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## MEDIA STATEMENT

24 October 2023

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### **MEC WILLIAMS HOSTS A SUMMIT TO SAVE LIVES AND RESTORE THE DIGNITY AND SACREDNESS OF CUSTOMARY MALE INITIATION**

Cogta MEC Zolile Williams complains about the persistent controversy and plethora of challenges besetting *Isiko loKwaluka* (Customary Male Initiation) practice in the Eastern Cape Province ranging from deaths, abuse and injuries of *Abakhwetha* (traditional initiates).

To mitigate these challenges, MEC Williams convenes a two-day Strategic Planning Summit from 30-31 October 2023 at the East London Golf Course. MEC Williams added that the event will be heralded by the Eastern Cape Premier as the guest Speaker for the day.

Invited guests include MECs of Health, Human Settlements, Transport and Community Safety and Social Development, Kings, representatives from the National Initiation Coordinating Committee, CRL Commission, EC Cogta Portfolio Committee, Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa (Contralesa) National, Provincial and Local Houses of Traditional & Khoisan Leaders, Traditional Healers Association, District Initiation Forums, SA Local Government Association (Salga), Executive Mayors, Mayors, Speakers, South African Police Services (SAPS), National Prosecuting Authority (NPA), United Nations, Non-Governmental Organisation (NGOs), etc.

MEC Williams said the Summit is guided by the Eastern Cape Customary Male Initiation Practice Act No 5 of 2016 and Customary Initiation Act No 2 of 2021 which provide for appropriate interventions to mitigate the challenges in customary initiation.

“We want to emerge with an implementable and achievable integrated monitoring and intervention strategy by emulating the best practices from some of our District and

Metro Initiation Forums. The session will also evaluate the effectiveness of intervention plans we have implanted over the years. The persistent old and new challenges require new strategies to minimise the atrocities engulfing the customary male initiation, for the passage of our children to manhood,” said MEC Williams.

He added that the provision of the necessary support and resources, full participation of traditional leaders as custodians of the custom, involvement of parents, families and community at large and the proper coordination of key stakeholders will guarantee the safety of *Abakhwetha*.

“Our badge of honour will be the restoration of the dignity and sacredness of this age-old custom where deaths and injuries of our children will be a thing of the past,” said MEC Williams.

He added that the mobilisation of key stakeholders provincially and nationally will empower the session to develop a plan that will attend to the challenges of resource allocation, coordination and awareness campaigns. **//End//**

**Issued by Cogta EC. For more information, please contact Mamnkeli Ngam on 071 685 7981 or Pheello Olifant on 082 432 6433.**