



Welcome Address by Councillor Mpume Sithole obo Her Worship the Mayor, Councillor Zandile Gumede on the occasion of LARASA's 2018 International Congress, on 08 October 2018, at the ICC, Durban.

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- Program Director
- President of the Leisure and Recreation Association of South Africa: Mrs Maliga Naidoo
- LARASA Board Members
- KZN MEC for Economic Development, Environmental Affairs and Tourism : Mr Sihle Zikalala
- Keynote speakers : Dr John Henderson, Executive Director of Park Prescription America, And Dr Marlene le Roux, CEO of Artscape, Cape Town, South Africa
- Distinguished Guest Speakers and Delegates
- Sport and Recreation South Africa
- SA Tourism

- The Parks and Recreation teams from eThekweni Municipality
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning.

On behalf of Her Worship the Mayor of Durban, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you to Durban, the Fun Shine city, where the Sun and the Fun, never sets!

A special welcome to guests from Overseas, Africa, and from other Provinces of South Africa.

I wish to especially acknowledge the presence of the KZN MEC for Economic Development, Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Mr Sihle Zikalala.

Program Director, Durban, or eThekweni in the Zulu vernacular, is the third largest city in South Africa, and the country's leading leisure resort.

Ladies and gentlemen, Durban is proudly home to the Ushaka Marine theme park, which showcases one of the largest aquariums in the world.

The city is also a haven for surfers, with long beaches lapped by the warm Indian Ocean, a mild subtropical climate, with excellent sporting infrastructure, the finest Hotels and Hospitality.

The New York Times list of 52 Places to Go in 2015, slotted Durban in an enviable, seventh spot.

Ladies and gentlemen, Durban is a city, which attracts tourists by the millions, each year.

As a leisure city, it therefore gives the Municipality immense pleasure, to jointly present, the 2018 LARASA International Congress., themed: "Parks, Leisure and Tourism: Transforming our World".

Program Director, LARASA, manages its our own Congresses based on scientific and quality papers to enhance learning and are presented by distinguished researchers and practitioners in these fields.

LARASA's partners are the eThekweni Municipality, the Department of Economic Development and Tourism, Sport and Recreation South Africa, and SA Tourism.

The Congress this year, based on the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations, will highlight the important role of

Leisure and Recreation in communities to promote health, social cohesion and sustainability.

We are pleased to have Researchers and practitioners from 20 countries, who will share with us their research and best practice, to emphasise the value of sustainable leisure and recreation services on the individual and community, to achieve these goals.

Ladies and gentlemen, Recreation, Tourism, and Leisure, or RTL, is big business in the global economy, and it is continuously expanding. One of the fastest growing sectors of tourism is that of sustainable tourism and nature-based tourism specifically.

Tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals – Journey to 2030, aims to build knowledge, and empower and inspire tourism stakeholders to take necessary action to accelerate the shift towards a more sustainable tourism sector by aligning policies and business operations, as Tourism has the potential to contribute, directly or indirectly, to all of the 17 SDG's.

However we are also being informed by early career researchers, that despite a clear mandate to integrate social, economic and environmental objectives in the SDGs, ecosystem health remains underrepresented in the latest iteration of the United Nation's global development agenda.

It is submitted that maintaining ecosystem health, is a necessary precondition to achieving all other 2030 sustainable development goals.

Indeed, human transformation of natural systems is so profound that many are referring to this period as the age of human destruction of environmental geology.

Program Director, there is a clarion call from some quarters, for the recognition that human development and associated activities are producing environmental consequences on an unprecedented scale, and that their effects can undermine development gains in the long-term, points to a need for a fundamental re-organization of the way in which the SDGs are currently being framed, and discussed.

It is argued that ecosystem health is the foundation for social and economic development activities.

It is stated that identifying, understanding and quantifying each of the synergistic and antagonistic linkages between the environment and human development, presents one of the formidable challenges that those operationalizing the SDGs, now face.

Program Director, we are therefore encouraged that LARASA and those involved in packaging this program, have put together items on the agenda, which collaborate with the synergy of this debate.

At eThekweni, we are therefore anticipating meaningful participation from delegates in this International Congress, with beneficial results, which will help us tweak and shape our current policies, in achieving our localised SDG's.

Ladies and gentlemen, I wish you all the very best in your deliberations. Do enjoy your stay in our most hospitable city. And yes please, make time within your busy schedule, to explore the offerings of Durban.

I now declare this Congress, officially open!

Thank you.