MINISTRY
HUMAN SETTLEMENTS
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY MINISTER OF HUMAN SETTLEMENTS, MP, THEMBI SIMELANE, DURING THE OCCASION OF 30 YEARS ANNIVERSARY SUMMIT OF THE NATIONAL HOUSING FINANCE CORPORATION

18 SEPTEMBER 2026

BIRCHWOOD HOTEL, BOKSBURG

Programme Director, Sakina Kamwendo

Chairperson and Board of the NHFC

MEC for Human Settlements in Gauteng, Tasneem Motara

Director General of the Department of Human Settlements, Dr. Alec Moemi

CEO and Executive Management

Deputy Directors General of DHS

Entities of the Department

Stakeholders from financial institutions,

NGOs,

Traditional leaders,

Property practitioners, and

Developers,

Distinguished guests,

Members of the media

Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning.

It is a profound privilege to stand before you today as we mark a significant milestone in our nation's housing journey - three decades of the National Housing Finance Corporation.

Programme Director,

Let me start by articulating the significant of this moment. This summit is not merely a celebration of an institution's longevity. It is a moment to reflect on a promise made to the people of South Africa, and the tireless work undertaken to deliver on that promise.

Thirty years ago, in 1996, our young democracy faced a monumental challenge. Decades of apartheid spatial planning had deliberately excluded millions from property ownership, from credit, and from the basic dignity of a secure home.

The government of the day recognised a hard truth that the housing crisis could not be solved through public funding alone. We needed an institution capable of mobilising private capital, bridging the gap between what South Africans could afford and what traditional lenders would finance.

That institution was the NHFC charged with the biggest responsibility of providing access to housing finance.

Notably, this year, the NHFC celebrates its 30th anniversary. It is a significant milestone for an institution that has played a prominent role in expanding access to affordable housing finance and supporting the development of sustainable human settlements across South Africa.

This milestone coincides with the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. Section 26 of the Constitution enshrines the right to adequate housing; it enjoins the state to implement reasonable legislative measures within its available resources to achieve progressive realisation of this fundamental human right.

Programme Director,

Let me foreground the legacy impact of the institution. When we look back at what has been achieved, the numbers are impressive. But behind every statistic is a human story.

More than **R13 billion** in housing finance facilitated.

Over **800,000** households helped to access housing opportunities.

Over **32,000 subsidy** approvals through the First Home Finance programme since 2019.

Close to R2 billion disbursed through First Home Finance, leveraging **R10.9 billion** in private sector investment.

These are not just figures. They represent families who have a place to call home. They represent children growing up in stable environments. They represent the restoration of dignity.

I want to particularly acknowledge the First Home Finance programme, which serves the "gap market", those earning between R3,501 and R22,000 per month who earn too much for a fully subsidised house but too little for a traditional bond. This programme has been expanded to rural areas, and I want to thank our traditional leaders for their partnership in making this possible.

This was done inline with the clarion call made by the President that we must have stronger collaboration with traditional leaders, and we are happy to report that many traditional leaders are actively driving local development initiatives in their communities.

But as we celebrate, we must be frank and honest about the road ahead.

South Africa's housing challenge remains significant. The United Nations projects that almost 68% of the world population will be living in the urban centres by 2050. Rapid urbanisation continues to place enormous pressure on our cities. Demand for affordable housing continues to outstrip supply. Economic pressures make it harder for households to enter the property market.

The backlog is estimated at approximately 2.6 million people in need of housing.

The question before us is not whether progress has been made. The question is - how do we accelerate that progress?

Programme Director,

In the context of the strategic focus of the entity, we posit that the NHFC's role in the next phase of our housing journey is critical. Let me highlight three overarching priorities:

First: Innovation in housing finance.

The NHFC must continue to adapt. The transition toward the Human Settlements Development Bank represents an opportunity to achieve greater autonomy and scale. We must ensure this transition is completed efficiently and that the new institution is equipped to operate with the agility our market requires.

Second: Integrated human settlements.

We must move beyond the delivery of individual houses toward integrated and sustainable human settlements that connect communities to essential services, economic opportunities, and secure tenure. This means schools, clinics, roads, and recreational spaces alongside housing.

Third: Continued partnership.

The NHFC's success over 30 years has been built on collaboration with financial institutions, developers, all spheres of government, and communities. That partnership must deepen.

The NHFC's 30th anniversary programme, including the Scholarship Fund, the 30 Stories campaign, and the digital archive, reflects a commitment to preserving this institution's legacy while investing in the next generation of housing and built environment professionals.

If the NHFC's legacy is measured by the lives it has helped to transform, then its story is ultimately one of people. It is a story of families, communities, and opportunities created. It is a story of dignity restored and futures built.

Most importantly, it is a story of a nation being built, one home at a time.

Programme Director,

In celebrating 30 years of the NHFC, we celebrate what is possible when government creates the enabling conditions for partnership and investment to flourish.

To the Board, management, and staff of the NHFC, thank you for your dedication, commitment, and hard work.

To our partners in the private sector and civil society, thank you for walking this journey with us and we must deepen our partnership as we put our hands together to transform the sector. Without regurgitating, I want to emphasise the point that government cannot do it alone.

And to the people of South Africa, we remain committed to the translation of Section 26(1) and Section 26(2) of the Constitution, especially the promise of adequate housing for all to make it a reality.

Let us use this summit not only to reflect, but to recommit to the work ahead.

Together, let us continue building a nation, one home at a time.

Thank you.