



**MINISTRY**

**HUMAN SETTLEMENTS  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**SPEECH**

**BY**

**THEMBI SIMELANE**

**MINISTER OF HUMAN SETTLEMENTS OF THE REPUBLIC OF  
SOUTH AFRICA**

**ON THE OCCASION OF BLACK BUSINESS COUNCIL IN  
THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT INDABA**

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**GALAGHER CONVENTION CENTRE, JOHANNESBURG**

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CEOs of Entities of the Department of Human Settlements and Private

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Ladies and gentlemen

Good day,

Thank you very much for inviting me to give an address to this important gathering to discuss the plans and policy shifts we are introducing as the department of human settlements in the technologically driven built environment.

Your theme is undoubtedly timely and is aligned with the current human settlements' nuanced policy perspective and we are indeed looking forward to partner with you to deliver infrastructure projects through innovative funding and delivery models.

After the democratic breakthrough of 1994, as we took over the contours of popular power, we did so, resolute, and steadfast in our commitment to push back the frontiers of poverty, repudiate the imbalances of the past and create a better life for all, premised on the noble principle as tacitly articulated by our forefathers in the Freedom Charter 70 years ago; that South Africa belongs to all who live in it.

The glimmer of hope grew brighter and brighter in the eyes of our people. An immense sense of pride and belonging was almost palpable and permeated throughout the entire country.

With hindsight, our evolution as a society has required us to be vigilant and uncompromising in implementing practical and tangible programmes and strategies that will reverse the negative socio-economic impact of our past; not only that, but also to catapult our ability to deliver services to our people using the available advances in technology and knowledge of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, which all of us here enjoy.

Notably, governments in the so called Third World or developing countries are faced with the urgency to deliver improved quality services to their citizens in an effective way. The resources to deliver such services are usually limited and the South African circumstance is not an exception. Under these circumstances, governments are under pressure to come up with innovative solutions and approaches that will assist the public service to reduce spending, fast track service delivery and improve the way citizens (both in the rural and urban dichotomy) experience service delivery.

Moreover, the public sector is expected to rethink government approaches and to explore and seize innovation as a springboard for greater efficiency and effectiveness. The human settlements sector is faced with the unprecedented increased levels of migration and lately persistent weather patterns resulting in disasters across the provinces demand innovative responses. We are therefore facing societal challenges that have made it essential not only for us to understand, but that we should embrace innovative strategies to ensure that we address as well as transform the lives of our people.

Programme Director,

As we all know, human settlements are the foundation of human existence as they influence how we live, work, and connect with each other and the environment.

As the Department of Human Settlements, our recognition is that our responsibility should not just be the provision of a roof over a head, but to create quality living environments that holistically respond to human needs.

It is with the consideration of the above that we have developed a White Paper for Human Settlements which serves as the policy foundation and was approved by Cabinet in December 2024. Worth noting is that the White Paper is contextualized within the United Nations' definition of

human settlements which advocates for a totality of human community – whether city, town, village- with all the material, social, organizational, spiritual and cultural elements that sustains it.

Specifically, Section 3.5.4 of the White Paper provides that greater investment will be made in the development of innovative and flexible building typologies and materials that are sustainable, resilient, and preferably locally produced. The policy advocates for effective partnerships between municipalities, the private sector and non-profit sector organisations and other partners.

Furthermore, the White Paper provisions seek to ensure adequate emergency responsiveness with well managed temporary facilities and use of alternative building technologies for speedy human settlements responses. I invite all of you to engage with this important document in its entirety as it will point out on areas that we can engage and collaborate in our quest for sustainable and integrated human settlements in South Africa.

This policy shift serves to re-align our implementation strategies with the broader government objectives, and South Africa's commitment to international goals in relation to effective planning, development, and management of inclusive, sustainable, integrated, and equitable urban and rural human settlement.

Our policy shift supports with commitments of South Africa's G20 Presidency for 2025 under the theme "Solidarity, Equality and Sustainability", with keen focus in addressing the triple challenge of poverty, unemployment and inequality as well as putting Africa's development in line with the African Union's Agenda 2063.

Let me hasten to highlight that the envisioned human settlements development demands that our delivery approach should integrate various role-players including sector departments, three spheres of government, civil society organizations and private sector.

Our implementation would be carried out through policy programmes embedded in the District Development Model (DDM), to respond to fundamental structural challenges, strained fiscus, and shrinkage in public spending. We are therefore in the process of reviewing the Housing Code which is an implementation tool for all human settlements' programmes. Parallel to this is the review of the current Housing Act, to give effect to the Human Settlements Act development and innovation is central to all these processes.

While our focus on innovation cuts across in terms of systems and strategies, let me amplify our focus on Innovative Building Technologies (IBTs). In the South African context, the use of the concept "innovation" refers to any building technology that is developed outside the use of South African National Standards, National Building Regulations and the Building Standards Act 107 of 1977. As such, technologies referred to as Innovative Building Technologies (IBT) are approved by the certification

body, Agrément SA which is a statutory body established under the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure.

Programme Director,

Examples of innovative building technologies include the introduction of standardised panel walling systems, light-weight steel, and modular foundation technologies.

In the previous financial year, the Department approved the Norms and Standards on IBTs. This was in recognition of the need to promote implementation of certified innovative technologies as part of addressing the current housing backlog. As I highlighted earlier, the human settlements are the most affected by the disasters and therefore there is a heightened demand for quicker and efficient turnaround times in our responses.

Our aim is to ensure that while we respond to disasters, through implementation of IBTs to contribute to improving the quality of life through permanent and sustainable quality houses while revolutionising access to adequate housing, increasing efficiency and reducing costs in the human settlements delivery value chain. The Department is now embarking on public awareness on the importance of IBTs and to strengthen the monitoring of implementation within the current grant allocations for Provinces and Metropolitan Municipalities.

Human settlements development is part of the construction industry, and therefore one of the main drivers of economic growth, it is opportune and timely that we enhance the capacity of both the public and the private sector in construction to deliver liveable neighbourhoods to our citizens. We must ensure that new innovative products, whether they are in terms of size, technology or both are developed, and that these products become the spring from which new ideas about housing development can flourish. This will further strengthen our transformation imperatives through creation of economic opportunities for the previously disadvantaged groups whether in the manufacturing or implementation of IBTs for human settlements development. It will be at the heart of new developments whose purpose would be to seek consolidation and the strengthening of all that has been achieved to date. Above all, we are hoping it will lead us to significantly increase our delivery rates.

However, the perceptions of various stakeholders, including end users, developers, government agencies, built environment professionals and financial institutions, can greatly influence the adoption and implementation of these technologies. Innovative building technologies (IBTs) have demonstrated significant value-adding attributes to construction products and according to studies, could reduce construction costs and time, and even improve the construction quality for relevant IBT systems.

Programme Director,



The Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Commission had been established as a bold recognition that infrastructure investment is a key priority for both the National Development Plan and the New Growth Path. It is aimed at transforming the economy, directing national growth and driving job creation by implementing a long-term, government-led infrastructure investment programme. In the process, we are leveraging the investment and participation of business, labour and civil society. Government is laying the foundation for growth and decent work for all South Africans and the prosperity of our country.

As of November 2024, there were 19 Completed Strategic Integrated Projects (SIPs) valued at R26 billion. Of these projects 6 are in Transport, 3 in Water and Sanitation, 1 in Energy, 4 in Human settlements and 5 in Student accommodation. Currently, 82 projects valued at R437 billion are in construction.

There are numerous challenges that confront our democracy, not least the building of an improved service delivery vehicle by amongst other things, ensuring that our contractors, processes, and technologies are aligned to:

- Support the fundamental requirement of government for quick, responsive service delivery;
- Ensure the continual improvement in the cost, quality, access, responsiveness, and speed of service delivery to citizens;
- Reduce the administrative burden to the citizens and the state associated with service delivery; and
- address the challenges faced by a developmental state.

Thusly, The Housing Development Agency (HDA) has established a panel of companies across the country that can be used by provinces, municipalities, and other departments to build houses using IBT. It is focusing on implementing innovative building technologies (IBT) to improve housing delivery, making it quicker, easier, and cheaper to build compared to traditional methods.

Similarly, the National Home Builders Registration Council (NHBRC) has an interest in the development of innovative building technologies for homes to ensure compliance with the performance based regulatory system in terms of the National Building Regulations.

Programme Director,

We are looking forward to South Africans and South African construction companies developing more innovative housing solutions in the foreseeable future that will directly and effectively respond to how we all envision the future development of IBT. This is a crucial matter, because most of the current technologies are imported from other countries and may not be fully suitable to our conditions.

Assessments of these technologies done by the NHBRC show that some of these imported technologies are failing in certain weather conditions and typologies. It is our aim that innovations should be developed within the country using the triple helix approach. With the support of industry partners, academic institutions and communities we are convinced that

these will speak directly to South Africa's daily challenging circumstances.

However, greater efforts need to be made to raise the uptake of technological innovation in housing and unlock the hinderances to South Africa's adoption and mainstreaming of innovative building technologies.

Internationally, countries such as China, the USA, Germany, India, South Korea, and Saudi Arabia are leading in construction technology and innovation, particularly in 3D printing, prefabrication, sustainable materials, and digital modelling. In the meantime, and until we have fully developed our industries, South Africa should leverage these global experiences to improve its human settlements sector.

The Department of Human Settlements is in the process of bringing together government leaders, industry experts, researchers, scholars, innovators and community-based activists to engage towards the creation of an enabling framework for the accelerated adoption of innovations in the built environment that can be implemented to provide modern human settlements solutions and accelerate the delivery of our mandate, but also address ecological concerns related to traditional construction methods.

Accordingly, the Department will host an International Summit on Innovative Building Technologies (IBTs), in September 2025 whose ultimate objective is to mainstream and heighten the importance of IBTs in South Africa. The Theme of the Summit is anchored towards accelerating the delivery of housing and sustainable human settlements

through the implementation of innovative building technologies in partnership with a range of local and international partners.

Programme Director,

I want to appeal to the BBCBE and its membership to lead in the implementation of Innovative Building Technology (IBT). The government is committed to using IBT, alongside traditional brick and mortar methods to build houses faster and develop new skills within communities, but we need the contractors to implement IBTs in our communities.

We commit not to rest until we get it right in our quest to adequately house the nation in sustainable and dignified human settlements.

I thank you.

