



MINISTRY
HUMAN SETTLEMENTS
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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**Speech by Human Settlements Minister, Mr
Tokyo Sexwale, on the occasion of the
establishment of the Chair for Education in
Human Settlements Development
Management at the Nelson Mandela
Metropolitan University - 19 March 2013.**

Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen.

It is edifying on this very special occasion, taking place at this institution of higher learning, to be with you all today. This school, the Nelson

Mandela Metropolitan University, now no longer carries the name of Elizabeth but that of Nelson, who is none other than the iconic founding father of our nation and democracy - Rolihlahla Mandela.

Many universities across the globe have recognized Madiba in one way or another and awarded him with more than a 120 Honorary Degrees, fellowships and diplomas. They have also named lecture theatres and halls after him including beautiful varsity botanical gardens. However, thus far, there is only one university which carries his name – this is it! We from the Ministry and the Department of Human Settlements are truly happy to be here today at Mandela's University as your partners.

This partnership is a tri-partite affair. It includes the Ministry and Department of Higher Education and Training, the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University and the Ministry and Department of Human Settlements. Today's occasion marks the culmination of efforts by several players for the realization and establishment of a special chair – the Chair for Education in Human Settlements Development Management.

This varsity is currently already endowed with several research chairs, however, this is important. The Human Settlements Education Chair introduces a new scholastic and academic dimension to this institution. This is a unique first and we are proud to be your associates.

It is common place, understandably so, for a perception to permeate the public psyche that Human Settlements, essentially encompassing residential housing, is merely about digging soil, mixing concrete, brick and mortar, dirty overalls of construction workers who are known for the saying: ***thatha-lapha-beka lapha-xova-lodaka wena!*** Therefore the question would be: why have the University gurus, professors and the like brought this mundane subject of housing into the realm of sophisticated academic faculties?

Humankind since time immemorial has always had the quest to satisfy three basic human needs: food, clothing and ***shelter***. Regrettably, across the world, the struggle to achieve these fundamentals remains elusive to many millions

of people out of the total population of humanity's seven billion inhabitants.

In two days time, our country will be celebrating Human Rights Day. The right to shelter in South Africa has its historical and philosophical genesis encapsulated in the now celebrated 1955 Kliptown manifesto of liberation – the Freedom Charter. In respect of decent human settlements it declares as follows:

“There shall be housing, security and comfort!

All people shall have the right to live where they choose, to be decently housed and bring up their families in comfort and security. Unused housing space shall be made available to the people. Rent and

prices shall be lowered... Slums shall be demolished and new suburbs built where all have transport, roads, lighting, playing fields, crèches and social centers. The aged, the orphans, the disabled and the sick shall be cared for by the state. Rest, leisure and recreation shall be the right of all. Fenced locations and ghettos shall be abolished and laws which break up families shall be repealed.”

The 1976 United Nations Habitat Conference held in Vancouver, Canada, echoed this material statement by resolving 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...***”

It is noteworthy that this year the Department of Human Settlements will be hosting the United Nations Habitat Conference in South Africa where delegates from across the world will exchange better ideas on this burning question.

To give effect to the housing demands of the Freedom Charter, our country's Constitution, the supreme law of the land, directs that:

“Everyone has the right to access to adequate housing and that the state must take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to achieve the progressive realization of this right.”

The primary responsibility of achieving this right lies with the Department of Human Settlements.

In 1995, our first Minister of Housing, Joe Slovo, convened a special housing conference at Botshabelo, Bloemfontein involving all relevant stakeholders – government, labour, business and civil society - which resulted in the Botshabelo Accord. At that conference he declared that:

“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 faculties”.

It is insightful to recognize the critical role played by many thinkers, including common people throughout history around the question of decent shelter for all. One of the ground breaking theoretical expositions is attributable to a German social scientist, a scholar, a consummate researcher, a philosopher and businessman - Frederick Engels.

Also known as an esteemed collaborator of Professor Karl Marx, another German philosopher and economist, he published in 1844 his now celebrated work entitled: ***The condition of the Working Class in England***, which provides a detailed description and analysis of the appalling conditions of the working people in Manchester where his family's factories were located.

In another special contribution to the discourse on the need for public housing policies called: ***The Housing Question***, Engels pointed out that, ***“the way in which the vast mass of the poor are treated by modern society is truly scandalous, they are herded into great cities where they breathe a fouler air than in the country side which they have left...How is it that the poorer classes can remain healthy and have a reasonable expectation of life under such conditions? What can one expect but that they should suffer from continual outbreaks of epidemics and an excessively low expectation of life?”***

These questions which were posed during the height of industrialization in Europe and the Americas, are still being asked today across the world. Certainly without doubt these questions

are relevant in our country in the current situation with a huge housing backlog of around 12 million persons.

Challenges of Housing in South Africa

Housing is not a theoretical equation, it is not something abstract, it is a crying pain for many people in our country. The utilization of apartheid spatial planning for purposes of entrenching colour-bar segregation, achieved the evil objective of dehumanizing society by creating racialized residential areas.

Therefore the biggest challenge confronting the Department is to root out this scourge, and to establish deracialised residential spaces in villages, suburbs, towns and cities of our

country, where various types of housing products – rural stand alones, densified urban housing development, clusters, flats, rental stock and densified high rise units are constructed, keeping in mind good quality products and affordability. In a word, the humanization of Human Settlements.

There is no way that the Johannesburg - SOWETO, Pretoria-Mamelodi, Durban-Mlazi, Cape Town-Kayelitsha, Port Elisabeth-New Brighton situations, to name a few, can be perpetuated. Even worse so this unique housing challenge in South Africa is grossly compounded by the phenomenal growth of informal settlements. These are essentially shanty towns and slums which are littered across all provinces particularly around the more affluent Metros and municipalities. This therefore results in a

situation of the classic undesirable urbanization which is driven less by economic growth and more by the rural-urban migration of the poor and jobless.

Effectively therefore, we are confronted with a crisis of an internal refugee-like situation of people who are driven by poverty from the country side which is further complicated by the continuous inflow of poor and jobless migrants and real refugees from other parts of the world, particularly from fellow African countries.

The number of informal settlements is growing uncontrollably. Likewise, the populations inside these ghettos is increasing rapidly. This imposes increased service delivery pressure upon resources like electricity, water, sanitation, health services and housing, all of which were

never budgeted for by the perceived affluent municipalities. Let alone issues regarding crime prevention, socio-economic and political stability.

It stands to reason therefore that somewhere, somehow, someday something must give as evidenced by the recent sporadic, unacceptable, xenophobic incidents, to say nothing about the growing discontent in respect of service delivery protests many of which are increasingly turning violent.

Limited government budgets by themselves are not the solution. A much more comprehensive approach is required as captured in the new National Development Plan underpinned by the government strategy around the Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Commission. The

objective of this method is the comprehensive and strategic, integrated projects-approach towards national socio-economic development. The NDP further highlights the need to professionalize the public service including the creation of capacity and competency particularly at local government level.

At this point the following must be emphasized: it is totally unacceptable to have unspent funds provided by the national department to provinces and or municipalities only for such funds to be taken back in terms of legislation due to the failure on the part of these spheres of government to spend such funds optimally.

Let me make it abundantly clear that national government is not galloping to make sure that funds are spent without due regard to

governance. Such conduct can easily result in the negative practice of fiscal dumping and corruption. Our responsibility is to prevent that to avoid a growing wrong perception – both in the country and internationally – that South Africa is slowly or fast becoming a kleptocratic state.

At the same time, recognition ought to be given to delivery capacity issues such as the lack of bulk services on the ground which confront a number of provinces and municipalities. Yet again, it would be completely irresponsible on the part of anybody at national government to pursue delivery for its own sake regardless of how poor the quality of products is - merely to seek applause for questionable deliverables on the ground.

Consequently, at human settlements department we are very wary of simply flushing down hard earned taxpayer's money in pit latrines and uncovered toilets to chase numbers while poverty is starring people in the eye. We do not accept countenance with such approach.

The developmental approach correctly advocated in the NDP hinges upon an economy that is performing optimally as opposed to the current low GDP economic growth rate percentage and the unacceptably high unemployment figures particularly amongst young people. Nevertheless it is within such an integrated approach that Human Settlements Vision 2030, with an emphasis on housing for the youth, who are future potential home owners, is situated.

The NDP is our guiding beacon. It provides our country in the highly challenging global markets with a fighting chance to compete.

Bachelor of Human Settlements Development Degree

The objective of sketching all this, all-be-it briefly, before this gathering in respect of Human Settlements environment within the country is because as your new partners, with a new Human Settlements Chair now established here at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, we are in search of good ideas. A University is more than a place of learning, it also offers space for thinkers. It is for the generation of ideas. Its universality is characterized by

discussions and debates, discourses and dialogues, all aimed at weighing and analyzing options to find solutions.

The cherry on the cake, up and above the establishment of the Human Settlements Chair at this University, is the introduction of a degree of Bachelor of Human Settlements Development Management. This creates academic opportunities, beyond debates and discussions for serious formal scholarly discourse, research, specialist knowledge skills and development for sustainable Human Settlements in South Africa. It provides scope for students to develop into professionals in this field. It prepares the graduate student to rejoin society as a thought leader and a change agent in the concrete reality of life outside the institution.

We are pleased to note that, the structure of the Human Settlements Development Degree course is designed in a way that is organic and evolutionary, bearing in mind that in our fast changing world of high technologies, particularly informatics, the course offered may have to adapt to new demands from time to time. For example the question of the current man-induced global climate change creates future challenges in the field of human settlements which may require new ideas, new technologies for improved solutions. How would this varsity respond side by side with other global learning centres?

Besides the provision of the expected modules such as Public Administration, Accounting, Economics and Political Studies, we note that new modules such as Local Government Law,

House Design and Services, Human Settlement Management and Integrated Development Management are going to be offered within the course. We are satisfied that this degree course, the Bachelor of Human Settlements Development and Management, will be evolving in the safe hands of highly recommended lecturers and gurus who are professionals in their own fields under the leadership of Professor Kobus Van Wyk. We thank them all in advance.

To the many students within the faculty who will go through this course, we wish them well and can only say that they are fortunate to live in such exciting times. Seize the opportunity with both hands. To the Vice Chancellor Professor Swartz and the rest of the Mandela Varsity Team we at Human Settlements heap

congratulations upon you for being the first in the country to offer the course and to host the Chair – this is even ahead of the University of Fort Hare and the University of South Africa who are due to follow after your trail blazing next year in 2014.

On behalf of the Ministry and Department of Human Settlements, together with the Ministry of Higher Education led by Minister Nzimande, as partners to your school, we are confident that our investment here is for a good course – it is worth while!

As your motto says: For Tomorrow!

