



MINISTRY

**HUMAN SETTLEMENTS
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**ADDRESS BY MS. THEMBI SIMELANE, MP, MINISTER OF HUMAN
SETTLEMENTS ON THE OCCASION OF THE TITLING AND TENURE
REFORM SYMPOSIUM AT ANEW HOTEL AND CONVENTION
CENTRE, OR TAMBO, BENONI**

25 MARCH 2025

Programme Director

Honourable Deputy Minister, Ms Mahambehlala

Director General, Dr Alec Moemi

Chairperson of the Ministerial Advisory Panel, Mr Dan Mashitsho

Members of Advisory Panel present

Prof David Dickinson, Lawyers for Human Rights

Chief Registrar of Deeds, Ms Carlize Knoesen

Chief Surveyor General, Mr Siyabonga Mdubeki

CEOs of Entities

Chairperson of the Boards of Entities

Chairperson of the Portfolio committee

Chairperson of the Gauteng Housing Crisis Committee

Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning!

Let me take this opportunity and thank Team Human Settlements for organizing this symposium to reflect and have in-depth discussion about the policies which guide and underpin our work in the human settlements value chain.

Accordingly, the human settlements value chain encompasses all activities involved in creating and managing human settlements, from planning and development to infrastructure, housing, and community services, aiming for sustainable and equitable living environments.

We have thus decided to convene this symposium to have a deep dive into our policy architecture and have a synthesis.

The strategic objective of this symposium is to offer a platform to discuss Titling/Tenure challenges experienced by the human settlement sector; to offer a platform to brainstorm the possible Titling/Tenure reform solutions

that could be adopted to find a quicker, simplified, and less costly process of registration and transfer of land and property; to propose and explore policy changes and reforms to unlock bottlenecks and fast-track Titling/tenure transfer to low and middle income households and restore the dignity of the indigenous people of South Africa consistent with the core principles of the Freedom Charter.

As we commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Freedom Charter since its historic adoption in Kliptown in 1955 by the people of South Africa as a radical and decisive response to the repressive regime of apartheid. It tacitly framed the aspirations and hopes of the marginalized South African masses.

The Freedom Charter made a laconic and succinct expression that 'There Shall Be Houses, Security and Comfort'!

Since 1994 a lot has been done in ensuring that this fundamental Freedom Charter principle finds sufficient expression and we provided houses to an inordinate number of the South African citizens, yet a lot still needs to be done.

Various investigations, research, reviews and evaluations on human settlements policy and programmes have identified numerous shortcomings related to gaps in policy and divergence in programme implementation. Among the influencing factors is the increasing rate of population growth, evolving housing environment, the prevailing effects of climate change, and technological advancement which continuously bring to light the shortcomings of the current human settlements policies, regulations, and legislation to provide an enabling environment for the development of the integrated and sustainable human settlements.

Therefore, policy discussions aimed at strengthening our mandate to integrated and sustainable human settlements and obliterate the apartheid spatial designs are indispensable.

As you all know, in December 2024, the White Paper on Human Settlements was approved highlighting a vision to provide housing, safety, and comfort for all, with emphasis on vulnerable, poor and missing middle of our society. This Policy anchors that the development of sustainable human settlements is a spatial assertion premised on the integration of (four) 4 key elements: namely, physical elements (infrastructure, services,

and housing); land use patterns; operational and governance relations; and socio-economic patterns.

The white paper has identified that the housing market is experiencing the dysfunctional property market whereby approximately 60% of people living in South Africa reside in land parcels or landed properties or buildings that are not recognised in the formal property system. This is predominantly in informal settlements, dilapidated/hijacked inner-city buildings, and subsidy homes which have not been registered in the deeds registry or customary areas.

The subsidised houses have not significantly integrated into the housing market and are not providing a financial lever for the poor households to realise market value. The Financial Institutions generally do not accept untitled land as security when borrowing loans whether to upgrade houses, invest in businesses, student loans etc. Systemic issues are evident in the whole title deed value chain, reforms will need to be considered to find a quicker, simplified, and less costly process of registration and transfer of land and property to cater for low- and middle-income households.

The White Paper introduces a multi-departmental approach that should be pursued to implement sustainable human settlements. It is aimed at holistically addressing spatial planning issues and bringing together various departments and specialists to facilitate better outcomes. As the custodian for human settlements function, the Department will explore various mechanisms of involving multi-disciplinary teams with specialists in built environment and other key professions e.g., planners, engineers, economists, architects, social facilitators, and journalists.

To find a solution, the Government needs to partner with private sector and civil society organisations to deliberate on different reforms that could be applied to ensure that the poor have security to tenure.

I wish the symposium well in its deliberations and I believe the outcomes will assist and strengthen the Department policy perspectives.

There are profound changes required, moving beyond the previous state-centred paradigm of new housing delivery towards more of an enabling, supporting, coordinating, and regulating role in creating and sustaining

viable and vibrant human settlements, where government recognises its limitations and actively seeks to harness the energy, expertise, and capabilities of many other actors in ambitious and pragmatic ways.

Titling is important as we calculate transactions in the property market and cannot calculate what is informal hence it is important we host more of these symposiums to find solutions and articulate details that will take us to the prescripts, guidelines, business processes, turnaround time that will go to the Code and regulations which will form part of the Human Settlement Development Bill that should follow after the approval of the White Paper for Human Settlements.

I thank you.