

**CLOSING REMARKS BY THE MINISTER OF HUMAN SETTLEMENTS,
MS.THEMBISILE SIMELANE, MP, DURING THE OCCASION OF THE
NATIONAL URBAN FORUM 2025, HELD AT INTERNATIONAL
CONVENTION CENTRE, DURBAN**

22 AUGUST 2025

Programme Director

Deputy Ministers

Mayors

Councillors

International partners

Ladies and gentlemen

It is my distinct honour and privilege to render closing remarks at this important national engagement forum, this was indeed a strategic platform of exchanging views anchored on frank and honest conversations. In the past two days you have invested your energies to taking a deep dive on critical issues affecting and influencing not only government plans, policies, and programmes, but our daily realities in managing urbanisation and challenges in our human settlements.

Ladies and gentlemen, I wish to remind you that, the National Urban Forum is not a totally new phenomenon in our country. Some of you may recall that in the 1990s, we witnessed the establishment of the National Housing Forum (NHF) which was the driving force behind developing

South Africa's 1994 Housing Policy. The NHF included a multi-party negotiating body comprised of representatives from government, civil society, political parties, and the private sector. The culmination of the NHF was the Botshabelo Housing Accord and draft 1994 White Paper on Housing.

Furthermore, the National Development Plan, calls on all South Africans in all sectors of society to contribute to the national development and transformation of our country. It is, therefore, critically important to maintain the National Urban Forum as an Annual Platform for a National Conversation on issues and realities lived by our people in urban and rural spaces of human settlements. We ought to normalise these kinds of national engagements in order for all of us to contribute to mutual understanding and discussion of the future of our villages, towns, and cities. To achieve this, we need the civil society organisations; national, provincial, and local governments, working together with the private sector and international partners building sustainable partnerships for the development our country.

It is, therefore, against the above realisation that, the 2025 edition of the National Urban Forum, needed to adopt an broader and even more inclusive approach in ensuring that no stakeholder and no level of government is left out from participating in this platform.

The sharing of the stage and experiences with our international partners immensely enriched our discussion as national partners. We have surely benefitted from their experiences and expertise. We will incorporate the

lessons learned in our national and local processes and systems to build more sustainable and resilient cities and human settlements. I wish to express our deepest appreciation to them.

The outcomes of this forum, as contained in the Declaration, should not just be another document that will be referenced in our annual reports and cited in academic studies, or perhaps used by our critics to take a dim view on our collective ability to deliver, all of us gathered here, have a proportionate responsibility to ensure that we deliver on our commitments, and that we succeed in delivering a better life and future for generations to come.

It is also important to highlight the fact that, as this generation, we have a responsibility to deliver on the promises made by the founding leaders of our maturing democracy, which in a nutshell, means delivering a better life for all our people, living no one and no place behind.

I thank you for your attention.