



**MINISTRY
HUMAN SETTLEMENTS
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**REMARKS BY THE MINISTER OF HUMAN SETTLEMENTS, MMAMOLOKO KUBAYI,
NGO SUMMIT, BIRCHWOOD HOTEL, KEMPTON PARK, 30 NOVEMBER 2023**

Programme Director

MEC of COGSTA Limpopo, Mr Basikop Makamu

President of SALGA, Cllr Bheki Stofile

Chairpersons of Boards of Human Settlements Entities

Representatives of our sister Departments

Representatives of our Chapter 9 Institution

Members of the Ministerial Advisory Panel

Leaders of NGOs and CSOs present

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning

Welcome to the Human Settlements Non-Governmental and Civil Society Organizations Summit. We convened the Summit under the theme: *“strengthening partnerships to deliver better, safer and secure sustainable human settlements”*.

I wish to quote Tata Madiba when he said: “As future leaders of this country, your challenge is to foster a nation in which all people, irrespective of the race, colour, sex, religion or creed, can assert social cohesion fully. Mindful of your own challenges, you

must continue to promote the principle of relentless freedom and democracy, as it is the foundation upon which issues of human rights are ingrained”.

It is not further from the truth to assume that the main reason we are all gathered here today is that we are motivated by the desire to serve the people of South Africa, especially the poor and the vulnerable in our respective roles and responsibilities. We wake up every day and ask ourselves the question: what is it that we can do today to make the lives of those we serve better? It does not get easier as poverty and unemployment in our country remain high and community needs are on the increase, but it is worthy cause to pursue. We commend you as NGOs and CSOs for the good work that you do and taking the road less travelled and most of the time with limited resources

But today I believe we are gathered here to respond to a different question, which is: how best can we partner and collaborate so that together our efforts can make a bigger and meaningful impact in the communities that we serve? And while answering that question, we will also have to discuss the areas in which we can partner to deliver a better service to communities.

I am aware that as government, we don't always act or do things in a way that finds favour with yourselves as non-governmental and civil society organisations. At times, when you felt your message to government was falling on deaf ears, you have had to use the courts as an avenue through which you could make your voices heard.

It is unfortunate that government and NGOs and CSOs, while seeking to achieve the same goal, have to interact through the courts on matters of human rights and basic service delivery issues. Overall, NGOs and CSOs have done a sterling job in holding government accountable. I wish to assure you that as government, our actions are driven by the desire to change our society for the better. This desire, which I believe we all share, should act as a centripetal force that brings us closer together to collaborate and engage constructively in a manner that reduces litigation.

The demand for adequate housing is still huge and it includes households in informal settlements and backyard shacks. These households are dependent on the intervention of government for housing. Just over 2.3 million people have registered in the National

Housing Needs Register of the Department of Human Settlements and are still to be assisted.

The human settlements sector has delivered over 4 million housing opportunities made up of stand-alone houses and units in multiple storey/multi-unit buildings by 2022. In addition, just under 376 000 Enhanced Extended Discount Benefit Scheme (EEDBS) subsidies were granted and title deeds transferred to qualifying occupants of the pre-1994 government rental houses to promote home ownership. Provinces and municipalities have also reported the delivery of over 200 thousand serviced sites that have been completed by end February 2022.

Census 2022, published by Statistics South Africa, reported that “The number of households who reside in informal dwellings has declined from 13,6% in 2011 to 8,1% in 2022;” and that “households residing in formal dwelling units increased to 88,5%, an increase from the 65,1% recorded in 1996.” The decrease in the number of informal dwellings has been happening despite the fact that we have seen a marked increase in the number of informal settlements. This means that the provision of formal housing is increasing at a faster rate than that of informal settlements.

I mention these achievements not so much to gloat about our victories but as to highlight the housing challenge that we still face as a country. Even though we have made these strides, which are significant, we are still faced with a rising housing demand as I have already mentioned.

Government alone cannot be able to resolve all these housing challenges. We believe that it is important that civil society and community-based organizations are not excluded from the development and review of human settlements policy, and they should not be excluded from being service-delivery agents in the implementation of sustainable and integrated human settlements programmes. NGOs and CSOs have the immense potential to contribute to the acceleration and delivery sustainable and integrated human settlements to the vulnerable groups in society. This Summit provides an important opportunity for us to reflect on where we have come from and where we still need to go.

We firmly believe that community driven programmes cannot be only about housing and top structures but must also ensure participative planning and engagement with housing support. The approach must be incremental with the full range of functions ultimately delivered, including community facilities.

We also commend the long history of community-based organisations in advocating for people centred and community driven approaches to development. These organisations have played an important role in facilitating community participation in the delivery of sustainable integrated human settlements. We also support the idea of incremental planning and tenure arrangements which are critical, not only for incremental upgrading of informal settlements but also for emergency relocation areas and for serviced land release. There are more opportunities for partnership and we should define how to increase this role as much as we do for business communities. Advocate, not only for these organisations to do voluntary work, but be recognised and contracted to generate income, as this will contribute to their sustainability.

The growth of unplanned human settlements, together with the rising number of housing emergencies in many of our communities, has often resulted in responses which are ad hoc and highly conflictual. Here we find increasing numbers of fire-, poverty-, flood- and climate change-related instances, where people living in these settlements often lose their possessions and temporary arrangements must be made to accommodate these families. And in such areas, the theft of electricity, water outages and sanitation blockages become the norm. In these cases, neighbouring communities find themselves in conflict with each other over the non-enforcement of basic planning standards, by-laws and the like. At the same time, there is growing inequality, where land in well-located parts of the city is becoming more expensive. The net result of this is spatial exclusion, which remains one of the major challenges.

One result of inner-city gentrification is that the poor and vulnerable are shut out and forced to live in the periphery of the city, far away from livelihood opportunities. This reinforces apartheid spatial planning legacies. There is an urgent need for both the delivery of a range of human settlements to be urgently provided in places which densify the cities and provide access to human settlements possibilities that bring work-seekers

and workers closer to work opportunities. There must also be consistent and ongoing enforcement of basic health and safety standards and bylaws to ensure that people do not live in unsafe spaces. Our collaboration in this area of work is an absolute necessity.

The NGO and SCO sector in rural housing, assists planners and implementers in rural developmental plans. They have assisted in mobilizing the local resources to be used for development. The sector helps in building a self-reliant and sustainable society. Overall, in many areas, this sector plays the role of mediator between people and government. There has been ongoing collaboration between Human Settlements Departments at all three spheres of government in the above and other areas. I have received a call to increase and intensify the provision of our services through co-operatives and community-based organisation. Some have called for a quota allocation in this regard.

I must highlight, that this is something I am prepared to support and drive as long as we all understand that we use public funds and every cent has to be accounted for and that we must comply with requirements as per procurement process and regulations - such as tax certificates, audited financial records etc.

Academia, students and their research and outreach initiatives have also been actively involved in progress which has contributed to the evolution of a human settlements system, meeting the demands of the constitution. This research often includes piloting alternative models to service delivery that are people centred. However, there has not been a consistent means through which academics and built environment professionals working in the human settlements space, have engaged with government and CSOs/service-delivery NGOs. In these two days, we must find ways in which we can create a new functional ecosystem.

Yesterday, Cabinet approved the White Paper Policy on Human Settlements for public consultation. In the coming days, I will gazette the policy paper, so that we can receive written comments. Our intention is to have the finally approved policy for implementation from the new financial year. The Approval by Cabinet of the White paper policy on human settlements, marks a shift from the 1996 White Paper Policy that not only focuses on housing but also ensuring that as we build houses, we include social amenities with access to basic services. The significance of the revised White Paper is that it introduces

a wide variety of initiatives such as the revision of the legislation, the revision of the housing code, improving the roles and responsibilities of all spheres of government in the human settlements value chain, concretising an all-of-society approach in strengthening partnerships, and focused approach on building resources. The highlights of the revised White Paper will be presented so that it can also inform the discussions in the next two days.

The context of our environment has changed with the effects of climate change being felt and families being displaced, the advancement of technologies which have introduced new building technologies such as the 3D printing house that was launched and showcased by University of Johannesburg. Furthermore, while these new challenges are felt, our economy is not performing well. As a result, we have a constrained fiscal environment to operate from. This is the context in which we are introducing our White Paper Policy.

Most importantly, the focus areas of the Summit, represented in the Panels, will help us to get a better appreciation of how partnerships between government and non-governmental structures can be improved in areas where there are policy or implementation gaps.

The focus for the summit includes the following areas:

- Legal and human rights imperatives for human settlements.
- The role of women, youth and people with disabilities in human settlements as economic participants and beneficiaries.
- Ensuring a capable and ethical public service is in place to respond to challenges of human settlements.
- Improving advocacy and partnerships to enhance building better, safer and secure cities and communities.
- To further develop collaborative stakeholder networks with the NGOs, CSOs and advocacy groups involved in the human settlements sector.

In this Summit and over the next few months as we discuss the draft White Paper, I hope we will operate not in a spirit of government versus non-government, but in a collaborative

spirit to find ways in which human settlements are delivered for all in ways that contribute to decreasing inequality, poverty and unemployment. Working together we can achieve what is in the Freedom Charter that there can be houses, security and comfort.

I wish you well in your deliberations in the next two days.

I thank you.