



**MINISTRY
HUMAN SETTLEMENTS
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**REMARKS BY THE MINISTER OF HUMAN SETTLEMENTS, HE MINISTER
MMAMOLOKO KUBAYI, PLENARY OF THE NATIONAL URBAN FORUM, 10
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Leaders of SALGA

Senior government

Panelists

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning

Let me start by congratulating you on taking a vital step in the achievement of South Africa's urban agenda by convening here for three days.

South Africa's growing population coupled with the rapidly rising urbanization is a reality that the human settlement sector is going to grapple with for a foreseeable future.

As it currently stands, the demand for human settlement in our urban centers far outstrips the supply. Accordingly, we have seen the rise of informal settlements and urban inner-city slums, which not only place the lives of many families at risk of disaster but have also become a major source of social ills.

I say this to emphasise the point that conversations such as this one, which bring together all the stakeholders are long overdue.

The National Development Plan (NDP) calls on South Africa to “start a national conversation about cities, towns and villages”, and argues that “South Africa would benefit from greater public awareness, mutual understanding and discussion of the future of its villages, towns and cities.

To achieve this the media and civil society organisations could stimulate a conversation at national, provincial and local levels about neighbourhoods, towns and cities.

Municipalities, provinces and national departments will facilitate and engage on the debate, and incorporate the emerging ideas and suggestions into their strategic plans.

South Africa’s housing policy has its roots in the National Housing Forum, a multi-stakeholder body that consisted of civil society, business, political parties, labour and the then apartheid government, in the early 1990s.

This culminated into the Botshabelo Accord, where democratic South Africa’s first Housing Minister, Joe Slovo, convened all parties to commit them to address the plight of millions left without houses by the apartheid regime.

While the Botshabelo Accord represented a popular expression of intent, the substance and full policy text appeared in the White Paper on Housing of 1994.

Now, thirty years later we are preparing a new White Paper, this time a White Paper on Human Settlements.

It is the product of many discussions in the sector, interrogating of research of past performance and challenges encountered, and anticipation of future trends.

It aligns with the global discussions we have been participating in that culminated in the adoption of the New Urban Agenda by the United Nations and United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat’s) Global Action Plan for the accelerated transformation of informal settlements and slums to 2030.

The review of the 1994 White Paper and development of the new White paper has given us an opportunity to reflect on the journey travelled in the human settlement sector since the dawn of democracy.

Although there are still many challenges, Government has made great strides in this sector.

Government has provided about 4.8 million houses and housing opportunities.

Of significance the Census Report 2022 noted that 88,5% of households lived in formal dwellings in 2022 compared with 77,6% in 2011; and only 7,9% of households live in informal dwellings compared with 13,6% in 2011.

Our review revealed numerous shortcomings related to gaps in policy and programme implementation. Such gaps demonstrate significant shifts in society that demand an updated and responsive policy.

These shifts include, population growth, rapid urbanisation, migration patterns, the emergence of innovative technology, climate change and changing human settlements demand patterns.

These shifts require us to develop new ways of doing things, better ways of planning, change of pace of delivery and adoption of innovative processes and technologies.

The NDP conceives of a South Africa that by 2030 no longer has 'poverty traps in rural areas and urban townships, workers isolated on the periphery of cities; inner cities controlled by slumlords and crime; sterile suburbs with homes surrounded by high walls and electric fences; households spending 30 percent or more of their time, energy and money on daily commuting; decaying infrastructure with power blackouts, undrinkable water, potholes and blocked sewers; violent protests; gridlocked roads and unreliable public transport; new public housing in barren urban landscapes; new private investment creating exclusive enclaves for the rich; fearful immigrant communities living in confined spaces; or rural communities vying as local production collapses'.

The New Urban Agenda adopted by United Nations members in Quito, Ecuador, in October 2016 is a global commitment to addressing urbanization over the next twenty years.

It addresses the required policy, institutional, and programmatic commitments member states would have to implement, to tackle urbanization and the reduction of poverty and inequality going forward.

South Africa actively shaped the New Urban Agenda adopted at Habitat III, through a collaborative effort of sector stakeholders. Then, after the adoption of the New Urban Agenda by the United Nations, we developed the discussion document for the localisation of the New Urban Agenda in South Africa in 2018.

The same collaborative effort continues to be required to drive its implementation.

Localizing the New Urban Agenda requires all the organisations, institutions, and actors who play a role in urban development, spatial transformation, and human settlements to identify what their contribution should and can be. We seek to do this through collaboration, co-production, and partnership. The discussion document further acknowledges that:

“In an all of society approach, the different stakeholder groupings must share a common vision for the future development of urban areas, and, more importantly, have a shared view on what all involved will have to do to achieve the vision.”

The National Urban Forum offers us an opportunity to engage in conversations to refine and improve our own policies, programmes and define agreed actions.

We have an opportunity here to enhance the human settlements and urban development trajectory of the country and develop concrete programmes and projects that result in real outcomes.

We have made a commitment that our approach to human settlements delivery will be guided by the principle of continuous improvement.

I look forward to hearing your proposals on how we can improve the human settlements delivery system.

Two days ago, we launched the Human Settlements research agenda which is a framework that will bring together a number of research institutions that will collaborate with us to conceptualize the future of human settlements.

The research will help us to develop policies that are evidence-based, and also help us to crowd-in bright young people who will generate and shape new ideas and drive innovation in the sector.

The National Urban Forum is a platform that is highly recommended by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, UN-Habitat, which has developed a useful guideline on how it should be created and organised.

In this regard, I also wish to highlight that the National Urban Forum falls hot on the heels of the inaugural African Urban Forum (AUF) held on 4-6 September 2024, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Our delegation to the AUF was co-led by Deputy Ministers Tandi Mahambehla from Human Settlements and Dr Dickson Masemola from Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs.

In conclusion, it is therefore, befitting that as we intensify our preparations to the Twelfth Edition of the World Urban Forum, to be held in Cairo from 4-8 November 2024, we take note the lessons learned from the AUF and consolidate our future urbanization strategies, policies and plans with a revitalised mandate that we are collectively crafting in this inaugural National Urban Forum. I wish you fruitful discussions which will have a long-lasting impact on our shared urban future.

I thank you.

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