



Joburg Leads the Way: Hosting the U20 Summit

Dear Residents of Johannesburg,

This week marks an extraordinary moment for our City. Johannesburg, alongside Tshwane, will host the Urban 20 (U20) Mayors' Summit from 12 to 14 September under South Africa's presidency of the G20. Mayors and leaders from some of the world's most influential cities will gather in Sandton to deliberate on challenges that all cities face, including climate action, infrastructure, social inclusion, and digital innovation.

I know this message reaches you at a time when many feel frustrated and disheartened. Some have said Johannesburg is dirty; others have questioned my ability to lead or doubted whether real change is possible. I do not ignore these voices. They reflect the pain, anger, and disappointment that so many residents experience daily. I see the waste that remains uncollected in some areas. I hear your frustration when the lights go out. I understand the disappointment when basic services are delivered too slowly. These realities weigh heavily on me, and I carry the responsibility for addressing them every single day.

The truth is that Johannesburg is not a hopeless City. It is a City imbued with resilience. It is a City of progress, even if that progress is not always as quick or as visible as we would wish. Since taking office, we have been rolling out High-Impact Service Delivery Operations across every region in the City: clearing illegal dumping, repairing roads and electricity infrastructure, fixing potholes, and enforcing bylaws in illegal informal settlements. These actions may not solve all our challenges at once, but they are proof of a government working steadily and persistently to rebuild our City.



The criticisms I hear do not discourage me - they drive me to act with greater urgency. When people call Johannesburg dirty, my response is not denial, but action through service delivery operations. When I am called useless, my response is not anger, but leadership; ensuring that Johannesburg has a voice on the highest global platforms such as the U20. Johannesburg cannot afford a defensive mayor. What it needs is a mayor who listens, acts and positions this City as a driver of solutions. That is why the U20 Mayors' Summit is so important for all of us.

It is not simply an international event happening on our soil. It is an opportunity for Johannesburg to access global networks of innovation, to secure partnerships that will help us address the very challenges our residents raise. Cities like Mumbai, São Paulo, and Jakarta face issues remarkably like ours, from housing shortages, migration pressures, service delivery strains, to climate shocks. By engaging with these cities, Johannesburg is not only showcasing its resilience but also learning and adopting new ways to tackle old problems.

Our readiness to host the U20 is not about claiming perfection. It is about demonstrating commitment. It is about showing that while Johannesburg has challenges, it is not bowing under them. Instead, we are standing tall, engaging the world, and proving that our City has a role to play in shaping the urban future of inclusivity and innovation.

As we welcome the world to Johannesburg, I ask residents to see beyond the criticism and recognise this moment for what it is: A chance to elevate our City, to highlight our struggles with honesty, and to attract the partnerships we need to overcome them. We are not hiding our difficulties. We are confronting them openly and with determination.

Johannesburg is not perfect. But Johannesburg is ready, willing to lead, eager to listen, and prepared to act. Together, we will prove that our City is not only defined by its challenges, but by its resilience, creativity, and spirit of possibility.

Until next time,

Johannesburg Executive Mayor Councillor Sello Dada Morero