



MINISTRY
COOPERATIVE GOVERNANCE AND TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

LOCAL GOVERNMENT WEEK – 2025
REMARKS BY DEPUTY MINISTER PRINCE BURNS NCAMASHE
NCOP
16 SEPTEMBER 2025

Programme Director,

Chairperson of the NCOP, Honourable Ms R Mtshweni-Tsipane,

Deputy Chairperson of the NCOP,

Chairpersons of the Select and Portfolio Committees of CoGTA and other Parliamentary Committees,

Honourable Members of the NCOP,

Cabinet Ministers and Deputy Ministers,

MECs from our provinces,

Auditor-General of South Africa, Ms Tsakani Maluleke,

President of SALGA, Councillor Bheki Stofile,

Esteemed guests, Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning.

It is an immense honour to address you at this 2025 Local Government Week. This address takes place under the theme: “Delivering Integrated Services to the People through Co-operative Governance and Support to the Local Sphere of Government.”

For us, this theme is not just a matter of administration. It is about the lived reality of our people. It is about whether a family in Kuruman can open a tap and find clean water. Whether a young person in Matatiele sees a road to opportunity. Whether a clinic in

Gugulethu has electricity to keep vaccines cold. Whether a grandmother in rural KwaZulu-Natal feels safe walking in her community.

RESTORING THE DIGNITY OF OUR PEOPLE

Honourable Chairperson, restoring the dignity of our people requires:

- Service delivery that works
- Improved quality of life
- Increased citizen trust
- Sustainable development.

This is why at CoGTA we say, emphatically: Every Municipality Must Work. That is our rallying call. Local government cannot be left to stumble while the people suffer. Every municipality must be supported, capacitated, stabilised, and made to work, because when municipalities fail, democracy itself is undermined.

And here is the principle we must always hold firm: when municipalities stumble, national and provincial government must step in, not to take over, but to support, guide, and stabilise. That is what the Constitution envisages in Section 154.

THE STATE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Honourable Members,

We must be candid about where we stand.

In recent years, there has been progress. The number of municipalities classified as stable increased from 30 in 2022 to 61 in 2023. Municipalities in distress were reduced from 66 to 35. This tells us that targeted interventions are bearing fruit.

But let us not sugar-coat matters. The majority of municipalities - 161 of them, or 63 percent remain at risk. Governance instability, financial distress, poor audit outcomes, and failing infrastructure continue to hold communities back.

In Limpopo, for example, only two municipalities achieved clean audits in the last cycle. Fourteen were unqualified, ten were qualified, and one received a disclaimer. This is not unique to Limpopo, it is a national trend. We must be honest that while some indicators show progress, for far too many households the daily lived reality remains unchanged.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND FUNDING SUPPORT

One of the most powerful levers we have is infrastructure investment.

Between 2021 and 2024, national government allocated R163 billion in direct transfers to local government, with R158.8 billion earmarked for infrastructure. A further R23 billion was provided indirectly, largely for infrastructure. This is not small change. It is a direct commitment to restore dignity through services.

The Integrated Urban Development Grant (IUDG) achieved a 99.94% expenditure rate in 2024/25. Municipalities like Ray Nkonyeni and Sol Plaatje demonstrated what is possible when planning, leadership, and oversight align.

But the challenges remain stark. Underspensing, late contractor appointments, weak planning, and poor project management continue to cripple progress in municipalities across the country.

The lesson is clear: money without capacity is wasteful. Funding without accountability collapses. That is why professionalisation of local government, from mayors to municipal managers, CFOs, and engineers, is not a luxury. It is a necessity.

PROFESSIONALISATION AND LEADERSHIP

Professionalisation of local government cannot be a by-the-way issue. It is the pillar of a capable, developmental state. Competent mayors, speakers, and councillors are not optional, they are custodians of service delivery and stewards of public trust. Equally, municipalities must have qualified municipal managers, CFOs, and technical directors.

We must fill vacancies, deploy skilled professionals, and build confidence in municipalities. Without this, no grant, no intervention, no plan can succeed.

Our municipalities must embody the ideals of a capable, ethical, and developmental state. This requires professionalising local public administration and ensuring municipalities are staffed by competent and ethical officials.

In 2021, the Municipal Staff Regulations and Guidelines were promulgated to introduce uniform standards for recruitment, appointments, job evaluation, performance management, and disciplinary processes. These measures also help curb maladministration and prevent unethical officials dismissed in one municipality from being re-employed elsewhere.

We have also advanced the Local Government Competency Framework, aligned to the broader Professionalisation Framework of the Public Service. This framework ensures that senior municipal managers are appointed on merit, assessed for competency, and held accountable for performance.

The Municipal Systems Amendment Act of 2022 further strengthens governance, requiring that all senior appointments meet minimum competency requirements, prohibits bloating of administrations, and empowers the Minister to investigate maladministration and corruption.

We are now piloting prototype staff establishments, designed to make municipal organograms fit-for-purpose, curb bloated administrations, and redirect resources to core service delivery.

Looking ahead, our implementation plan includes reviewing appointment regulations, establishing a Professional Leadership Development Programme, and considering the establishment of a Statutory Council for Municipal Managers to regulate professional standards and enforce accountability.

NATIONAL SUPPORT AND INTERVENTIONS

Honourable Members,

When municipalities falter, support must be structured, targeted, and decisive.

Through Schedule 6B interventions, we have channelled R88.3 million to municipalities like uThukela and Emfuleni to tackle urgent needs in water, sanitation, roads, electricity, and waste management.

Debt relief has also been critical:

- Eskom Debt Relief: As of March 2023, municipalities owed Eskom R58.5 billion. Government has approved R55.3 billion in relief, with 71 municipalities qualifying. Already, 24 municipalities have secured a first-cycle write-off worth R4.1 billion.
- Water Board Debt Relief: Municipalities owe more than R25 billion to water boards. Relief is tied to reforms — from financial recovery plans to the use of smart meters and special purpose vehicles to manage water services sustainably.

These are not bailouts. They are lifelines tied to reforms, opportunities for municipalities to reset, rebuild, and restore financial health.

Currently, 39 municipalities are under Section 139 interventions, and four are under Section 139(7) national interventions: Lekwa (Mpumalanga), Mangaung (Free State), Enoch Mgijima (Eastern Cape) and recently Ditsobotla (North - West).

As honourable members would be aware, the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Municipal Audit Outcomes has prioritised 10 distressed municipalities for focused support, targeting debt resolution, governance reforms, and turnaround strategies. This is cooperative governance in action: national, provincial, and local spheres working together to stabilise municipalities.

DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT MODEL (DDM)

To truly integrate services, we need one plan, one budget, one implementation. That is the promise of the District Development Model (DDM).

The DDM does away with silos, ensuring joint planning, budgeting, and monitoring across all spheres. It aligns local action with the National Development Plan, Agenda 2063, and the Sustainable Development Goals.

We are continuing to institutionalise the DDM in all provinces. One Plans are being rolled out, IGR structures are being resuscitated, and district spaces are being made the fulcrum of developmental compacts. Because our people do not live in silos, and neither should government.

WHITE PAPER REVIEW

The 1998 White Paper on Local Government was visionary in its time. It introduced developmental local government and helped us build democratic municipalities where none had existed.

But after 25 years, it no longer reflects today's realities. That is why, on 19 May 2025, we launched a comprehensive review of the White Paper.

Public consultations have been robust. The deadline for submissions was extended to 31 July 2025, and we received over 265 submissions from municipalities, professional bodies, political parties, and the public.

This process marks a critical step in reforming local government so that it becomes resilient, developmental, and fit for purpose in the 21st century.

MISA SUPPORT AND SPATIAL TRANSFORMATION

Through the Municipal Infrastructure Support Agent (MISA), municipalities are receiving hands-on support in planning, engineering, and service delivery.

- **Spatial Planning and Land Use:** MISA helps municipalities prepare SPLUMA-compliant spatial plans and implement the National Spatial Development Framework (NSDF), addressing apartheid's spatial legacies and promoting integrated communities.
- **Water and Sanitation:** MISA assists water service authorities with O&M frameworks, asset management, and the use of MIG allocations for infrastructure repairs. In 2025/26, corrective projects worth R494m are underway in 21 municipalities to improve Blue and Green Drop scores.

- Capacity Building: Young graduates, artisans, and apprentices are being deployed to municipalities to build a pipeline of engineers, planners, and technicians.

We are confident that this is capacity building not for today only, but for tomorrow.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE

Chairperson,

Chairperson, another important element to delivering integrated services to the people through co-operative governance and support to Local Sphere of Government also touches on Disaster Risk Reduction. It is important to build a Capable Developmental Local Governments and ensure that South Africa's disaster risk reduction approach incorporates elements of climate change adaptation, monitoring and resilience building, as stipulated in the specific overarching goal of South Africa's National Development Plan (NDP), which is to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030 with reference to the safety of its citizens.

South Africa's disaster risk reduction approach can no longer be separated from the realities of climate change. Our strategy must now fully incorporate elements of climate change adaptation, monitoring, and resilience building. This is in line with the overarching goal of our National Development Plan, which seeks to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030, while ensuring the safety and security of our citizens.

We must be guided by evidence. Scientific research, data, and scenario planning point to an undeniable reality: South Africa will face growing levels of vulnerability and exposure to climate-related disasters. We are already experiencing the devastating impacts of floods, windstorms, droughts, heat waves, and fires. In addition, there is the looming risk of health-related emergencies linked to changing weather patterns and environmental degradation. These disasters will not only increase in frequency, but also in intensity, with far-reaching socio-economic consequences for communities, infrastructure, and livelihoods.

In response to this urgent challenge, the President has signed into law the Climate Change Act, Act 22 of 2024. This Act is a milestone in our country's journey to building a climate-resilient future. It provides South Africa with a comprehensive and integrated framework to respond to climate change across all sectors of society.

The Climate Change Act places clear obligations on sectors, provinces, and district municipalities. It requires them to undertake climate risk and vulnerability assessments, identify their specific needs, and develop response plans. This will ensure that our climate change response is not fragmented, but instead coordinated across the three spheres of government and aligned with national priorities.

We are not working in isolation. South Africa's projected climate futures are informed by extensive modelling and research undertaken by the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, working closely with the South African Weather Service, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research through the Green Book, and leading international bodies such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the World Bank. This wealth of scientific insight allows us to plan, prepare, and build resilience proactively rather than reactively.

Colleagues, our path forward is clear: disaster risk reduction and climate change response must be embedded into every facet of our governance, planning, and service delivery. In doing so, we will not only safeguard our citizens against present and future risks but also advance the vision of the National Development Plan - a South Africa free of poverty and inequality, where every citizen can live in safety and dignity.

TRADITIONAL LEADERSHIP

Furthermore, traditional leadership is an integral aspect of a functional local government. The Municipal Structures Act provides that traditional leadership should be involved in municipal governance through meaningful participation in, and among other areas by:

- Supporting the relevant municipality in promoting integrated local economic development and planning

- Make recommendations and propose appropriate interventions in respect of service delivery within the defined areas of jurisdiction of the relevant traditional councils;
- Participating in relevant development programmes of the municipality;
- Promoting the ideals of co-operative governance, integrated development planning, sustainable development and service delivery
- Promoting indigenous knowledge systems; and
- Participating and ensuring the participation of traditional and Khoi-San communities in any environmental programmes of the municipality.
- Integrating the rural Master Plan which the Traditional leaders have developed into government plans.

CONCLUSION: MAKING EVERY MUNICIPALITY WORK

Honourable Members,

Our collective oversight and accountability across the three spheres of government can and must restore trust in local government.

Together, through cooperative governance, shared accountability, and unwavering commitment, we can make every municipality work.

When every municipality works, every community thrives. When every municipality works, we restore the dignity of our people.

I thank you.