



**MINISTRY
HUMAN SETTLEMENTS
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

REMARKS BY THE MINISTER OF HUMAN SETTLEMENTS, MMAMOLOKO KUBAYI AT THE PLANNING AFRICA CONFERENCE 2024 IN DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA, UNDER THE THEME “SUSTAINABLE FUTURES: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE” - 19 AUGUST 2024.

Programme Director Mr Moodley

Her Worship, the Deputy Mayor of eThekweni, Councillor Zandile Myeni;

President of the South African Planning Institute, Dr Johannes Mulaudzi;

Chairperson of the South African Council of Planners, Professor Mfaniseni Sihlongonyane;

Ms Angela Brooks, Chairperson of the American Association of Planners;

Government officials from all spheres, including our State-Owned Entities and private sector

All members of the planning community present here today

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning,

Gathered here today are the shapers of the urban and rural landscapes of the future. Amongst you resides a skill through which the social and economic outcomes of future generations will be determined. I trust that the conversations that you are going to have in this conference will go a long way in ensuring that you use your skill wisely so that we can achieve a more equal, prosperous and integrated communities in the future.

Urbanisation is a global phenomenon that planners in South Africa, Africa and the world need to grapple with as a matter of urgency. Looking back, in 1950 less than one in three of the world's population was living in cities. Since then, the world has undergone such dramatic changes such that by 2015, urbanisation had progressed to such an extent that over half the world's population resided in cities, and the rate is

not abating. The expectation is that by 2050, 6.3 billion people, or two thirds of the world population, will be urbanised. From a sustainable development perspective, cities drive the economy and are also the dynamo of climate change.

The rate of urban spread exceeds rate of urban population growth which makes it difficult to plan. Small and medium-sized settlements are growing fastest. This growth places demands on existing infrastructure and infrastructure augmentation needed is expensive to retro fit. Despite the economic, social, and environmental importance of urban development, it has often happened without effective planning. Where planning legislation has existed, the process of making plans for land use and physical development has not kept pace with the rate of urban growth. Once prepared, plans can be instantly out of date, and the task of enforcing regulation of development is time consuming and costly. Out of date plans also can criminalise the poor who did not wait for the plan before accessing land to build informal housing, because we take long to finalise plans and formalise areas where people can settle. Plan preparation, approval and enforcement has been overwhelmed. Detailed regulation of land use is expensive and unaffordable. This is the reality that we find ourselves as a country.

The planning tradition emphasises the need to envisage and prepare for the future. By so doing it also recognises that people, place, environment and economy are all connected to each other. However, if we are to achieve the better future for all envisioned by the New Urban Agenda, and in the Sustainable Development Goals, then we need to change the way we do planning. We must proactively seek to shape our space, with a view to achieving spatial justice which in our case requires us to break the apartheid spatial development.

The climate change effects are upon us. We have as a country experienced rapid occurrence of disasters. Not only are they rapid, but they are also massive and lead to the displacement of communities. As a department, we find ourselves having to urgently intervene as people are left homeless overnight. It becomes difficult to plan for and respond to and becomes costly to deal with, this leads to many of our communities being unhappy with us. As we grapple with this, one of the areas that we want to adopt is the use of Alternative Building Technologies. But it needs all of us to

work on how we urgently all integrate this type of innovation to assist us in building and developing our spaces.

In the Publication *Leading Change: Delivering the New Urban Agenda through Urban and Territorial Planning*, UN-Habitat posits that planning must be rights based. It must integrate development with infrastructure. It also emphasises that there must be strong focus on implementation that is informed by budgets. To be sustainable, planning must secure political legitimacy and must be alive to subsidiarity and diversity. To keep up with the pace of change of population and migration, planning must be clear, simple and rapid.

Planning must respect and capitalise on the special characteristics of the space being planned for. The *Leading Change* publication argues that if done well, urban and territorial planning contributes to increased human security by strengthening environmental and socio-economic resilience, enhancing mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change and improving the management of natural and environmental hazards and risks.

Government plays crucial roles in planning and developing sustainable settlements. Each sphere has key responsibilities and functions in fostering sustainable settlements, highlighting the integration of human, environmental, and economic factors. These responsibilities are segregated as follows

- 1. National Government Responsibilities:** Policy Formulation, Funding and Resource Allocation, Capacity Building and Monitoring and Evaluation
- 2. Provincial Government Responsibilities:** District Based Coordination and Support, Project Implementation and Technical Assistance, Monitoring and Evaluation
- 3. Local Government Responsibilities:** District Based Planning Human Settlements Planning and Land Use Management, By-laws and other Regulations, Infrastructure Development, Community Engagement and Participatory Planning, Environmental Sustainability, Economic Development and Livelihoods, Monitoring and Evaluation.

Some of this work is integrated and one of the focus areas is coordination amongst the three spheres of government. As Team Human Settlements, we are now starting to yield results, especially when it comes to all metros – we coordinate, plan, monitor and evaluate jointly. We do this through our Minmec, where we have our MECs, but also representatives of SALGA and Metro representatives. We will intensify this work through coordinated planning and project implementation, monitoring and evaluation in the seventh administration.

The President has announced the top priorities in working together in this Government to National Unity, ensuring that we are able to prioritise economic development, sustainable development and job creation as well as ensuring that we sustain our economy and democracy.

During the opening of Parliament, the President emphasised the key role in ensuring that we can, as a country, provide affordable housing. This is a challenge for us in an environment where it becomes difficult to find available land to build, hence part of the responsibility and work we started in the 6th Administration, is to work with the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure to redefine inner cities and repurpose our buildings to utilise them for human settlements. But this will put pressure on our infrastructure within inner cities as the majority of them were not designed for this purpose. We are finding that our cities are unsuitable in dealing with the challenges of today. As we reflect, we realise that having to retrofit is expensive but a necessary exercise.

As we plan today, we must ensure that we understand what currently is the capacity of cities and design programmes and responses that can adapt and ensure we do not end up with sewers running on the streets because of population growth and inability to carry capacity, as currently is the case now.

To create sustainable human settlements that lead to desired social and economic outcomes, planning needs to undergo significant changes. Through the District Development Model (DDM), all three spheres can play a role in ensuring that planning is coordinated and well-funded for sustainable implementation over time.

Given the unequal resource allocation between urban and rural areas there needs to be an emphasis on the inter-connectivity of urban and rural areas. This

means looking at larger scale units, even up to and beyond municipal boundaries. The idea of functional regions is important – these are the territories across which people move between home and work, or where urban areas get their water supply, to give just a couple of examples of functional connections. Furthermore, an administrative divide between an urban core and sub- or non-urban settlements can perpetuate inequalities. The District Development Model we are embarking on now goes some way to address this, but even taking a district wide approach without proper planning may perpetuate divisions and misalignment.

Future sustainable human settlements need to recognise the importance of the informal sector. This is not exclusively because that is where many of the poorest people gain their income; the informal sector is also an expression of, and incubator for, entrepreneurialism. In recognising that many businesses start in or near to the home, our planning must be done in a way that supports local business opportunities. For example, this could be achieved through making affordable sites and services available to households, and premises available for the township economy.

We need to be deliberate in ensuring that planning contributes to redressing social inequalities. Our cities continue to be fraught with deep inequalities. Majority of poor city dwellers stay far from economic opportunities such that the little income that they manage to earn a major percentage is spent on transport. These settlements that are on the fringes of the cities also lack social amenities such as schools and health facilities. If planners and policy makers disregard these differences, they will reproduce them. Barriers that are not confronted are reinforced.

Let us follow the UN-Habitat's **international guidelines on urban and territorial planning** that we helped develop, that we endorsed, and that we then committed to implementing in the New Urban Agenda. Let us commit to cutting through blockages by responding to the reality of our urbanisation, as it is occurring, and not perpetuate colonial and apartheid spatial legacies. Let us reimagine planning with people at the centre, and with its primary goal to ensure social, economic and environmental resilience of our communities.

I welcome the return of the Planning Africa Conference after a long absence. I encourage us to have honest conversations about what is not working now, about what actions can realistically be undertaken, given our resource and capacity constraints, and what we can overcome by working together.

I wish us to establish a regular forum for all the planners of the human settlements sector to reframe and reimagine planning as a profession and area of work that supports the global sustainable development agenda, the African development agenda, and our national development vision. I am open to hearing your suggestions, President of SAPI and participants of the 2024 Planning Africa Conference, on how such a forum can support these crucial objectives and more importantly how we can partner for a better country envisioned by our forebears.

Thank you.