

# Local Welcome Message

## Welcoming message from the MEC for Health in KwaZulu-Natal, ahead of the World Society for Paediatric Infectious Diseases (WSPID 2023)

Dear Esteemed Colleagues, Delegates, Partners and Distinguished Guests.

It is with immense pleasure and anticipation that I extend a heartfelt welcome to all of you, from the heart of South Africa, KwaZulu-Natal Province!

We are truly honoured to be hosting the World Society for Paediatric Infectious Diseases (WSPID 2023) in our beautiful city of Durban, from the 14th to the 17th of November 2023.

As we prepare to convene on these shores, I would be remiss not to mention the beauty and charm of our city, eThekwinini, which is known for its warm weather, offers not only a welcoming climate, but also a warm embrace from our culturally diverse local community.

Our people are known for their kindness and generosity of spirit, ensuring that every visitor feels at home in our vibrant, diverse, and culturally rich city.

Our city is not only blessed with warm water, but also seemingly endless stretches of sandy beaches and robust waves.

When you get here, you will soon understand why eThekwinini is everyone's favourite seaside playground.

But beyond the beauty of Durban, we are brought together by a common purpose, a shared commitment to the well-being of our world's most precious resource – our children.

This gathering could not have come at a better time, as it provides a platform for us to address the pressing issues that confront our children today.

It is a challenge that calls upon us to do better, and to redouble our efforts in fighting poverty, and linking children from impoverished families with the essential social services that they need, in order to secure a healthier and brighter future for them.

We have a collective duty to protect children from preventable ailments, especially those that are infectious, as well as other material conditions that may compromise their safety.

Our continued commitment to addressing these challenges is a testament to our fervent belief that the true measure of any society lies in how it treats its women and children.

We must strive to ensure that every child, regardless of their background, has access to quality healthcare, education, social support, and is generally protected. This is not only a moral imperative but also the key to building a stronger, more equitable society.

The WSPID 2023 therefore offers us the opportunity to pool our collective knowledge, resources, and passion to make a lasting impact on the health and well-being of our children. Together, we can definitely chart a course towards a brighter future, one where no child is left behind.

As we embark on this journey, I look forward to engaging in insightful discussions, forging new partnerships, and finding innovative solutions to the challenges before us.

I have no doubt that WSPID 2023 will be a momentous event, one that leaves a lasting legacy for the children of KwaZulu-Natal and beyond.

Once again, I extend a warm and heartfelt welcome to each one

of you. Let us come together in the spirit of collaboration and compassion to create a better world for our children.

Yours sincerely, **Ms. Nomagugu Simelane**

*MEC for KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health, South Africa*