

**Words of support by the Deputy Minister of Human Settlements, Ms Zou Kota-Fredericks on the occasion of the launch of the African Forum for Urban Safety: 30 November 2015 at Sandton Sun.**

**Programme Director: Mr. Eric Apelgren**

**Director, Regional Office for Africa, UN-Habitat, Professor Oyebanji Oyeyinka**

**Chairperson of the African Forum for Urban Safety and Mayor of eThekweni Municipality, Cllr James Nxumalo**

**Various UN agencies, international organisations, all City Mayors present here**

**DDG of Human Settlements, Mr William Jiyana and all officials.**

**Ladies and gentleman,**

As we speak South Africa and the world is embarking on the 16 Days of Activism of No Violence Against Women and Children campaign to raise awareness about the negative impact of violence against women and children on all members of the community. This year marks 16 years since the South Africa adopted the campaign as one of the intervention strategies towards creating a society free of violence.

Therefore, it gives me great pleasure to stand here today as we launch the African Forum for Urban Safety which will provide a platform that will facilitate and enable African cities to collaborate and take action at local level to improve safety and security of our cities and offer opportunities that foster innovative responses to address the inequality and marginalization of the urban poor, women, children and young people who are impacted mostly by this scourge.

Programme Director, since the turn of the century Africa has been basking in a wave of opportunities and rapid democratic transitions that have led to significant strides on social, political and economic fronts with responsive and accountable governments. At the same time the continent is also experiencing a challenging time with regards to the

issues of safety and security. This comes at the time when we are grappling with the effects of a poorly planned urbanisation that has led to an increase in crime, violence and insecurity, especially towards the vulnerable urban dwellers.

Efforts by a wide range of stakeholders who are working to increase security and justice, enhancing safer cities and communities is currently poorly coordinated. The reason for this has been the absence of a regional knowledge management strategy or systematic approach to help them connect on a continuous basis, harness existing knowledge and experience, share best practices and identify lessons learned. This has led to the “Know – Do” Gap, the gap between what is known and what is done in practice.

Programme Director, us being here today is to ensure that we don't just visualize urban safety but we make it a possibility. This platform will ensure that action and pragmatic steps are taken to ensure urban safety by all players at the local government level including the concerned communities.

Therefore the launch of the African Forum for Urban Safety is very important to us as South African, we are extremely happy to support this initiative, especially that this shows that all stakeholders in the development of sustainable and safe human settlements are serious about bridging the “Know – Do” gap in City Safety by fostering an environment in the African region that will encourage the creation, sharing and effective application of knowledge to improve safety and security at local level.

South Africa has recognized human settlements and urban development as a critical element of our National Development Plan. Our Integrated Urban Development Framework seeks to address urbanization by recognizing that it cannot be divorced from overall economic, social, political and physical development along the rural and urban development field.

But we also acknowledge that there needs to be a concrete agenda that also speaks to the urban challenges. There are shortcomings that need to be addressed in terms of urban planning, urban governance, and urban economies and finance.

We take this opportunity to emphasize that there should be reference made to the role of all relevant stakeholders, from National, Provincial and Local government actors, community-based organisations, community members, planners, academics, and the private sector. We will need to implement the new Agenda collaboratively, so a continuous process of stakeholder engagement and sharing of information will ensure that we are all empowered to participate meaningfully in the creation of our future safe cities.

South Africa has endorsed the notion that urbanisation could support the structural transformation of Africa if properly harnessed. We have stressed that urbanization takes place in a diversity of settlement types and so we need to ensure that the New Agenda addresses the urban safety and rural development and the close interface socially and economically between places.

South Africa has argued that the new agenda for human settlements and urban development must ensure access, participation, and empowerment for all, with special emphasis on vulnerable groups, women, youth and people with disabilities. This would be in line with Aspiration Six of the African Union Agenda 2063, which speaks to: “An Africa whose development is people-driven, especially relying on the potential offered by its Women and Youth and well-cared for Children”.

Programme Director, as the department of Human Settlements we applaud the good work done by UN-Habitat safer cities programme in Africa, particularly in the city of Johannesburg and Durban. It is our hope that this programme will be rolled out in other cities across the country.

As government we are trying to deal decisively with issues of crime in urban areas. We have noted with concern that the youth population at risk has increased in urban areas, so as drugs and alcohol consumption increase, violence against women and children persists.

As a response to these challenges we support urban crime prevention strategies that include all stakeholders. They must be community or people driven, particularly at local and neighborhood level. Everyone must take full responsibility in creating safer and peaceful urban living environment. Cities must include the issue of safer cities in their integrated development plans and must be budgeted for.

All cities must be at the forefront of providing safety to all its inhabitants. Cities must be inclusive to all; they must strive to build cohesion in order to address the relationship between crime and urbanization.

In conclusion, programme director; let me say it is clear that in order to foster sustainable safety in our neighborhoods and cities, a more global approach is necessary to ensure that we protect the vulnerable citizens in our cities i.e. women, children, elderly and people with disabilities.

Therefore safety must be a concern of all spheres of government, private sector and all community stakeholders. We support the launch of the African Forum for Urban Safety.

I thank you