

**Speech by the Minister of Human Settlements, Tokyo Sexwale, at the handover of homes to the Sunnyside community in Eshowe, uMlalazi**

**KwaZulu Natal, on 26 June 2009**

When President Jacob Zuma delivered his State of the Nation address to Parliament on the 3rd of June, he made a direct call on South Africans to become more active citizens.

In doing so, the President was calling on all of us to play a direct role in the renewal of our country, and to make a specific contribution to the creation of a united cohesive society.

Today, we must congratulate the youth of uMlalazi for rising to the challenge, so soon after the President spoke, to become active citizens in their own community.

Working together, our Youth build volunteers have built a total of 76 houses over the past two weeks, as a tribute to the fallen heroes of June 1976. The way in which they have done so truly embodies President Zuma's vision of "active citizenry", where members of society take direct responsibility for problem-solving, rather than relying on others.

It is fitting that the youth of uMlalazi have stepped up to the plate during national Youth Month, when our nation pays tribute to the role of the youth in bringing about our liberation.

The fact that they have chosen to get their hands dirty building houses, when they could have turned their backs on those less-fortunate and focused on having fun, must be commended. To you, young people, we say thank you: you have led by example, and you deserve to be acknowledged. You are doing justice to the memory of the June 16 martyrs.

Of course, June 16 is not the only historic date which we commemorate today. This is also the 53rd anniversary of the signing of the Freedom Charter at Kliptown in Johannesburg, where delegates declared that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of all the people.

Among the many noble and bold statements made that day was the following call, in clause 9: There shall be houses, security and comfort. The Charter further stated, and I quote, that all people should have the right to live where they choose, be decently housed, and to bring up their families in comfort and security.

Fifty-three years ago, the drafters of the Freedom Charter also began to define the essence of what we are today calling "human settlements" when they declared, and again I quote: slums shall be demolished, and new suburbs built where all have transport, roads, lighting, playing fields, creches and social centres.

If you are looking to understand what we mean as government when we talk about human settlements, you need look no further than that definition from the Freedom Charter. It says it all.

Of course, if you are looking for a more practical example of what we mean, you need look no further than Sunnyside, the community we are in today.

Thanks to our new integrated approach to planning and development, and our emphasis on going beyond housing to the development of human settlements, we are doing more than handing over houses today. We are breaking new ground.

Various government departments have worked together to do more. The departments of agriculture and water affairs and agriculture, for example, have provided trees, grass, fruit trees and seeds to the community, ensuring that this is a “green” community from day one.

National, local and provincial governments have collaborated to ensure the provision of infrastructure such as roads, electricity, sanitation and water, highlighting the beginnings of our new integrated approach to spatial planning.

Business has also come on board, providing funds and other forms of support to the development of this new community.

At the same time, the new development has been planned in such a way that it is an integrated one: it situates low-cost housing alongside more established communities, and also integrates historically-divided racial groups.

The holistic nature of the settlement ensures that it not only provides shelter and comfort to former shack-dwellers, but at the same time situates them close to places where they can work and play, where they can shop, work and enjoy access to educational and healthcare facilities.

All these are indicators of what we mean when we talk about human settlements, and the way we will continue to work. We intend to focus on integrated, holistic solutions, with better planning and coordination to ensure that we build communities such as this one, communities we can all be proud of. Communities where people can play, pray and stay.

Of course, the key to the sustainability of a community such as Sunnyside is the community itself. Government can only do so much. Business can only do so much. It is up to the community itself to care for its new property, to pay for the services they require, and to continue with the upkeep of the area.

To the people of Sunnyside, my message is that we have done what we can to create the basic framework of a human settlement. From now on, it is largely up to you: you will need to continue planting more trees, you will need to care for your gardens, and you will need to look at other initiatives which will ensure that your community goes from strength to strength.

You are not alone in doing so. Your municipality has assured us of their ongoing support for this initiative, and we have no doubt that if the hand of government or business is required, it will be there.

But at the same time, we will be looking to you, as a community, to play your part.

If I may quote the President again, it would be to conclude with another comment from his State of the Nation address, in which he said: Fellow South Africans, working together we can do more to realise our common vision of a better and more prosperous nation.

This is the partnership we are calling for.

Note to Editors: A total of 23 houses were handed over today, out of a total of over 400 which are being built in Sunnysdale. Certificates were issued today to young volunteers who built houses for the elderly in the town as part of their contribution to Youth Month. This was Minister Sexwale's first handover of homes since his appointment as Human Settlements Minister.

Chris Vick, Special Advisor to Minister Sexwale

083 556 7644