



**MINISTRY**

HUMAN SETTLEMENTS  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**ADDRESS BY MS. THEMBI SIMELANE, MP, MINISTER OF HUMAN  
SETTLEMENTS ON THE OCCASION OF OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE  
SECOND NATIONAL URBAN FORUM HELD AT INKOSI ALBERT LUTHULI  
INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE, DURBAN, KWAZULU NATAL**

**21 AUGUST 2025**

Programme Director

Minister VF Hlabisa (cohost of the NUF)

Honourable Ministers

Honourable Premier of KwaZulu-Natal Province

Cllr Bheke Stofile, President of SALGA

Mayors and Councillors

Traditional leaders

Mr Oumar Sylla, UN-Habitat Regional Director for Africa

Dr Greg Munro, Director of Cities Alliance

Heads of Department and Senior government officials

Representatives of Communities, NGO's and CBO's

Distinguished Speakers and Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good day,

The hosting of the 2025 edition of the NUF has a special significance, in that, it coincides with our country's historic G20 and U20 presidency, and it takes place during the year that we are also compiling our country's Second Quadrennial Report on Progress in the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda (NUA). This year also marks ten years since the adoption of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

At the inaugural National Urban Forum held in October last year, the Department of Human Settlements highlighted the fact that this forum offers government and all other stakeholders in the sector "an opportunity to enhance the human settlements and urban development trajectory of the country and to develop concrete programmes and projects that result in real outcomes". I am anticipant with great hope that our deliberations during this year's forum will transcend the ideational notional phase of our interactions, to focus more on collaborating to implement solutions to our

perennial developmental challenges, some of which inflict inexplicable pain in our national psyche as citizens of this country.

In the spirit of delivering real outcomes in our national engagements, this year the Department of Human Settlements has outlined its apex priorities which include: (i) accelerating delivery of housing units and serviced stands to the most vulnerable segments of our population in line with approved national budget allocations; (ii) increase the number of recipients of housing subsidies from the missing middle-income groups; (iii) enhance efforts to accelerate the transformation of informal settlements and slums; (iv) increase access to and management of social housing interventions, (v) as well as consolidate government efforts in affording our people security of tenure through expediting issuance of title deeds to qualifying beneficiaries of low-cost housing and serviced stands.

To deliver on these priorities we require strong and mutually reinforcing multi-stakeholder partnerships as envisaged in the 2014 Social Contract for the Development of Sustainable Human Settlements, and also recognised in the 2024 White Paper for Human Settlements.

The NUF offers the sector a platform to take the 2024 White Paper forward through building national consensus on critical issues in building sustainable human settlements and effective management of rapid urbanisation.

The cost and affordability of adequate housing remains a pressing challenge of our time, in both nationally and internationally contexts. Furthermore, innovative approaches are urgently needed to help the country address human settlements challenges such as transforming informal settlements, reviving and removing bottlenecks on stalled housing projects, bridging housing budget and financing gaps in order to address the housing backlog. Deliberations and outcomes at this forum should explore and advance durable solutions to these challenges.

The partnerships ought to be informed and guided by the determined national priorities and be implemented in a manner that contributes to the overall efforts to mobilise resources from all stakeholders to accelerate the delivery of integrated human settlements as a key pillar of the national strategy on poverty alleviation and fundamental disruption of the spatial apartheid geography. In this regard, it is important to recall the commitments we all made in the 2024 edition of the NUF, that we would

endeavour to “enhance Housing and Infrastructure Development by, inter alia, prioritising the provision of affordable housing and the upgrading of informal settlements to ensure that all citizens have access to adequate and secure housing”. Furthermore, we also undertook to collectively “mobilise resources for critical infrastructure investments, using innovative mechanisms such as green bonds, pooled financing, and tax increment financing (TIF)”. To which I must add, blended financing. Investment in housing is critical in infrastructure development and it also has concrete benefits and direct contribution to other sectors of the economy such as construction and manufacturing, including supporting local capacity in emerging industries such as alternative building technologies.

Transformations in global geopolitics and international economic architecture, have influenced many countries to refocus their attention to prioritising their national interests and domestic expenditure, thus, reducing the scale and scope of traditional additional funding options such as the Official Development Assistance, Development Grants, investments in social programmes, etc. It is therefore incumbent upon domestic partners to craft innovative and mutually beneficial partnerships that stimulate economic growth and enhance government fiscal capacity

to deliver on public goods and services such as provision of adequate housing and sustainable urban development.

As a country we are enjoined with other countries to implement the New Urban Agenda which was adopted in Quito, Ecuador, in October 2016, to guide countries on how to manage, address challenges and capitalise on opportunities presented by irreversible rapid urbanisation over the next twenty years. UN-Habitat Member States are requested to voluntarily compile and submit quadrennial progress reports on the implementation of the NUA.

The Department of Human Settlements has concluded nationwide technical consultations with all-of-society stakeholders on the process toward the compilation of the Second National Report on Progress in the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

The NUA makes provisions for transformative commitments that countries have to deliver on including housing, which is viewed as both inseparably linked to urbanisation, and as a socioeconomic development imperative. As explicitly articulated in the National Development Plan and the Integrated Urban Development Framework, the development of

sustainable human settlements requires an integrated approach with the management of urbanisation through the expansion of access to adequate and affordable housing as a critical contribution to achieving inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable cities envisaged in the NUA.

Access to adequate housing involves more than just government subsidies and grants, it also entails access to land for human settlements, flexible and affordable housing finance, responsible property market regulations and practices, development of human settlements that are responsive to climate and other natural disasters.

Our first national report on the NUA was submitted in 2021 and it highlighted the policy frameworks, programmes and government interventions aimed at providing integrated urban governance. The current report compilation process afforded stakeholders with opportunities to make submissions during in-person and virtual workshops, written submissions and case studies, covering all our nine provinces. Once the report is finalised and approved by Cabinet it will be made available to the public.

The localisation and implementation of the New Urban Agenda is carried out through the IUDF and requires all stakeholders to play their part in building sustainable human settlements and integrated urban development, to among other things, address spatial inequality through a transformational national agenda. Therefore, the National Urban Forum as an engagement mechanism endorsed by the UN-Habitat, is an appropriate and strategic platform for formulating and adopting a national consensus on human settlements and urban development priorities.

Your voices will be consolidated to inform the outcomes of this forum which will shape, inform and contribute to our national position that we will take to the Second Africa Urban Forum and the Thirteenth World Urban Forum in 2026.

In conclusion, Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to reaffirm South Africa's commitment to sustainable and inclusive growth and in shaping the future we want, we wish to improve the quality of life for all residents, while protecting the environment, and fostering innovation.

Collaboration among government, private sector, and communities is key to building cities that are smart, vibrant, equitable, and sustainable.

Let us commit to thoughtful development that meets the needs of today without compromising the ability of future generations to thrive. Together, we can create human settlements, towns and cities that are not only centres of progress but also bastions of sustainability and prosperity.

I thank you.