

OPENING ADDRESS – EASTERN CAPE AIDS COUNCIL MEETING

Delivered by MEC for Health, Ntandokazi Capa

Programme Director,

Representatives from the Civil Society Forum (CSF), Colleagues from the South African National AIDS Council (SANAC), Networking HIV and AIDS Community of Southern Africa (NACOSA), National and Provincial Department of Health, Development Partners, government representatives, civil society leaders, and all stakeholders are present. Good morning.

I greet you all this morning as we gather once again to strengthen our collective fight against HIV, TB and related conditions in the Eastern Cape. Before we proceed, I must acknowledge a moment of profound sadness for our province. The Premier, Hon. Oscar Mabuyane, has recently lost his beloved mother, Mama Nolandile “Mambathane” Mabuyane, who passed away at the age of 79 after a long illness. She is remembered as a woman of faith, dignity, and strength.

I kindly request that we all rise and observe a moment of silence in her memory.

[Pause for silence] - Thank you.

Programme Director, today’s session is a significant milestone in our collective fight against HIV, TB, and STIs. This morning, we inducted new members into the Eastern Cape AIDS Council, strengthening our leadership and broadening the shoulders upon which this work rests. To each new member, congratulations. You are joining at a time when your expertise, commitment, and partnership are needed more than ever.

Colleagues, the Eastern Cape continues to face a heavy burden of disease. Almost 900,000 of our people are living with HIV, and TB remains one of our leading causes of death, with more than 60% of TB patients co-infected with HIV. These numbers remind us of the road still ahead.

But we are not without progress. Through campaigns such as Close the Gap and End TB, we are actively reaching out to those lost to treatment, expanding testing, and linking thousands back into care. We have seen encouraging improvements in some districts, even as challenges such as loss to follow-up and treatment adherence remain.

As the government, working with civil society, SANAC, and all our partners, we are determined to ensure that no one is left behind. This Council remains a critical platform for accountability, aligning our efforts, and ensuring that resources are mobilised where they are most needed.

Today's agenda reflects the seriousness of our mission, from induction and orientation to reviewing updates on SANAC, civil society, and our provincial Secretariat, to critical discussions on the sustainability of HIV and TB programmes and preparations for World AIDS Day 2025. These conversations must not end here; they must translate into action in our districts, facilities, and communities.

Colleagues, our task is not easy, but it is urgent. Every statistic we discuss today represents a life, a family, and a community that depends on us getting this right. Let us leave this meeting not only with resolutions on paper, but with renewed energy to act, to close the treatment gap, to scale up TB testing, and to protect the most vulnerable among us.

On behalf of Premier Mabuyane, I extend my gratitude for your commitment and partnership. May today's deliberations strengthen our resolve and bring us closer to an Eastern Cape where no one is left behind in the fight against HIV, TB and related conditions.

Enkosi. I thank you.