

**SPEECH BY LN SISULU, MINISTER OF HUMAN SETTLEMENTS
ON THE OCCASION OF THE
2017 HUMAN SETTLEMENTS DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT
21 SEPTEMBER 2017
BIRCHWOOD CONFERENCE CENTRE, BOKSBURG**

Programme Director,
Deputy Minister for Human Settlements, Zou Kota-Fredericks,
Deputy Minister for Cooperative Governance, Andries Nel,
MEC Mashatile,
Chairperson of the National House of Traditional Leaders, Chief Mahlangu,
Chairperson and Members of the Portfolio Committee on Human Settlements,
Members of the Select Committee on Social Services,
All leaders of SALGA,
Member of the National Planning Commission,
Commissioners of the South African Human Rights Commission,
Chairperson and Members of the Finance and Fiscal Commission,
Representatives of the UN-Habitat and the African Union,
Director-General of Human Settlements, Mr Mbulelo Tshangana,
Senior Officials and Officials in the Public Service and related institutions,
Representatives and Activists within the Civil Society and Non-Government Sector
Organised Labor, Business and Private Sector representatives,
Leaders and Members of the Academic Fraternity,
Members of the Media,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to address you this morning on this occasion of our Human Settlements Development Summit. This Summit is convened out of consensus in the Human Settlements MinMec that there is a need to pause and reflect on the direction we are taking on Human Settlements Development.

We represented the sector at the Habitat III and on your behalf, we adopted the New Urban Agenda to guide our global village on best ways to manage urbanization and to meet changing and growing needs in a rapidly urbanizing world.

With the **weakening economic performance** and the resultant pressures on the fiscus it became necessary that we reflect as this collective on strategies to do more with dwindling public funding amidst growing needs for housing and human settlements development. There has to be a better way of doing things.

In light of the **increasing community agitation** notably in parts of the Gauteng province and other provinces, it then becomes clear that we need to take stock as this collective on how we can do better to limit the vulnerability and exposure of families.

With the occurrence of devastating disasters caused by ravaging fires in the Bitou, George and Knysna Municipal areas, the fires in Hout Bay Imizamoyethu informal settlements,

I have in the recent past had the occasion to meet with the construction sector to ask how we can do business faster and more efficiently. I hope that we can address this matter in our deliberations today.

We must shake off the complacency and repetition of the same methods that have not yielded any results. Let us seek to represent the best that the country has invested in.

This Summit represents our collective determination to meet the demands of rapidly growing and changing human settlements in South Africa and the sub-continent some of which have been outlined above. When the last of us leave this venue tomorrow, we must at least walk away with a renewed sense of deliberate purpose in the development of Human Settlements. We must each carry away a share of the moral, leadership, administrative and innovation burden to push our systems and programmes individually and collectively in the direction of sustainable human settlements development.

Our policy and programme priorities for human settlements are as follows:

- i. We are resolute in our determination to fully meet the Constitutional right of all citizens to have access to adequate housing prioritizing the indigent. We are convinced, and our policies and programmes bear testimony to this, that access to adequate housing is not only a basic human right, but it is also a socio-economic right upon which a functional and normal society is built.
- ii. In this current term of government the following apex programmes enjoy priority:
 - a. Title restoration and the eradication of the title deeds backlog to the bona fide residents.
 - b. Upgrade informal settlements and ensure improved living condition to over 650 000 households.
 - c. Increase the supply of affordable rental housing in priority restructuring zones.

- d. Increase the supply of affordable housing and finance for low to moderate income households. In essence, to support those households that earn above the housing subsidy band but still fall short of meaningfully qualifying for mortgage finance to meet their housing needs. We will ensure that government employees receive our attention.
- e. Rapidly overcome apartheid spatial development patterns and transform settlements spatial orientation through
 - i. Release of well-located State land for human settlements purposes.
 - ii. Implement Catalytic human settlements projects that are large-scale, multi-use, mixed-income in good locations with set expectations and time frames. So far **48** Catalytic projects that are government led are under way, or so I'm informed. At this point let me point out that I have taken a decision to add a unit of monitoring and evaluation to our structure so that on a daily basis I am informed of how many houses have been built, where we have problems.
 - iii. Implement a Master Spatial Plan to guide and inform investment choices in line with our spatial priorities and hierarchy.

Following my meetings with communities in Gauteng and Hout Bay, I still want to reaffirm what I said in the Budget Vote:

That meeting, for us, put into perspective the reality of our situation: that the provision of decent human settlements is an essential first step towards a solution to address most of our social ills. It is no longer only about a constitutional right, a Freedom Charter directive and the basis for dignity. It is now more than ever about the restoration of normalcy in society, where so many social ills thrive in conditions

of poverty, homelessness and squalor. That indeed the environment determines the consciousness of a people and that a decent environment creates a different perspective, a different affirmation of self.

The full extent of our work was brought down to its lowest level of abstraction. So this is what human settlements is about: provision of housing, provision of basic essentials so that every family should be settled in relative dignity, security, and access to opportunities that allow them to realise and fulfill the full potential, and the entire spectrum of that which would take us to a radically transformed society.

Programme Director, let me reassert some of the priorities outlined earlier in the year, and my previous budget vote. These should be well known to you by now.

We will be better served as government if spheres enter into delivery contracts towards planning, funding, budgeting for development of human settlements. Stated differently, I am persuaded that instead of insisting on the self-serving exercise demanding accreditation of municipalities to administer national and provincial housing programmes, more will get achieved if the spheres of government simply conclude inter-governmental contracts to enable delivery of human settlements. To this end I urge the Commissions to explore and adopt the principle of inter-governmental contracting and agree on roles and responsibilities, funding arrangement. The model of inter-governmental contracting will replace the current accreditation practice which is one-sided and seeks only to decapitate housing functions from Provinces with little regard to what becomes of the Provincial government post the migration of the housing function.

Further more, Mayors will be required to attend at least two MinMecs a year – this will mean that we are all moving at the same pace in the same direction.

Programme Director, this summit is convened voluntarily by ourselves, not because we are uncertain of what our responsibilities, collectively and severally, are, but instead, to mark a turning point in our journey of developing human settlements. We are determined to do more. Our people expect and deserve more from us. Hence, we are poised to exceed our past performance informed and guided by the collective wisdom assembled here.

At this point I wish to invite all responsible to ensure that every indigent family who is in need of a house registers or updates their details on the National Housing Needs Register, or that you assist them to do that. Ensure that at all times you understand that our fully subsidized houses are for indigent families, child-headed households and people living with vulnerabilities. We have in the past ourselves flouted this policy creating a great deal of confusion in our people. We must take every step to rectify and clarify the message. We have a number of other options for various other people in need.

In this way we will be able to ensure that the people on our Needs Register have passed the needs test and therefore have as comprehensive as Register as possible. So far we are pleased to announce that to date **2.1 million** households have registered their housing needs on the NHNR and in so doing they help us in planning adequately to support their housing projects. As soon as we have cleaned it up we will make it public.

MECs in each province will ensure the rollout of the programme for each family in each municipality to be able to contact the facility for the needs register. We have now assembled a team consisting of the National Department, the CSIR, Statistics South Africa, Home Affairs, and Department of Labour to ensure that the Housing Needs Register is user-friendly and accessible through various technology options of cellphone, web-sites, and contact points.

At the end of the day, this Summit offers opportunity for us together to:

- i. Assess if we are still on the right track.
- ii. Assure every family that we are working around the clock in helping to support them to meet their housing needs.
- iii. Adopt a framework for up-scaling the use and application of innovation and alternative technologies to empower communities even as we develop human settlements.
- iv. Enter into a compact on the management of urbanization as well as spatial development governance for human settlements.

I hope that this will be a productive meeting. The next one will be a report from the construction industry.

I thank you