



**MINISTRY**

**HUMAN SETTLEMENTS  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**ADDRESS BY THEMBI SIMELANE**

**MINISTER OF HUMAN SETTLEMENTS, MP**

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE  
OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE UN-HABITAT SOUTH AFRICA COUNTRY  
OFFICE**

**14 AUGUST 2026  
CITY OF TSHWANE, GAUTENG**

Programme Director;

Honourable Ministers;

Her Excellency, Ms Anacláudia Rossbach, Executive Director of UN-Habitat;

Honourable Members of Parliament and MPLs;

Honourable MECs and MMCs;

Esteemed representatives of the United Nations;

Directors-General;

Heads of the State Entities;

Executives and senior officials;

Distinguished guests;

Ladies and gentlemen;

Good morning,

It is both a privilege and an honour to address you today at this significant occasion marking the official launch of the UN-Habitat Country Office in South Africa.

Once again, a warm welcome on the South African soil to the Executive Director of UN-Habitat, her esteemed delegation and dignitaries.

Since its inception in 1975, UN-Habitat has been steadfast in its mission to promote transformative change in cities and human settlements across the globe. Through the sharing of knowledge, provision of policy advice, technical assistance, and collaborative action, UN-Habitat has positively impacted over 95 countries, including our own South Africa.

The UN-Habitat Country Office and Programme for South Africa is a testament to the enduring partnership between UN-Habitat and South Africa, and it serves to integrate sustainable urbanisation and human settlements development with the broader United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework with our nation.

Through the collaborative efforts of UN-Habitat, South Africa has gained international recognition for its achievements in providing adequate housing and upgrading informal settlements. With the unwavering support of UN-Habitat, our country stands as a vocal champion for the transformation and upgrading of informal settlements, addressing poverty, ensuring adequate shelter, and delivering essential services to our people.

In October 2022, my predecessor had the honour of hosting the former Executive Director of UN-Habitat, Her Excellency Maimunah Mohd Sharif. This visit yielded vital outcomes, notably the adoption of the Global Action Plan on Accelerating the Transformation of Informal Settlements and Slums, aimed at tackling the global challenges of slum growth.

Additionally, the signing of a formal Memorandum of Understanding for cooperation on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals

and the New Urban Agenda in South Africa underscored our commitment to advancing sustainable development. The discussions also explored the establishment of a dedicated UN-Habitat Country Office, further reinforcing our partnership and capacity for impactful action.

In facilitating the establishment of the UN-Habitat Country Office in South Africa, the UN-Habitat Country Programme was developed. It is a product of extensive consultations with stakeholders across the human settlements sector. Adopted in September 2023, this programme is fully aligned with South Africa's national priorities as articulated in the National Development Plan, and it supports our government's constitutional mandate to provide adequate housing.

Sustainable human settlements are central to our commitment to reducing poverty and improving the quality of life for all South Africans by creating and managing environments that foster dignity, safety, and prosperity.

The Country Programme offers additional impetus, guidance, and support from UN-Habitat to augment the implementation of policies and initiatives related to spatial integration, the development of sustainable, inclusive, and resilient human settlements, and capacity-building within local government. It aligns with the vision articulated in the National

Development Plan, specifically Chapter 8 on Transforming Human Settlements and Chapter 12 on Building Safer Communities.

Furthermore, the UN-Habitat Country Programme is consistent with national priorities outlined in the Medium-Term Development Plan 2024-2029, Priority 2: Reduce Poverty and Tackle the High Cost of Living. It supports the Comprehensive Plan for the Creation of Sustainable Human Settlements, which aims to provide adequate living environments and shelter for all, through the transformation of informal settlements and improvement of substandard housing conditions. The Programme is also in line with the Integrated Urban Development Framework and the District Development Model, as well as global agendas such as the United Nations' 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda (also known as the Sustainable Development Goals-SDGs) and the New Urban Agenda.

The UN-Habitat and South Africa MoU, as well as the Country Programme, together bolster South Africa's efforts to advance Africa's urban and human settlements agenda, in support of Agenda 2063 – the Africa We Want. It serves as a springboard for establishing a Southern African Development Community consolidated agenda on human settlements, thereby filling a critical gap in current SADC regional development programmes.

The UN-Habitat Country Programme for South Africa sets forth six impact-oriented objectives:

- To facilitate enhanced collaboration and cooperation between the South African government and its entities, UN-Habitat, other UN agencies, development partners, and relevant human settlements actors outside of government;
- To develop, guide, and advocate for integrated, holistic, and cross-sectoral urban interventions that accelerate progress towards national and global development goals;
- To capture learnings that inform new partnerships and programmes, drawing on global policies and practices for transformative development outcomes in South Africa;
- To diagnose and respond to contextual constraints and opportunities by proposing catalytic and holistic solutions rooted in international experience and local realities for safer, resilient, inclusive, prosperous, and connected human settlements;

- To enhance the capacities and capabilities of national and subnational institutions for improved, effective, and efficient urban management and development;

As we embark on this journey, let us reaffirm our collective commitment to the vision of sustainable, inclusive, prosperous human settlements and leave no one behind.

May the UN-Habitat Country Programme serve as a catalyst for transformative change and lasting progress in South Africa, and may our partnership continue to inspire hope and opportunity for generations to come.

I thank you.