**\*REMARKS BY KWAZULU-NATAL PREMIER THAMSANQA NTULI\***

**\*DURING THE DURBAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY NPC’S 168TH ANNUAL GALA DINNER\***

**\*HELD AT THE HOLLYWOODBETS STADIUM ON 02 OCTOBER 2024\***

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Programme Director, Ms. Leanne Manas;

MEC for Economic Development, Tourism, and Environmental Affairs, Rev. Musa Zondi;

Members of the Diplomatic Community;

Durban Chamber of Commerce and Industry NPC CEO, Ms. Palesa Phili;

Durban Chamber of Commerce and Industry Deputy President, Mr. Mpho Lethoko;

Non-Executive Board Member of the Durban Chamber of Commerce and Industry NPC, Executive MTN Group, Mr. Matthew Khumalo, and all Members of the Chamber;

Captains of Industry, Business Leaders, and Sponsors;

Guest Speaker, Dr. Roelof Botha;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Evening!

This evening, we gather to celebrate a tremendous milestone—168 years since the formation of the Durban Chamber of Commerce and Industry in 1856. A century, a century and a half, and now, more than a lifetime later, the Chamber has not only survived but thrived, embodying resilience and steadfastness. On behalf of the Government of KwaZulu-Natal, I extend our sincerest best wishes to the entire Board, President, Deputy President, and CEO of the Chamber. May you continue on your upward trajectory, for turning back is no longer an option. The only direction is forward—Congratulations!

As the Chamber approaches its 170-year mark, it has faced some of its most significant challenges in recent years. We recall the 2020 shutdown due to COVID-19, followed by the devastating July unrest in 2021, and the catastrophic April/May floods in 2022. Yet, despite these setbacks, we emerge more resilient and determined. The theme of tonight's event, cantered on resilience and regeneration, is apt. It reflects the strength of the people of KwaZulu-Natal—no matter how deep the crisis, we always find a way to rise, rebuild, and push forward.

Our guest speaker, Dr. Roelof Botha, will elaborate, but we cannot overlook the current challenges in South Africa's economy. We are facing low GDP growth, stagnant fixed capital formation, and other structural hurdles.

Though we have returned to pre-pandemic GDP levels, obstacles like power supply uncertainty and logistics bottlenecks hinder full recovery. Unemployment has risen, with rural areas still deeply affected by poverty and economic fragmentation. While employment figures show some growth, it is not enough to bridge the gap. The socioeconomic disparities we see must be addressed urgently, as they are linked to other societal issues like crime and violence.

We commend Transnet for its efforts to address inefficiencies at the Port of Durban. The recent christening of five new tugboats is a positive step in revitalizing this critical hub. The Transnet Recovery Plan, launched in 2023, focuses on improving operational efficiency and better services for port customers, which is essential for the province's and the country’s economic vitality.

Our Medium-Term Development Plan focuses on three key areas: rapid, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth to create jobs; addressing poverty and the high cost of living for vulnerable populations; and rebuilding state capacity to deliver basic services and infrastructure efficiently, with a focus on ethical, professional governance. Through these initiatives, we aim to tackle the socio-economic fragmentation that fuels crime, gender-based violence, and substance abuse.

The tourism sector, a key driver of job creation, is in good hands under the leadership of MEC Rev. Musa Zondi. We applaud the decision to lease the iconic Elangeni and Maharani Hotels to Southern Sun.

We look forward to the reopening of the Hilton Hotel, which will further boost our province’s ability to welcome visitors from around the world.

Community Safety is a priority, and I have placed it under the Office of the Premier to ensure a direct, accountable link with law enforcement agencies. I salute our Provincial Commissioner, General Mkhwanazi, for his tireless efforts in fighting crime, particularly against the "construction mafia." The private security sector also deserves recognition for its crucial role in this battle. Together, we can win the fight against crime and corruption.

We all share the same goal: a stronger, better KwaZulu-Natal. Facing challenges together makes us more resilient. By working together, we can continue to build a province that grows stronger every year. As the saying goes, "If we want to go fast, we must go alone; if we want to go far, we must go together."

In closing, I wish the Durban Chamber of Commerce and Industry NPC a successful 168th Gala Dinner and thank you all for being part of this celebration.

Enjoy the evening!

**\*End.\***