Address by His Worship, the Mayor, Cllr James Nxumalo,
On the Occasion of the Young Communist League youth event

20 August 2015 – 18h00
Clermont

• Programme Director,
• Our young leaders
• Distinguished guests,
• Ladies and gentlemen,
• All protocol observed,
Ladies and gentlemen, I bid you good evening. What a wonderful evening to be surrounded by young blood, our future leaders who will take our beloved country forward.

This evening is one I regard highly important because I will address you on the vital role of education in building our solid societies. I feel honoured to join you in this gathering because it is high time we engage on this topical subject.

Programme Director, education remains the only key that can unlock all doors and set you on a path towards reaching for your dreams. It is an important tool used to empower, it is a tool that can be used to fight the imbalances of the past and most importantly, it is a tool that has the power to open opportunities for YOU, as the future of our country.

Education remains the only hope we have for a complete liberation of a young mind. First democratic president of our country, Dr Nelson Mandela once said: “Education is the most powerful tool one can use to change the world”.

Ladies and gentlemen, this quote by the late Tata Madiba always resonates in my mind when I think of the challenges that this country faces and the possible solutions thereof. I chose to emphasise these powerful words by our struggle icon because I wanted to highlight the importance and significance of education in the development of the country.
It is widely accepted that all children have the right to an education, because education gives people the skills they need to help themselves out of poverty and into prosperity.

Education contributes immensely to the economic growth of the country. Education supports the growth of civil society, democracy and political stability, allowing people to learn about their rights and acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to exercise them. We all agree that education is a vital tool but we are still faced with the challenge of young people falling through the cracks of social ills. This is of great concern to our government.

Programme Director, government’s concerns emanate from destructive activities that our young people are engaging in these days. These delinquencies are alcohol abuse, substance abuse, criminality and early engagement in sexual activities which often lead to teenage pregnancies and HIV infections.

According to Statistics SA, in 2013, just over 68 000 learners attending schools in our country had given birth to a child. Also in 2013, of all the female learners attending school during that year, approximately 21 000 were pregnant.

These social ills result in young people dropping out of the education system. For girls, this is frequently explained by the high rate of teenage pregnancies. Socio-economic factors such as poverty, unemployment and peer pressure can contribute to social ills.
Ladies and gentlemen, I must mention that the school-going youth of today lack respect for their teachers in the classrooms. Teachers are the backbone of the education system and yet they receive little or no respect. In recent years, we have heard of teachers stabbed to death by pupils in classrooms, others have been beaten by their pupils. This is unacceptable.

It is important to highlight that violence amongst pupils also exists in our schools. Yesterday, we woke up to the sad news that two male learners from Qantayi High School in Port Dunford, northern KwaZulu-Natal have died. It is believed that a feud erupted between them before the one male learner pulled out a gun and shot the other male learner before turning the gun on himself. In recent years, there have been many incidents similar to this one which means that learners are now carrying dangerous weapons to schools. Education environments are being turned into warzones by learners.

Programme Director, while the country celebrated a 75.8 percent matric pass rate for the Class of 2014, it is concerning that from the 1.1 million learners who enrolled for Grade 1 in 2003, 530 000 made it to Grade 12 in 2014.

This means nearly half a million of learners have dropped out during the course of their school years due to different reasons. From the 530 000 learners who made it to Grade 12, approximately 400 000 passed their matric exams. Further to this, only 150 000 learners passed with bachelor passes, allowing them access to a university education.
Programme Director, we need to decisively tackle the issue of drop-outs. We need to investigate the causes of the decreasing number of learners within the 12 years of schooling and find solutions that will assist in the retention of learners in the education system from Grade 1 to Grade 12.

Ladies and gentlemen, we must agree that South Africa is a much better place than it was before 1994 and once again, building capacity in all sectors of our economy through education is the primary factor that has helped us to achieve this feat and to be where we are today.

Efforts have been made to improve the education system in terms of infrastructural upgrades, curriculum changes and many more other interventions that were done by the democratic government of the new South Africa, but we cannot depend on government alone.

This then calls for a collective effort from all sectors of society to work together in ensuring that we all do our bits to help develop our country by educating our children. We need to ensure that no child is unable to go to school.

Ladies and gentlemen, we also need to sit down and brainstorm how we can get our children off the streets and occupied with sports and community development activities.

Our Municipality has invested in various sports development programmes targeting the youth which will also assist in tackling social cohesion in our City. Our City encourages young
people to demonstrate civic pride and become actively involved in sports to create a socially cohesive society.

Sports are a universal language, something that is understood by all, or most of the world’s population. Therefore, we believe this to be one of the most effective ways to build and achieve a caring, united and socially cohesive City through the development of young people. One of the six strategic priority areas of our City strategy is “A Socially Cohesive City.”

Ladies and gentlemen, sports development is a priority to our government. As a result, our Municipality in partnership with the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Government and the South African Football Association are supporting the construction of a multi-million KZN International Training Centre and Provincial Football Academy. These facilities worth R300 million, are aimed at identifying and grooming upcoming sports stars.

Our City is looking forward to being a training camp base for our Rugby National Team, the Springboks in preparation for the 2015 IRB Rugby World Cup that will be hosted by England from 18 September to 31 October 2015.

Recently, Durban hosted the second installment of the Under 19 International Football Tournament which creates platforms to promote economic development, a healthy lifestyle and social cohesion. Government has injected R5 million for the tournament to run for three years.
Our City has also bid to host the Commonwealth Games 2022 and we await a favourable announcement next month that will inform us of Durban being the successful candidate to host this international sporting event.

These major sports development will open potential opportunities for our young people who are passionate in pursuing budding careers in various sports fields.

In closing ladies and gentlemen, I would like to encourage those young people who are successful in life to look back and uplift youth in their communities. Let us impart knowledge from one young person to another. You can achieve anything your heart desires through your commitment to education. Education is an investment to a bright future.

Thank you.