

**SPEECH BY HUMAN SETTLEMENTS DEPUTY MINISTER ZOU KOTA-FREDERICKS AT THE LAUNCH OF THE NATIONAL FORUM ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT
BIRCHWOOD HOTEL
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Ladies and gentlemen;

We are launching the National Forum of Human Settlements and Urban Development as the country is gearing itself for major celebrations, 20 Years of Democracy and Freedom next year.

It is however important for us to reflect on where we come from as a country and as a sector as we gather here to write a very important chapter in the body of knowledge pertaining to human settlements and urban planning.

South Africa's housing policy has its roots in National Housing Forum, a multi-stakeholder body that consisted of civil society, business, political parties, business, labour and the then apartheid government, in the early 1990s.

This culminated into the Botshabelo Accord, where democratic South Africa's first Housing Minister, Joe Slovo, convened all parties to commit them to address the plight of millions left without houses by successive apartheid regimes.

While the Botshabelo Accord represented a popular expression of intent, the substance and full policy text appeared in the White Paper on Housing that was gazette for comment in December 1994.

Government's vision of a *Nation Housed in Sustainable Human Settlements* as spelt out in the White Paper was to be achieved by establishing and facilitating, in collaboration with all stakeholders, a sustainable housing delivery process that provided equitable access to adequate housing for everyone.

Circumstances at the time dictated that government provide housing en masse, setting itself a target of providing what former Housing Minister Sankie Mthembi-

Mahanyele called as “mammoth task” of building one million housing units within five years.

However, shortcomings were soon identified with this housing programme. One of them being that, we were chasing numbers instead of building sustainable human settlements and our programmes continued to perpetuate the apartheid spatial planning in that we were not integrating communities.

CHANGING STRATEGY

The Comprehensive Plan for the Development of Sustainable Human Settlements (Breaking New Ground) approved in 2004 represented a paradigm shift for the national housing programme.

Government shifted its development focus towards addressing settlement inefficiencies through the development of integrated human settlements which will contribute towards more compact settlement form and provide a range of housing and social economic opportunities.

The housing we were building prior to the adoption of the BNG Policy focused primarily on the development of subsidised housing and did not provide much scope for area wide settlement planning and the integration of a range of housing types and price categories, together with commercial and social amenities in a project.

As the name suggests, the Comprehensive Plan for the Development of Sustainable Human Settlements provides a tool to plan and develop integrated settlements that include all the necessary land uses and housing types and price categories to become a truly integrated community.

The programme in particular provides for planning and developing an integrated project, providing for the housing, social and economic needs of different income categories.

FROM HOUSING TO HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

The 1976 United Nations Habitat Conference held in Vancouver, Canada, has played in a leading role in defining human settlements. It resolved that “...the condition of human settlements largely determine the quality of life, the improvement of which is the prerequisite for the full satisfaction of basic needs such as employment, housing, health services, education and recreation...”

At the Botshabelo Accord, Minister Slovo had this to say:

“Government strives for the establishment of viable, socially and economically integrated communities which are situated in areas allowing convenient access to economic opportunities, health, educational and social amenities and within which South Africa’s people will have access on a progressive basis to: a permanent residential structure with secure tenure, ensuring privacy and providing adequate protection against the elements; portable water and adequate sanitary facilities including waste disposal and domestic electricity supply.”

In his 2009 inaugural State of the Nation Address in the National Assembly, President Jacob Zuma, on changing the Ministry of Housing into that of Human Settlements said:

“We will proceed from the understanding that Human Settlements is not just about building houses. It is about transforming our cities and towns and building cohesive, sustainable and caring communities with closer access to work and social amenities including sport and recreation facilities”.

Sustainable human settlements, as contained the BNG Policy, refers to well-managed entities in which economic growth and social development are in balance with the carrying capacity of the natural systems on which they depend for their existence and result in sustainable development, wealth creation, poverty alleviation and equity.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have come a long way since 1994.

What this demonstrates is the centrality of human settlements in everything that we do as we seek to reverse the impact of apartheid in the socio-economic landscape of our country, the South Africa we all love.

It is about the people after all.

If successive apartheid regimes sought to separate and dehumanise us through racially segregated dormitory townships, then it is the responsibility of the Department of Human Settlements to humanise us.

This requires a co-ordinated approach to planning and development by all sector departments and spheres of government involved. What this means is that, in this day and age, it is unacceptable to build houses without schools, clinics, police stations, recreational facilities, proper public transport system and closer to places of work.

Present and future inhabitants of sustainable human settlements, located both in urban and rural areas, must live in a safe and a secure environment.

Sustainable human settlements are supportive of the communities, thus contributing towards greater social cohesion, social crime prevention, moral regeneration, support for national heritage, recognition and support of indigenous knowledge systems, and the ongoing extension of land rights.

In our collective endeavour to build such inclusive urban spaces and settlement areas, our Integrated Urban Development Framework will be a key policy lever. This Framework is a policy process and framework to understand why urban divides remain stubbornly in place, with an eye on promoting effective instruments to change this legacy and promote resilient and inclusive urban settlements.

The IUDF also takes its cue from the 'Urban Futures' vision set out in the NDP. In this section the NDP asserts 'The main challenge in planning for urban areas is to enable job creation linked to sustainable livelihoods and to establish well-performing human settlements. This should be at the heart of what municipalities do and how they function'.

Indeed, planning and project implementation takes place at a municipal level. We will use our grants like the Urban Settlements Development Grant to make sure that there is an integrated project approach towards national socio-economic development.

As a Department, we are committed to play this co-ordinating role to make sure that this vision is achieved as envisaged in the National Development Plan.

THE NATIONAL FORUM ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS AND URBAN FORUM

Programme Director;
Ladies and gentlemen,

This country has a rich history and experience in bringing together stakeholders in shaping its future as illustrated by the National Housing Forum and the Botshabelo Accord.

The launch of the National Forum on Human Settlements and Urban Development is a continuation of that tradition.

The Forum offers South Africans an opportunity to engage in conversations meant to refine and improve our own policies such as the Green Paper on Human Settlements which seeks to revise the Housing Act.

Most importantly, it offers us an opportunity to make sure that that these policy debates on human settlements and urban planning find their rightful place in the development of our country and in such multilateral institutions as the UN.

HABITAT III in 2016 will be the major United Nations Conference related to human settlements and urbanisation and seeks to set the agenda for the 21st Century, building on the very successful 1976 and 1996 Conferences.

It seeks to develop and adopt the “New Urban Agenda” to deal with challenges confronting developing and developed countries on the increasingly important

role of cities in global issues such as climate change, disasters, economic development and human rights.

THE URBAN/RURAL DIVIDE

Ladies and gentlemen, our improved understanding of the interface between rural and urban areas is critical in the formulation of national poverty reduction strategies particularly in our context where rapid urbanisation and rural-urban disparities co-exist.

Likewise, a better understanding of rural-urban linkages matters as it provides the basis for greater understanding of the social and economic linkages between rural and urban areas as well as policy measures that can improve the well-being of both urban and rural inhabitants.

Focusing on linkages between rural and urban areas can help us reframe our understanding of how development occurs in these areas. It can also help us frame our terminology in ways that do not reinforce separateness, stereotypes, and mislead policy development and analysis.

Overall, urban-rural linkages highlight that development planners and policy makers must increasingly think of the impact of their development interventions in ways that are more integrated and emphasize the importance of analyzing rural and urban economies as a united whole.

Indeed, there is a need for more policies that recognize these linkages as well as how rural and urban poverty are interlinked. Such policies can improve the way in which we deal with processes of impoverishment and the way in which we frame our responses to address them.

In conclusion,

This Forum has to carry forward the resolutions of the 2011 Vision 2030 Human Settlements Indaba held in Port Elizabeth and build on the Social Contract we entered into in 2005 and reconfirmed in 2009. The National Housing Forum gave rise to the Botshabelo Accord and the 1994 Housing White Paper, the Social Contract gave rise to the Comprehensive Plan for Sustainable Human Settlements.

Now the National Forum on Human Settlements and Urban Development will give rise to the Integrated Urban Development Framework and a new Green Paper on Human Settlements.

We have an opportunity here to enhance the Vision 2030 as articulated in the National Development Plan and develop concrete programmes and projects that result in real outcomes.

This is an opportunity not to be missed.

I thank you.