



**Speech for Mayor, Cllr Zandile Gumede
on the occasion of
British Airways inaugural flight - Durban KSIA**

- Programme Director,
- KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, Mr Sihle Zikalala;
- Paulo de Renzis, Commercial Manager for Europe, Corporate Sales and Africa from British Airways
- Ambassadors and Members of the Diplomatic corps,
- Captains of industry,
- Our international guests and friends,
- Distinguished guests,
- Members of the media
- Ladies and gentlemen,
- All protocol observed,

Sanibonani!

Ladies and gentlemen, I am pleased to welcome you all here today to our warm and friendly City of Durban.

It is always an honor for us to host any gathering of key decision makers and influencers in the Tourism and investment space, under one roof.

However today is an even more special occasion, as we welcome the first ever direct flight between London's Heathrow Airport and our very own King Shaka International Airport.

Esteem guests, words cannot begin to describe the excitement that we have as a City today as we mark the beginning of a new era.

This inaugural flight signals the start of new and direct trade and tourism route between London and Durban – KwaZulu-Natal.

Most importantly, we are confident that this new route will be a huge success for British Airways because as the City, we have done all the necessary ground work to ensure that it is a sustainable route.

We believe that the work that we have done in marketing Durban to not only London, but the entire United Kingdom region, has begun paying dividends.

Over the years, we have invested in creating partnerships with strong global brands like National Geographics, Discovery Channel, Eurosport, Amambazo and many other strong global brands to market Durban in UK and the entire European region.

Furthermore, we have appointed a Destination Marketing Company (DMC), to ensure that our brand remains visible in the UK and the rest of Europe.

I believe that it is this work that has created the necessary demand and interest for our City and I am confident that this will translate to conversions.

Ladies and gentlemen, I believe that it is very same aggressive marketing efforts by both Durban and KwaZulu-Natal that has led to British Airways taking a decision to have a direct flight to Durban.

In this regard, we would like to once again give our heartfelt gratitude to the British Airways airline for recognizing the efforts.

Equally, I want to acknowledge the local trade partners and stakeholders for their continued support. We would not have achieved this feat alone had it not been for your commitment in working with us to make Durban – KwaZulu-Natal a truly global City.

It is such that has been shown by the local industry in working with us to grow tourism and investment promotion that has enabled us to continue to lead.

Honoured guests, I stand here today to reassure you that this direct flight to Durban is a begin of many more to come.

Ladies and gentlemen, this new airline could not have come at a better time than when we have just taken a decision to embark on a massive infrastructure investment drive in what we have termed as the Catalytic projects through Invest Durban office.

These investments will change the landscape of our beautiful City over the next few years and make Durban more investor and tourism appealing.

The UK is one of our key source markets and we are confident that this will make a sizeable impact in our endeavors to grow our respective economies.

Furthermore, this British Airways direct flight joins a whole host of other airlines that are already flying directly to Durban which includes the like Qatar Airways, Fly Emirates and many others.

We firmly believe that route will enhance our efforts of attracting visitors and investors from the UK and European market to our city.

This means the gateway to Europe is now opened and subsequently Durban – KwaZulu-Natal becomes a gateway into the African continent.

Today, I want to reiterate that we intend to use this platform to grow access to tourism for all and to unlock the tourism potential of Durban into Africa and beyond.

In this regard, we have already started with major investments, in partnership with the private sector, to ensure that we build the necessary capacity to ensure that Durban continues to be a global city and Africa's leading tourism and investment destination.

Our City has won major accolades and is highly recommended by many reputable international platforms like CNN, New York Times Travel and many others.

This international recognition, albeit a result of our investment in a consented global marketing campaign, has also served to motivate us to focusing significant additional investment and resources into our tourism attributes.

This is aimed at building a strong global travel brand and identity for the City of Durban and the province of KwaZulu-Natal. In closing, I would like to send my deep condolences to the to the Government and the people of Indonesia following the plane crash.

Welcome to Durban!

I thank you.