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REMARKS BY HUMAN SETTLEMENTS MINISTER MMAMOLOKO KUBAYI AT THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONSTRUCTION AWARDS, EMPERORS PALACE, 27 NOVEMBER 2024

Programme director,
Cllr Xhakaza, Executive Mayor of ekhuruleni
Cllr Cyril Xaba, Mayor of Ethekewini Municipality
Cllr Modise, Deputy Mayor of Tshwane
All Councillors
Mr Ngavu, President of SACA
Mr collen Mashawane, CEO of the SACA
Chairperson of PPRA, Dr Ngubeni
Dr Moemi, all Senior Managers
CEOs of state-Owned entities
His Royal Highness Princes Sikhanyiso
Captains of industry,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening,

Let me start by congratulating all the winners this evening. I say to all of you well done, keep up the good work.

As the department of Human Settlements we seized the opportunity to partner with the South African Construction Awards (SACA), as Director-General Dr Alec Moemi explained, because we felt that it is important for us to honour those who have been central for the delivery of our mandate as a department.

But also to fulfilling the promise and also the vision by the President to turn this country into a construction site.

We are not yet there, but we hope we can be able to get there with many of projects to come to life across all sectors and subsectors.

The SACA awards are an important event in the construction sector in the annual calendar.

Let me take this opportunity to send a word of appreciation to Dr Collen Mashawane for establishing this important work, the SACA awards. We say you are a winner in your own right and your pioneering work in putting together SACA has not gone unnoticed, and many other initiatives that you drive.

I am touched especially by the work that you do under your foundation reaching out to the most vulnerable of our communities and providing shelter for them.

We have witnessed you across the country being able to give, especially the senior citizens a shelter and I do believe the award and the recognition and the honorary doctorate you received from Unisa is well deserved and congratulations once more.

Today we honour those who have endured the pain and suffering of starting and sustaining a business enterprise in a difficult environment.

Globally, not only in South Africa, starting a business is an undertaking that requires courage and extraordinary patience and tenacity.

It requires people who are willing to travel the road less travelled, of lack of sleep and sacrifices, that only those who have successfully run a business can truly appreciate and understand.

When you are engaged in an enterprise that sometimes it is difficult to tell whether you are making a positive impact and you are still walking the right path, you and others, every once in a while, require a pat in the back, and a voice that says, you are doing a wonderful job.

I say this in recognition that we came out of COVID19 were a sector had come to a stand still, many businesses did not survive, they actually collapsed. Many of you today stood the test of time and you are here to tell the story.

Post COVID19, we had the July unrest which literally drove the princess in terms of our sectors, especially the construction sector higher.

That is what informed even some of us in our sector in the Human Settlements to increase the quantum because it was becoming unaffordable for our contractors to be able to conduct their business.

The people who made the sacrifices and wake up every morning to do their bit in a large effort to change the world for the better, know what it means to get to be acknowledged and to be appreciated.

But most importantly, these are people who are contributing to South Africa and ensuring that we can be able to respond to the challenges as a department to the most vulnerable, who are looking for shelter from us as government.

We are not able to fulfil our mandate as the Department of Human Settlements without you as our partners, without you as our service providers, without you as beneficiaries as well of our services, and therefore we do recognise this partnership not only for this awards but because we wanted to ensure that those who are playing a role in our sector, do understand that we do say well done for the job that you have done.

We say this because we understand that over time there are challenges in terms of fiscal constraints, but sometimes we do have a challenges where some of the invoices do not get paid.

We have committed ourselves as a sector that we will ensure that invoices are paid within time to all contractors who are servicing us. We monitor this in our MINMEC Bimonthly.

I say this because I understand how important of payment of an invoice it is to a SMME. Without them receiving their money, it means they are not able to fulfil their obligations on the next project.

That is why we consistently as the department and as I committed that we will ensure that we make sure that people are paid and we monitor it.

As we continue to raise awareness about gender-based violence during these 16 days against gender based violence on women and children, I want to send a special appreciation to the women in construction who against all odds have kept the fire burning in this male dominated sector.

I have interacted with many of you in the sector, you have shared the pain and the barriers that you have to overcome to survive in the sector.

When we held our indaba in Kimberly, some of the contractors shared their experiences where they are threatened by rape or to be raped if they do not leave the sites. This is a something, a pandemic that we must do away with in our country. No woman or child should feel unsafe in the country of their birth.

We must, all of us, commit to ensuring that we are not only creating a safer communities but we also ensure that women can participate in our sectors freely without being threatened.

The fact that some of you are receiving awards this evening is a demonstration of your resilience and business acumen and I say to you, congratulations.

This sector has an added responsibility of not only building sustainable human settlements but also safe communities for women and children. Giving a woman a home protects them from many ills of the world including gender based violence.

We honour you tonight because even though you might not have realised it, by building a house you have contributed to saving lives of women and children.

I was filled with joy to learn that we are also going to give lifetime achievement awards to a man and woman tonight.

I must quickly add that the achievements of these two people are widely known, and it is a testament that both men and women can make a success of their businesses in this sector and that they are equally capable of achieving greater heights.

I did not have anything to do with the choices of the people that will receive today, but I must say the lady who will be awarded here has been working in the task team of Minister Kubayi in terms of ensuring that we meet the 40% set aside for women in the sector of human settlements.

I pay tribute to all those women who work and I hope this award is not only to her but to all of those that have worked hard to ensure that we are able as a sector to fulfil our obligations to women.

I know men will say Minister you are too dominated and focused on women what about us men. I do believe that you have been awarded and honoured enough. It is our time to shine as well.

But I am acknowledging men who have ensured that many of these women businesses actually becomes a success.

It takes all of us, a community, to build a build a community. It needs all of us to stand and work together, hold hands together and support each other to be able to fulfil.

You can see here when I say we can work together, here is a woman Minister supporting a male entrepreneur who is hosting these awards. So it can also happen versa versa. For the success of this country, we have to acknowledge that we have to work together.

Let us take this moment to remind ourselves of where we come from as a country. A country, 30 years ago that was still plunged with segregation, with apartheid. The majority of the people had no opportunities, especially black businesses.

Today we pride ourselves with you, many of you who are in this room, who started your businesses. You are the Tintswalos the President spoke about.

We are committed as the South African government to see you through and succeed. The other day I was talking to Social Housing Institutions that my vision, as Minister of Human Settlements, is not only to support businesses, not only to support and see black entrepreneurs rise, but my vision, and if it is a legacy I would have left, it will be to build black billionaires in the property sector and that is possible.

We should not shy away from saying that we want to build successful businesses. We must not look at business companies and various people and think that all of them are corrupt or because they have a black face they have got this from corruption.

There are men women who are rising as entrepreneurs, real entrepreneurs who are folding their sleeves to rise. And for us as government we are saying we will rise with you, we will create opportunities we will support you. But I hope in the coming 10 years, at least 10 billionaires must come.

We must be able to say when we say life time achievement in the next centenary, maybe we might be retired me and you, but lets make sure that time it is billionaires that we have build out of these awards.

With that ladies and gentlemen I am wishing you all of you who are receiving awards tonight a success but also congratulating you. Those who are not receiving it is not the end of the world, next year it is still your turn, we will be here to say you have done well.

Thank you very much and have a lovely evening.

Issued by the Ministry of Human Settlements, Govan Mbeki House 240, Justice Mahomed Street, Sunnyside, Pretoria