

SPEAKING NOTES BY HUMAN SETTLEMENTS DEPUTY MINISTER ZOU KOTA-FREDERICKS AT THE SOUTH AFRICA NEDERLANDS RESEARCH PROGRAMME ON ALTERNATIVES IN DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE, DURBAN, 25-27 JULY 2013

Programme Director;

MEC for Human Settlements Ravi Pillay;

SANPAD CEO Dr Anshu Padayachee

Executive Mayor of eThekweni Municipality James Nxumalo;

Members of the Executive Council and MPLs;

Councillors;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

All protocol observed.

This conference comes at a time when our country, South Africa and the world, is facing enormous challenges with regard to human settlement issues which, among other things, include dealing with the challenges of growing informal settlements, urban renewal, deepening poverty, inequality and joblessness.

We meet here today to look, amongst other things, at the nature of the challenges we face, identify the root causes and consider some of the various innovations that our governments, in partnership with communities and the private sector, can

implement as new ways or methods to deal with the challenges we face in the human settlements sector.

Instructed by the conference theme, “**Rethinking Sustainable Livelihoods**”, we are here to jointly respond to the pressing needs encountered by our communities who continue to live in squalor in and around our urban centres, in informal settlements.

The ultimate objective of this government is to eradicate slums and thus discontinue the pervasive homelessness, reduce inequality and poverty and to create sustainable livelihoods for all South Africans, irrespective of race, gender or geographical location.

Programme Director, a few weeks ago, the Department of Human Settlements convened a Summit in Khayelitsha, Cape Town, to look at this persistent problem of informal settlements in our country.

At the conference we acknowledged that:

- We have since 1994, housed over 11 million people through the government’s housing programme;
- Built over 3 million houses;

- Pioneered new forms of integrated development projects and produced new housing typologies; and
- Most importantly, we have made an enormous difference to the lives of families that now live in their own homes.

But we also acknowledged that we must recognise the scale of the demographic and economic challenges that continue to hinder our objective of creating sustainable human settlements for all.

Just to give you an idea of the challenge we are facing:

- The Census 2011 results show that we have over 1.2 million households in our country still living in informal settlements and this shows an increase of almost 20% since 1996.
- The highest concentrations of informal settlements lie in the metropolitan areas, particularly in Gauteng and Western Cape, which are also facing the largest migrations from poorer provinces.
- Even here in KwaZulu-Natal, urban centres such as the eThekweni Metro, are hit hard by the rural-urban migration problem.

- Demographic growth and migration is also driving the growth of informal settlements, which today number almost 2 700, compared to 300 in 1994.
- Despite steady increases in the housing subsidy, especially since 2004, actual delivery of houses has declined, largely due to building costs, lack of suitable well-located land and rising land prices.
- Our need for cheaper land to offset this erosion of subsidy value has meant we tend to locate our new housing projects at the edge of cities and townships, pushing the poor further away from employment opportunities and amenities.

These, as highlighted in the 2011 Census Report, are just few of the challenges that we are facing today. The world is facing similar challenges.

I am certain that some of our guests here, especially the researchers and people who know South Africa and have been to countries like India and Brazil will concur that we are facing a daunting, but not insurmountable challenge.

Programme Director, it is my view that part of the innovations that we need to introduce in dealing with these problems, should include consistent engagements with communities. Inclusivity is key, a non-negotiable. **Nothing for us, without us!!!**

The new approach also will have to include other important role players in our communities such as community based organisations and the business community.

Our new approach means we will build partnerships with communities, and to give them “voice and choice” in the design and construction of settlements that build sustainable livelihoods and can fulfil their needs.

I do believe, fellow delegates that working with these community structures will help in letting beneficiaries have a full say and be able to take decisions on projects that are meant for their upliftment.

The challenge previously has been that, over the years, we have had to standardise our approach to producing housing for the poor on a mass scale. While this has produced a huge number of houses, it has also reduced our engagement with the poor to dealing with them as numbers of beneficiaries.

This raises the crucial question of “who provides and who decides”, and how we put issues of greater involvement and accountability into practice.

Delegates at the Informal Settlements Summit in Cape Town agreed that:

- There was a need by all stakeholders to commit to finding innovative and sustainable developmental approaches that will help address the challenge of homelessness.
- There was a need to strength partnerships and build trust with communities by getting more people involved in projects.
- It was also emphasized that community involvement in the building of houses should always be undertaken as a joint venture seeking to cement the ethos of working together.
- And that there’s a need for a long term approach in dealing with the creation of sustainable human settlements as outlined in the National Development Plan.
- Creating renewed awareness on the fresh approach that seeks to foster a solid working relationship with affected communities was also re-emphasised.

As Government, we have set the Outcome 8 Delivery Agreement target of providing 400 000 households in well-located informal settlements with basic services and secure tenure. We have directed that the planning and implementation of these projects should be carried out with the participation of the affected communities.

We have targeted 45 municipalities as priorities in developing informal settlement upgrading programmes, and have agreed with the Presidency that the 1 800 informal settlements that they contain should all have detailed project plans – and that these plans should be produced through participatory processes.

Billions of rands have been set aside by the Department of Human Settlements to address specific human settlements infrastructure challenges faced by our municipalities. In this current financial year, R16, 7 billion has been set aside for the Human Settlements Development Grant while R9 billion goes directly to the country's metropolitan municipalities for Urban Settlements Development Grant. There is also the Municipal Infrastructure Grant that is dispensed by the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs.

Programme Director, ladies and gentlemen, these are resources at our disposal that are meant to address infrastructure challenges within our communities. In my view, this is capital that at our disposal that we must begin to use to make sure that, as we deliver basic services, communities also benefit through skills empowerment and job opportunities that the rollout creates.

Partners such as the South African Netherlands Research Programme on Alternative Development, our institutions of higher learning and other research institutions are there for us to tap into as we grapple with these challenges. Socially relevant research is what is going to assist us think out of the box as we seek to achieve our historical mission.

I am optimistic that all the presentations that are still to be made at this conference would help us identify more innovative ways to improve human settlements and totally eradicate slums and poverty.

I thank you