WELCOME REMARKS BY THE PREMIER OF KWAZULU-NATAL NOMUSA DUBE-NCUBE DURING THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE WORLD FOOTBALL AFRICA SUMMIT HELD AT THE INKOSI ALBERT LUTHULI CONVENTION CENTRE ON 16 NOVEMBER 2022  
  
Ladies and Gentlemen  
  
Good Morning!  
  
INTRODUCTION  
In a few days, the greatest sporting spectacle in the world kicks off in the desert oasis of Qatar.  
From Asia to Africa, Europe, Australia to the Middle East no doubt the eyes of the world will for weeks be glued to the screens, as the best compete for the most contested and coveted sporting cup in the world.  
Ahead of the start of the FIFA World Cup in Qatar this weekend, we are pleased on behalf of the people of KwaZulu-Natal, to welcome you all to our own showpiece, the World Football Summit taking place at the Inkosi Albert Luthuli Convention Centre in Durban.  
We look forward to interacting with the clubs, leagues, federations, but also the broadcasters, sponsors, technology companies and all the different companies from across different sectors that are involved in the football industry.  
  
Many of you at this summit subscribe to the famous Bill Shankly declaration that “Football is not a matter of life and death... it's much more important than that.”  
At this World Football Summit, we can attest to the fact that football is not just a game, but what has become a mighty global network economy that commands the attention of major investors and is growing in leaps and bounds.  
  
In hosting the World Football Summit here in our city, as KwaZulu-Natal we again demonstrate our capacity to host Africa and the world in global events. In that way, KwaZulu-Natal continues again and again, to serve as the true gateway not only to the continent, but to all nations.  
  
LEVERAGING THE VALUE OF THE WORLD FOOTBALL SUMMIT  
According to research, the global sports market has reached a value approaching 500 billion dollars. Football beyond what happens on the field of play is a multi-billion industry that if exploited to the fullest contributes immensely to GDP of Countries and the global economy. Observers believe that the sports industry is set for a major shakeup and will become the second fastest growing sector for brands, outpacing the GDP growth of most countries. The key trends in the Sports economy are fueled by:  
  
• The market for wearable technologies which is experiencing astronomical increase in sales  
• Sports sponsorship revenue and increasing competition for premium contents.  
• International sports betting is estimated to have a market capitalization of $250 billion;  
• Revenues for eSports have doubled.  
  
As KwaZulu-Natal Province we want to seize the opportunities in all the new economic frontiers of sports and digital economy for the benefit of many of our young people. We are looking at new industries of the future in order to ensure that our citizens take advantage of the opportunities and they do not only become consumers of services. We are grateful to SAFA, CAF and FIFA for exposing our province and people to this strategic sector of the economy. We are using this summit to open our eyes and minds to think beyond just the unrivalled passion of football but use beautiful game as catalyst for tourism and socio-economic development.  
  
We reaped handsome dividends in hosting the 2010 World Cup, as it generated more than R93billion for the country and R3 billion for the City of Durban and Province of KwaZulu-Natal. We are excited at the global marketing exposure that this summit presents for us and this will surely ignite and further fuel the growing tourist interest in our Province. We have in our midst representation from best football Leagues who will work with our province in a number of areas to help us grow this new economic terrain.  
  
THROUGH FOOTBALL FIGHTING RACISM  
Ladies and Gentlemen, more than any other, being a team sport, football has been well-placed to pioneer non-sexism, non-racialism and total integration in society. Football fans know they want the best footballer in their team regardless of what passport they carry. Because of their reach footballers can help Society Bridge the virus of parochialism and xenophobia, and to champion the unity of Africans across the continent and end racism.  
  
Football will be remembered for playing a major role in South Africa and by showing that two races and more, can share a cloakroom, a hotel room. Footballers and sports people are prepared to die for each other on the pitch even as their political leaders think they should be separate.  
However although non-racialism in football today might be legislated, with racism outlawed globally, ugly racial incidents especially from fans in Europe and the Middle East against players of African origin, still remind us that the struggle is not yet over.  
Leading to the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar, the rights of the LGBTQ+ community admittedly came under the spotlight as did human rights in general. While these issues have been raised for many years in football before, one of the advantages of holding the World Cup in Qatar, has been to broaden the awareness.  
  
USING FOOTBALL TO RIGHT DISCRIMINATION OF WOMEN  
Programme Director let us use our passion for football to promote and protect the hard-won rights of women, children and all people regardless of their sexual, or religious orientation. From being a predominantly male sport for many years, the game of football has become non-sexist with the women leading soccer’s phenomenal growth over the past decade.  
While the women’s football game has grown, an article by David Berie in the publication “Economics Observatory” of July 2022 notes that even though women’s football matches are attracting record crowds, funding still lags far behind the men’s game.  
The story of women’s football is similar to that of South Africa’s discriminatory practices during the apartheid regime. From the 1920s women’s football was practically banned by many associations including the English FA. It was only unbanned in 1971, but for the most part remained largely discriminated and side lined in terms of funding and other vital structural support.  
This means we are dealing with unfair competition and discrimination where women can never reach the level of men simply because they are being asked to enter a 1km race, when the men are already 200metres ahead.  
Affirmative action and corrective legislation as we know the story in South Africa, are meant to equalise opportunity and to bridge the gap between races and sexes by proving additional opportunities to those who were previously discriminated against.  
  
For this to happen, we call on all sponsors and the media to intensify their collaboration in support of women’s football in Africa and the world. These two working with the associations and government, can provide the support necessary for women to rise and achieve their full potential in football.  
We make this call not because it is the right thing to do, but because it makes business sense to grow the women’s market, which happens to be the majority population demographic in the world anyway.  
  
PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE FUTURE  
Ladies and Gentlemen, we are pleased to welcome all our football legends to KwaZulu-Natal. We want to thank you while you are still alive for bringing magic to our living rooms, stadiums and pubs in villages and towns across the continent, and indeed the world.  
We will continue to work closely with our Football Legends in KwaZulu-Natal to develop the sport of football among boys and girls.  
Our legends are major brands and are severely underutilised. We intend to invite many of them to work with our government to address some of the socioeconomic challenges we face including substance abuse, criminality and sedentary lifestyles that are behind preventable illnesses and the deterioration of lives among the people of KwaZulu-Natal.  
  
We also believe that we are not tapping fully into football’s potential to boost our province not only by hosting Premier Soccer League and FIFA matches, but by hosting international conferences and events such as this one.  
  
Many footballers in the room will attest to the fact that by giving an opportunity to one individual, sport has the potential to change lives of a family and communities forever.  
One of the tragic recent developments in our football is that our Bafana Bafana players are no longer making the grade in the first 11 of the top leagues in Europe which remains the gold standard in world football today.  
  
Here in KwaZulu-Natal we want to see more and more our boys and girls playing and earning top money abroad every week. This will not only enhance our national squads, but it will radically transform players’ lives forever, and bring much-needed international revenue to KwaZulu-Natal.  
  
In this regard we will work with the relevant structures on a focused programme that will facilitate and fast track the development of talented footballers so that we can unlock the barriers and they can be scouted by more international clubs.  
  
This World Football Summit will serve as the fulcrum upon which KwaZulu-Natal changes the speed at which we tap into the potential of sport in general to help us attack the triple challenges of unemployment, poverty and inequality. Our province has passion, capability and experience to become a global leader in the entire value-chain of the football business.  
  
We have the best weather in the world and the tourism potential of the sport is demonstrated clearly by the fact that we estimate this summit alone will potentially inject approximately R480 million into our economy.  
Many of you are well aware of the tragic loss of more than 440 lives during the floods in April. We are pleased that your presence comes as a welcome boost to our province’s Economic Recovery and Transformation Plan.  
  
We wish to assure you all, that the worst is now behind us. We have moved forward very far from where we found ourselves in April.  
Government was able to do this because of the close collaboration with all stakeholders including Business, Civil Society and our Communities.  
  
MAY THE BEST AFRICAN TEAM WIN!!!  
Programme Director I am aware that many of you will be on their way to Qatar after this World Football Summit we wish you and the teams your support, well. May football be the winner.  
As you aware, sadly, South Africa will not be part of the teams that are taking part in the 2022 FIFA World in Qatar. Having failed to qualify we are not ashamed to say that we now look to the giants of Cameroon, Morocco, Senegal, Tunisia and Ghana to fly Africa’s flag high in this soccer spectacular.  
  
We pray the prayer of all Africans that 2022 becomes the year of Africa and that an African team makes it all the way to the finals and lifts the FIFA World Cup Trophy at end of the tournament.  
In case no African makes it to the final round, we have Brazil to fall back with its historic links to the African continent. Failing which, we will be left with no other option but to support the French Team. They are the defending Champions, and they may well have the distinction of being the only other African Team in Qatar, given the fact they have so many of their players with links to Africa.  
  
CONCLUSION AND WELL WISHES  
We are excited at the deals we will conclude here, the exchange programmes for soccer coaches, administrators and officials. We look forward to agreements and partnerships between KZN soccer clubs, academic institutions, administrators in government and private sector as part of creating the next generation of soccer stars.  
  
I wish you all well in your engagements as you seek to grow the game even further. May this World Football Summit be the best in the world.  
  
Allow me to invite you back to our province to stay longer, so that you can see the many sights in our city and in all corners of our beautiful KwaZulu-Natal.  
  
May I end by expressing my wish to the South African Football Association, the Confederation of African Football and FIFA that this World Football Summit will again be held here in KwaZulu-Natal over the coming three years and more.  
  
I Thank You!