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## Media Statement

### For Immediate Release

**Date: Monday, 30 June 2025**

### **City of Joburg rallies for World Environment Day to “beat plastic pollution”**

The City of Johannesburg’s Environment & Infrastructure Services Department [EISD], in collaboration with Breathe Cities and the Clean Air Fund, commemorated World Environment Day with a guided nature hike and #PauseAndBreathe activation at Kloofendal Nature Reserve on Saturday, 28 June 2025.

The 2025 theme, “*Beat Plastic Pollution*,” served as a poignant call to action for individuals, communities, and governments to decisively reduce plastic waste and embrace sustainable alternatives.

The event featured a diverse range of activities, including eco-exhibitions, youth engagement sessions, child-friendly environmental games, and interactive displays. These initiatives were specifically designed to raise awareness, showcase practical environmental solutions, educate residents [particularly youth] on the health impacts of plastic pollution, inspire proactive community innovation, and cultivate long-term behavioural change.

Speaking at the event, the Member of the Mayoral Committee [MMC] for EISD, Cllr Jack Sekwaila, emphasised the event's broader significance: “This day is about accountability and confronting the environmental challenges in our City head-on. Together, we must find solutions that are not only sustainable but also inclusive and empowering.”

Councillor Sekwaila further acknowledged Joburg’s ongoing struggle with waste management, including pervasive illegal dumping and mounting pressure on landfills. He highlighted the City's efforts to “expand access to recycling drop-off points, support local cooperatives, and create more opportunities within the recycling economy.”

MMC Sekwaila was accompanied by Cllr Vhengani Munyai, Chairperson of the Section 79 Portfolio Committee, Cllr Gift Mathe, a member of the Section 79 committee, and senior management of the department.

A recently released polling survey, conducted by EISD in partnership with Breathe Cities and the Clean Air Fund, revealed critical insights into residents' perceptions of air quality. The survey found that 92% of Joburg residents expressed concern about air pollution, with 78% believing it negatively impacts their health. However, despite these widespread concerns, only 5% of the 3,000 respondents were aware of existing local air quality policies and solutions.

Breathe Cities, an initiative supporting 14 cities in reducing air pollution, launched the #PauseAndBreathe activation to inspire public support and bridge the gap between concern and awareness, thereby encouraging broader public support for air quality solutions. This collective moment served as a vital reminder that every individual has a role to play in building a healthier, more equitable Johannesburg for future generations.

Lebo Molefe, Director of Air Quality and Climate Change for the City, emphasised the urgency of the matter: “Air pollution is one of the silent threats facing our communities. It becomes especially visible during winter, particularly in informal settlements and low-income areas where many families still rely on burning coal, paraffin, and even waste to stay warm. The resulting smoke lingers and has severe health impacts.”

Molefe further highlighted that broad public participation and sustained behavioural change are paramount in addressing the root causes of pollution. Engaging young people, who constitute the majority of the City’s population, is particularly crucial, as they possess the creativity, energy, and influence necessary to drive sustainable change within their communities.

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Issued by the City of Johannesburg

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