



MINISTRY
HUMAN SETTLEMENTS
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**REMARKS BY THE MINISTER OF HUMAN SETTLEMENTS, MMAMOLOKO
KUBAYI, DUBAI EXPO, VIRTUAL, 03 NOVEMBER 2021**

Programme Director

UAE Minister of State for International Cooperation, Reem Al Hashimy

Honourable Ministers

Members of the Organising Committee for the Dubai World Expo

United Nations Resident Coordinator for the United Arab Emirates

My Fellow Panelists

Distinguished Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to thank Minister Reem Al Hashimy, for the invitation to participate in this important gathering as you welcome more than 200 nations and organisations to this historic World Expo. Let me also congratulate your country for this momentous milestone of hosting the World Exposition for the first time in the history of the Middle East, Africa and South Asia region.

It is just a little over half a decade since Heads of State and Government, Ministers and High Representatives, gathered at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) to adopt the New Urban Agenda. To ensure inclusivity, the adoption of the New Urban Agenda included the participation of subnational and local governments, parliamentarians, civil society, indigenous

peoples and local communities, the private sector, professionals and practitioners, the scientific and academic community, and other relevant stakeholders.

Out of the New Urban Agenda countries are expected to localize and implement the commitments outlined within this framework on the basis of each country's peculiar circumstances. Our country, South Africa, faces the new challenges arising from rapid urbanization foregrounded by a history of Apartheid whose pattern of development was the exclusion of the majority from cities through social and economic exclusion and spatial segregation. This means that our country has to implement the New Urban Agenda in cities that were designed to exclude the majority of South Africans.

Added to this unique domestic complexity, South Africa as the most industrialised economy in the African continent naturally attracts migrants from the surrounding countries in large numbers. These migrants who enter our country primarily for economic opportunities gravitate to our cities, whose human settlements infrastructure is already under pressure because it is severely inadequate for accommodating huge populations. Currently, Of the 1 billion global slum dwellers, 238 million are in Sub-Saharan Africa. Africa's population is projected to double between now and 2050 and two-thirds of this growth will be absorbed by urban areas. It is within this context that South Africa has formulated its national urban policies, urban legislation and regulations, urban planning and design.

Our policies were formulated within the context of South Africa's 1996 constitution, which protects the rights of all people in the country and affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom. More importantly, with regards to housing, our Constitution domesticated Article 25.1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by guaranteeing all our citizens' right to access adequate housing regardless of class, creed or economic status.

In line with the global commitment in SDG 11 to **Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable** and the sections in the New Urban Agenda which deal with informal settlements and slums, South Africa has placed informal settlement upgrading as a pivotal focal point for the creation of sustainable human settlements in urban centres. We have adopted the development of integrated human

settlements as a guiding policy response to address historical exclusionary spatial arrangements of the Apartheid era. This policy seeks to transform the spatial housing settlements in South Africa by creating more inclusive, denser, mixed-use urban areas.

Our lived experience indicates that the burden of social ills of informal settlements is most felt by women, girls and children where there is lack of sanitation facilities, health, education as well as recreational facilities. The UN Habitat III Pretoria Declaration on Informal Settlement Upgrading, signed in South Africa in 2016, recognises that informal settlements challenge must be tackled through an integrated approach to sustainable urban development - taking into account the national policy frameworks, legal, financial resources and spatial issues. Our country, through an inclusive process, has made tremendous progress in implementing this policy and our approach includes the following steps:

- a. We started by identifying and verifying informal settlements in the country gathering real-time data, monitoring the growth patterns, so that we could get a better understanding, and planning for, the extent of the challenge we are faced with. Presently, informal settlements are estimated to over 2600 informal settlements accommodating about 1.4 million households, according to Statistics South Africa estimates.
- b. We completed a baseline assessment of informal settlements whereby we defined variables for monitoring and evaluating informal settlements.
- c. We have established Provincial Forums on Upgrading of Informal Settlements in all 9 provinces of the country. The forums facilitate alignment of upgrading processes with all municipalities and monitor progress in implementation, as well as knowledge exchange with various stakeholders in each province.
- d. To entrench an understanding of informal settlement upgrading among practitioners and public representatives, we have developed a 13 module course called Introduction to Informal Settlement Upgrading that unpacks

the critical processes required for undertaking informal settlement upgrading.

- e. We are rolling out an intensive capacity development programme to all our provinces, municipalities, civic organisations and communities. Furthermore, we have undertaken activities to ensure that the modules are accredited and incorporated into our tertiary institutions.
- f. The majority of our informal settlements have access to services. Moreover, municipalities have implemented various methods for security of tenure, such as a Letter of Occupation to informal settlement dwellers. This affords the dweller the opportunity to engage in economic activity and entrenches government's commitment to dignity for all South Africans.
- g. We have established our Community of Practice to engage with our civic organisations and academia and share good practice, exchange knowledge, and disseminate information.

Our vision strives for the establishment of viable, socially and economically integrated communities, situated in areas that allow convenient access to economic opportunities, health, education and social amenities, and to which all South Africa's people will have access on a progressive basis.

We are learning that upgrading can have a profoundly positive effect on social cohesion, resilience, and safety, especially when there are targeted interventions to protect vulnerable women, youth, children, the elderly and disabled. We have also learned that when we involve the community in their own development, they respond and adapt more positively to change. Thus approach to Upgrading Informal Settlements Programme has evolved to entail extensive community participation and consultation in the provision of emergency basic services, permanent services, and security of tenure.

We acknowledge, however, that government cannot yet keep pace with the demand, and we are ever more aware that we need to create more partnerships to respond to the needs of nearly 2 million households living in informal settlements across South Africa. It is a national priority to respond systematically to the increasing rate of urbanisation. Thus the upgrading of 2200 informal settlements is a central objective of our urban management strategy.

With the participation of the private sector, civil society academia and other stakeholders, approximately 5 million housing opportunities have been created with government support in South Africa since 1994. We have also put other enabling policies that allows more housing options and choices to be continually developed to meet the needs of a rapidly urbanizing country.

Speaking at the launch of the “Cities Without Slums Action Plan” at the inaugural meeting of the Cities Alliance in Berlin, Germany in 1999, former president Nelson Mandela said that “Poverty reduction and upgrading of informal settlements will not be possible unless cities are productive and efficient, and capable of providing the poor with economic opportunities to build their assets and incomes.” This still rings true. We believe, therefore, we are on a correct path to transforming urban space in such a way that we address inequality, poverty, human rights, dignity, economic opportunities and social cohesion.

I thank you