



MINISTRY  
HUMAN SETTLEMENTS  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**MEDIA STATEMENT BY MINISTER OF HUMAN SETTLEMENTS, THEMBI SIMELANE,  
MP, ON THE UPCOMING IBT SUMMIT AND LATEST UPDATE ABOUT DISASTERS IN  
LIMPOPO AND MPUMALANGA, 21 JAN 2026**

**Director General, Dr Alec Moemi**

**DDGs and Officials of the Department of Human Settlement present**

**Members of the media**

Good morning,

Today's media briefing is in two parts. The first part seeks to announce the upcoming Summit on Innovative Building Technologies (IBTs). The last one is aimed at providing the latest update regarding our interventions to the recent disasters in Limpopo, and Mpumalanga.

In 2025, we presented our Budget Vote Speech under the theme: **Leveraging technologies for resilient, sustainable human settlements**". We did this with full understanding that technologies can assist us in achieving our targets as contained in the 2024-2029 Medium Term Development Plan (MTDP).

The Constitution enjoins us to take reasonable legislative and other measures within available resources to ensure everyone has access to adequate housing. With this directive not only to provide houses, but to deliver sustainable human settlements that are affordable, resilient, and dignified.

To this end, we are happy to announce that from 03 to 04 February, the Department of Human Settlements will host the Innovative Building Technologies (IBTs) Summit, under the theme: **"Mainstreaming Innovative Building Technologies for sustainable human settlements"**.

The Summit will be a national platform dedicated to advancing and showcasing innovative, sustainable, and scalable construction solutions that support the delivery of dignified housing, the eradication of informal settlements, and mud houses. It will also strengthen our capacity to respond to housing emergencies stemming from disasters.

The Summit forms part of the Department's strategic interventions aimed at addressing South Africa's persistent housing challenges, including housing backlog, the continued existence of informal settlements and the prevalence of mud houses and structurally unsafe dwellings, particularly in rural and disaster-prone areas. These challenges are further compounded by climate change, which has increased the frequency and severity of floods and storms. Regrettably, these natural disasters displace communities and damage housing structures.

Our country continues to experience rapid urbanisation and population growth. These dynamics require new and innovative approaches to housing delivery that are faster, more cost-effective, environmentally sustainable, climate resilient and capable of being deployed at scale.

The IBTs Summit seeks to provide a national platform where such solutions can be explored, assessed, and advanced through collaboration between government, private sector, and civil society.

The Summit will bring together all three spheres of government, industry leaders, developers, investors, professionals in the built-environment, and research institutions to engage on practical solutions that can support the development of safe, resilient, and integrated human settlements.

A key focus of the Summit will be the role of IBTs in accelerating housing delivery while maintaining quality, safety, and compliance with regulatory standards. These technologies include modular and fabricated construction systems, alternative and locally produced building materials, climate-resilient designs, green and energy-efficient solutions, and smart construction methods that reduce time and cost.

The continued existence of mud houses, particularly in rural provinces, remains a critical concern. These structures are often highly vulnerable to extreme weather conditions, including heavy rains and flooding, posing serious risks to the safety and well-being of the occupants. Through the Summit, the Department aims to promote IBTs that offer durable, affordable alternatives that can be rolled out rapidly, while supporting local manufacturing, skills development, and job creation.

Similarly, the growth and persistence of informal settlements reflect historical spatial inequalities and ongoing socio-economic pressures. Responding to this challenge requires integrated planning, serviced land, infrastructure investment, and innovative construction that offer faster delivery of permanent housing solutions. The Summit will explore how IBTs can support in-situ upgrading, rapid construction, and the development of permanent, dignified housing that improves the quality of household life and reduces vulnerability to disasters.

The Summit will examine how modular, prefabricated, and rapidly deployable housing systems can be used to respond to emergencies, while also allowing for the transition from temporary shelter to permanent housing solutions. This approach supports our commitment to ensuring that disaster-affected communities are not subjected to prolonged periods in unsafe or inadequate living conditions.

The IBTs Summit will also focus on aligning innovative solutions with the country's regulatory policy framework, including building standards, safety requirements and environmental regulations. Discussions will explore how the certification and approval process can be strengthened to enable the wider adoption of IBTs within the sector.

The Summit will feature a comprehensive exhibition platform, allowing technology providers and innovators to showcase solutions applicable to different housing programmes. This exhibition will enable us, implementing agents, and developers to directly engage with IBT solutions and assess their suitability for large-scale development.

The Department recognises that innovation in housing delivery must also contribute to economic transformation and inclusive growth. The Summit will, therefore, highlight opportunities for local production, enterprise development, skills transfer, and job creation. As the Department, we are fully committed to rolling out the IBTs across the country. Thus, our 2026/2027 grant framework has made provisions for the 2% minimum spent on IBT-related projects. We call upon youth and women operating in the IBT space to seize this opportunity.

One of the critical factors of the IBTs is that they must be climate resilient. As climate-risks intensify, as we have just seen in Limpopo and Mpumalanga, housing solutions must be designed to withstand extreme weather conditions, reduce environmental impact, and promote efficient use of energy and other resources such as water. Accordingly, IBTs offer significant potential to support South Africa's climate commitments while ensuring that housing remains safe, affordable, and resilient.

With IBTs, we also seek to achieve spatially transformed and socially integrated communities. By promoting innovative construction methods that support higher-density development and well-located housing, we will reverse apartheid spatial patterns and build communities truly reflective of a democratic South Africa, and communities that are closer to economic opportunities and social amenities.

As a department, we view the upcoming Summit as a critical platform for strengthening public-private partnerships. Addressing housing backlog, eradicating informal settlements, and mud houses and responding effectively to disasters requires coordinated action across all sectors. We need one another, and we are in this together. Therefore, the Summit will facilitate collaboration, knowledge sharing, and partnership building to unlock innovative solutions that can be implemented at scale.

Through hosting the IBTs Summit, the Department affirms its commitment to ensuring that all South Africans have safe, decent, and affordable housing, and that innovation plays a critical role in accelerating delivery and improving the quality of household life.

In closing, we have received the latest update from Limpopo and Mpumalanga. Sadly, the number of fatalities has increased from 17 to 18 in Limpopo, while the other six persons are still missing in Limpopo and in Mpumalanga the fatalities stand at 20. Once again, we send our sincerest condolences to the families of the deceased.

The number of houses damaged in Limpopo as per the recent reports are 1942 and in Mpumalanga a total of 1808 houses were recorded as affected by the disaster.

The weather conditions in Limpopo have made our work extremely difficult. Central to our work in providing the necessary interventions is the verification process. This determines the extent of the damage and informs the department of the appropriate emergency housing interventions to be implemented. Strides have been made in this regard.

While the verification process is continuing, we have decided to proceed with assisting households that have been verified. We are happy to report that we are at an advanced stage to start helping the households. As the phase, we have started procuring temporary emergency accommodation (TEA) for people who are currently housed in mass care centers or evacuation centers. The second phase will be the acquisition of Temporary Residential Units (TRUs) as the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase. We are procuring 39 for Mbaula area, 73 for Bushbuckridge, 5 for Blouberg and 13 for Makhado.

We will continue to provide interventions as and when we conclude verification processes.

Over the next two days, we will be on the ground with Limpopo and Mpumalanga MECs of Human Settlements to ensure the communities receive the necessary help.

Finally, let me thank communities, churches, and NGOs for lending a helping hand to affected families during this difficult time. Everything you have done and continue to do is not in vain. Your support is highly appreciated.

I thank you.

