

Statement by Deputy Minister, Ms Zou Kota-Fredericks at the occasion of the Global Platform for the Right to the City Africa Regional Meeting on 28 November 2015 at the University of Witwatersrand

Programme Director:

Representatives from different countries, organisations and academia

Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like to express my appreciation for the invitation to participate at the Global Platform for the Right to the City African Regional meeting here in South Africa. Us being here today is part of an important process to form part of this panel on a new global urban consensus on how to address human settlements and urban development in the context of our broader development imperatives.

We have a unique opportunity at this moment to recognize the important role our sector plays in the implementation of the post 2015 development agenda, and in the Africa Agenda 2063.

South Africa has recognized human settlements and urban development as a critical element of our National Development Plan. Our Integrated Urban Development Framework seeks to address urbanization by recognizing that it cannot be divorced from overall economic, social, political and physical development along the rural and urban development field. Let us not forget our commitment to Section 26(1) of our Constitution which provides that everyone shall have the right of access to adequate housing. There must be progressive realisation of this right within available resources.

I do not need to re-state the facts about our rapidly urbanizing continent and the challenges and opportunities that brings with it, informal settlements sprawling all over, many of them are in City Centres or form corridors to the Cities, meaning that people want to leave closer to places of work.

I also do not need to re-state the persistent and urgent need to provide adequate housing and basic services to all as entrenched in section 26(1) of our Constitution and the difficulties we all face in making that a reality.

In this regard South Africa is one of the members of the Ministerial sub-committee on human settlements and urban development of the African Union Specialised Technical Committee on Public Service, Local Government, Urban Development and Decentralization (STC 8) has had engagements on developing a Common African Position for Habitat III, to ensure that Africa becomes an active driver of the development of the Habitat III outcome document, aligned to Africa Agenda 2063 and the emerging African urban agenda.

South Africa's position in the preparatory processes for Habitat III is as follows:

During the preparatory processes in the United Nations, and within the African Union, South Africa has supported the position that the original mandate of the Habitat Agenda which is "adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlement in an urbanizing world" still remains valid. So our starting point must be that the new Agenda builds on what we agreed to in 1996. But we also acknowledge that there needs to be a concrete agenda that also speaks to the urban challenges. There are shortcomings that need to be addressed in terms of urban planning, urban governance, and urban economies and finance.

South Africa has emphasized that the new agenda should reference the role of all relevant stakeholders, from local government actors, community-based organisations, community members, planners, academics, and the private sector. We will need to implement the new Agenda collaboratively, so a continuous process of stakeholder engagement and sharing of information will ensure that we are all empowered to participate meaningfully in the creation of our future.

We have endorsed the notion that urbanisation could support the structural transformation of Africa if properly harnessed. We have stressed that urbanization takes place in a diversity of settlement types and so we need to ensure that the New Agenda addresses the spatial continuum of urban and rural development and the close interface socially and economically between places.

South Africa has argued that the new agenda for human settlements and urban development must ensure access, participation, and empowerment for all, with special emphasis on vulnerable groups, women, youth and people with disabilities. This would be in line with Aspiration Six of the African Union Agenda 2063, which speaks to: “An Africa whose development is people-driven, especially relying on the potential offered by its Women and Youth and well-cared for Children”.

The emerging Common African Position:

The African Union in its Agenda 2063 has recognized human settlements and urban development as important transformative forces. Specifically, it envisages a continent where “Cities and other settlements are hubs of cultural and economic activities, with modernized infrastructure, and (where) people have access to all the basic necessities of life including shelter, water, sanitation, energy, public transport and ICT”.

In this regard the Ministerial sub-committee on human settlements and urban development of the African Union Specialised Technical Committee on Public Service, Local Government, Urban Development and Decentralisation (STC 8) has had engagements on developing a Common African Position for Habitat III, to ensure that Africa becomes an active driver of the development of the Habitat III outcome document, aligned to Africa Agenda 2063 and the emerging African urban agenda. The Common African Position is being developed and hopefully will be adopted by the African Union Heads of State and Government Summit in 2016 (January or June Summit)

The current working document identifies 8 pillars as last discussed in November 2015 during the special Working Group on draft Common African Position for Habitat 3:

Pillar 1: Harness the potential of Urbanization to accelerate structural economic transformation and inclusive growth by:

- deploying adequate financial resources in the productive urban sectors for planning and management of urban areas, investment in infrastructure and basic services for human settlements development and provision of decent and affordable housing particularly to the low income segments
- promoting inclusive economic growth that translates to decent job creation as well as improved living standards for all
- Promoting connectivity between rural and urban areas to harness the full potential of the urban rural linkage.

- transforming the urban economies into high productivity and value adding activities
- Promoting planning and investment for sustainable urban mobility systems that link people, places and economic opportunities

Pillar 2: Link Sustainable Urban and Human Settlements Development with Resilience through:

- fostering resilience of human settlements, including social and economic resilience, along the rural - urban development continuum, and enhancing rural-urban linkages
- adoption and domestication of the International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning, and effective land use planning
- .active partnerships with the private sector as the key actors of land development, for the greater public good in human settlements
- up-scaling participatory slum upgrading and prevention programmes
- building institutional capacity [and enhance it where it exists]for urban safety, resilience and disaster risk management recognizing that urban areas are particularly vulnerable to climate change risks
- installing early warning systems and urban observatories for disaster risk management and mitigation
- preserving eco-systems and increasing urban public spaces,
- Addressing urban pollution, promoting renewable energy utilization, and improving waste management.

Pillar 3: Enhance people-centered urban and human settlements development through,

- provision of basic services to all including water and sanitation for equitable, inclusive and sustainable urban and human settlement development;
- promoting gender equity;
- Ensuring safety and security in human settlements
- facilitating access to urban services and housing for migrants and refugees

- Promoting consultative frameworks among all urban and human settlements stakeholders as well as promoting participatory approach in urban project implementation
- Ensuring accessibility to housing and urban basic services for all, including vulnerable groups such as people with disability, children and the elderly.

Pillar 4: Strengthening institutions and systems for promoting transformative change in human settlements through:-

- Adoption of integrated National Urban Policies including the review of planning curriculums in line with UN Habitat Resolution 25/6 on the International Guidelines for Urban and Territorial Planning.
- Supporting preemptive, spatial and programmatic planning as an effective mechanism for responding to rapid urbanization and for directing sustainable human settlements development
- Promoting effective decentralized urban management by capacitating technically and financially local authorities to deliver adequate shelter and sustainable human settlements
- Strengthening urban governance through legislative capacity and law enforcement for efficient and effective service delivery

Pillar 5: Enhance the contribution of urban and human settlements development to the continental integration process by:-

- promoting sustainable planning and management systems of border cities and urban corridors within and across international boundaries;
- expanding continental spatial development programmes as well as regional and interregional infrastructure, facilities and initiatives that would promote cross boundary interaction and leverage urban and human settlements assets;

Pillar 6: Enhance Africa's global competitiveness through Urban and human settlements development by:-

- Promoting specialization amongst Africa's major cities with a view to maximizing the continent's value addition.
- Promote inclusive cities as articulated in the African Agenda 2063 through advocacy and outreach;

- Strive to promote strategic synergy and forge within the continent's integration framework, a dynamic network of urban and human settlements that are competitive on the global platform.
- Develop smart cities with improved urban systems for improved functionality, efficiency and effective delivery of urban basic services and infrastructure ;

Pillar 7: Enhancing Environmental Sustainability and Effective Response to Climate Change in Human Settlements by:

- Strengthening capacities for strategic response to climate change adaptation;
- Developing infrastructure for mitigating the impact of floods and inundations, coastal erosion, drought, as well as increasing heat in human settlements especially in slums and informal settlements;
- Promoting Green building and infrastructure technologies as well as the application of designs which mitigate climate change and adapt to its impact
- Fostering the utilization of sustainable renewable energy and resources as well as investment in Low carbon production systems in urban centres
- Developing systems for sustainable Solid and liquid waste management, including promoting the principle of reducing, reusing and recycling of resources;

Pillar 8: Institute a Global partnership for sustainable urban management to facilitate implementation of the new global urban and human settlements agenda in Africa which

- Recognizes the importance of continued implementation of the unfinished business of the relevant MDGs and Habitat Agenda
- Acknowledges the importance of addressing human settlements continuum as a driving force for structural transformation
- establishes an operational fund for facilitating implementation of the new urban and human settlements agenda
- strengthens existing institutions and arrangements for implementation
- strengthens the UN-Habitat to make it politically visible, as a key player in mobilizing all relevant actors, state and non-state in implementing the outcome of Habitat III as well as the urban and human settlements component of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

However, South Africa stresses the importance of the people-centred approach (pillar 3), strengthening institutions (pillar 4) and the global partnership (pillar 8). That is why we're here today.

Nigeria will be holding a regional preparatory conference in early 2016, during which the proposal for a common African position will be finalized for consideration by African Heads of State and Government at one of AU Summits in 2016.

Thus I wish to emphasise at that at this positive moment we need to work together to fully make sure that human settlements and urban development are appropriately located and mainstreamed in the current critical global debates.

Thank you.