



MINISTRY

**HUMAN SETTLEMENTS
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

SPEECH

BY

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SOUTH AFRICA**

**ON THE OCCASION OF
THE DEBATE AT THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PROVINCES ON
2025 LOCAL GOVERNEMENT WEEK**

16 SEPTEMBER 2025

Honourable Chairperson of the NCOP, Mrs Refilwe Mtshweni-Tsipane

Honourable Deputy Chairperson of the NCOP, Mr. Les Govender

Honourable Members

Minister and Deputy Ministers

Ladies and gentlemen

Good day,

The 2025 Local Government Week of ***“Restoring the dignity of our people through spatial planning, provision of human settlements and water and sanitation”*** is quite instructive and it directly speaks to our mandate as the human settlements’ portfolio.

We enter this debate cognisant of the realities of systematic failures, structural impediments, and a myriad of governance challenges plaguing the local government and the provision of sustainable basic services to our communities.

Over the weekend, the African National Congress turned its specific focus on local government, we took stock of the underlying issues affecting the sector and renewed our commitment to accelerate the delivery of services

to the people in struggling municipalities, and we shall live up to the organisational directives and commitments to turn things around and strengthen the work of the sector, consistent with our adopted Local Government Action Plan.

In 2004, cabinet adopted the Breaking New Ground (BNG) policy, a comprehensive plan for the development of sustainable human settlements, cabinet introduced this plan to move beyond simple housing provision to creating integrated communities.

The focal point of Breaking New Ground (BNG) policy is predicated on developing sustainable human settlements with access to social and economic amenities, upgrading informal settlements, and integrating different housing types and financial subsidies.

It is undeniable that significant work has been done to implement the BNG policy through the department of human settlements and bring the historically marginalised communities closer to centres of economic activities, and we are not oblivious to the fact that more still needs to be done.

Honourable Chairperson

Once again, this important and timely debate takes place in the year of the 70th anniversary of the Freedom Charter since its historic adoption by the South Africans of all walks of life in Kliptown in 1955, the Freedom Charter aptly framed the hopes and aspirations of our people, and imagined the South Africa they want characterised by spatial justice.

We dare not fail the collective wisdom of the South Africans who gathered in Kliptown to define our future, and we make no apology for creating a conducive environment for the clauses of the Freedom Charter to find sufficient expression, in our quest to completely obliterate the apartheid spatial geography.

We will continue to use the housing delivery programmes of the department of human settlements to radically change the human settlements landscape in South Africa, to reflect the demographics of the country by building sustainable and integrated human settlements in areas where apologists and architects of the apartheid ideology didn't allow our people to be settled.

As part of rolling out major infrastructure projects in the human settlements sector, last month in August, together with MEC Duma, we

handed over 1000 houses in Cornubia, an area which is a mixed income development, demonstrating our deliberate intentions to building integrated human settlements in practical terms, and not in theory. Cornubia, is part of Northern nodes of Durban linking with the King Shaka International Airport, the project will yield 28 000 homes upon completion.

Human Settlements infrastructure projects are differentiated to respond to the different market segment that we serve as a portfolio, the creation of sustainable integrated human settlements has been a major development in the sector, and this has been driven through large integrated or catalytical projects. These include, and not limited to:

- Fleurhof ongoing affordable housing project which is the bridge of the historical middle and working class divide in the Roodeport node and Main Reef Road Corridor, which has enabled a growing market in Meadowlands in Soweto; it includes more than 8,000 low-income and middle-income housing units;
- Savannah City will be providing more than 18,000 homes in the South West Johannesburg;
- In the Free State, Vista Park project is projected to provide and integrate the spatial landscape of Mangaung with 6 036 residential opportunities for all income segment of the market;

- Lufhereng is a mega housing project on 2 000 hectares of land secured for the western expansion of Soweto with the capacity to accommodate over 30 000 households in a wide variety of housing typologies and land tenure options

I must also hasten to indicate that we are effectively undermining the apartheid spatial planning through the delivery of social housing programmes, largely driven by our Social Housing Regulatory Authority (SHRA), SHRA prides itself with an existential task of “reviving cities through social housing”.

Accordingly, the Social Housing Programme forms part of the broader National Human Settlement Housing Programmes as a rental offering to low-to-moderate income households that do not qualify for bonded products or fully subsidised state housing.

It's intended, among others to:

- Contribute to the government agenda of re-dressing the imbalances of the past by:
- Bringing lower-income people into areas where there are major economic opportunities
- Promoting a mix of races and classes, through the promotion of spatial access to economic opportunity and promoting job creation

We do this, mindful of the fact that human settlements are the heart of inclusive development, and they are not just about shelter, but the people's dignity, safety, and most importantly opportunities, an important aspect of human development previously denied to many South Africans because of separate development, perpetuated by the apartheid government.

The White Paper for Human Settlements succinctly clarifies that Human Settlements is a local government function. This clarity comes from the fact that Human Settlements is a product of spatial planning which is a function of local government through the Spatial Land Use Management Act (SPLUMA).

The SPLUMA mandates local authorities to plan for land use through their Integrated Development Programme (IDP), Spatial Development Framework (SDF), and Land Use Management Strategies (LUMS). The town planning exercise which is performed at the local government level is a responsibility of a through planning process that includes a variety of key SPLUMA principles that yield Integrated sustainable Human settlements.

Although the regulatory framework that occasions and operationalizes spatial planning and integrated development in local government is developed, monitored, and supported at the National government (and Provincial government), the actual work happens at the local government level. As such, human settlements is just but one aspect of the greater, and broader Spatial Planning and Land Use Management processes that take place at the local government level.

The mutually reinforcing relationship between human settlements and spatial planning is an incredible one as conceived in Chapter 8 of the National Development Plan (NDP). The NDP clearly demonstrates that human settlements is a leader towards transforming the space economy.

This means that as human settlements we can dictate economic development direction. If well-planned, coordinated, and delivered in an integrated and sustainable manner, the space economy will follow the direction that human settlements take.

We have ambitious plans for the now and the future as guided by our 2025-2030 Strategic Plan and the recently approved White Paper on Human Settlements, which are intrinsic with the priorities of the 7th

administration, particularly, the priority of driving inclusive growth and job creation.

This means that economic opportunities will be created in the developmental direction of where people live, work, and worship, just to mention a few salient underlying aspects underpinning our work as the department.

It is without doubt that the human settlements' sector is central in achieving priority number of two of the 7th administration, obviously, we must not be oblivious of the fact that we undertake this work under the environment characterized by constrained shrinking budgets, high unemployment rates, and rising construction costs and regular project disruptions, by construction mafias.

This demands that we put more emphasis on innovation, collaboration, and do more with less.

Honourable Chairperson

One crucial aspect that brings it all together is good governance in local government. This is not just merely one of the core spatial principal

features, but the cardinal cornerstone of intergovernmental relations. Both human settlements and spatial planning can never realise their intended strategic objectives if they are not anchored on the principles of good governance.

Thus, local government units have an obligation to ensure continuous improvement on good governance and improved service delivery commitments. Fortunately, the templates to assist in such exists through back-to-basics among other things.

We are on the cusp of restoring people's dignity in our systems, in the current 2025/2026 financial year, we committed to modernising how we serve our beneficiaries. A key part of this commitment is the upgrading of the current Housing Subsidy System (HSS) to the **National Digital Human Settlements Management System (NDHSMS)**. This innovation will place transparency, efficiency, and accountability at the centre of our housing delivery, working together with municipalities leveraging the District Development Model (DDM).

To this end, working with the State Information Technology Agency (SITA), we have already established governance structures. This includes a Steering Committee and Technical Working Groups to ensure alignment

with national ICT governance frameworks and manage implementation risks.

To ensure the system is fit for purpose, we have nominated subject matter experts from provinces, metros, and entities to guide its design. Their input will ensure the system responds to the realities of human settlements delivery across the country.

The NDHSMS will allow citizens to **apply online for housing opportunities**, track their applications in real time, and receive updates via SMS, WhatsApp, and other channels. Through the system, allocation will be automated, fair, and fully transparent, thus eliminating any room for manipulation.

Furthermore, the system will provide advanced tools for **project and contract management, land and infrastructure oversight, financial reconciliation**, and real-time analytics. These capabilities will strengthen our ability to monitor both financial and non-financial performance across the sector.

I have made it clear to the team driving this project and impressed them that the system must be fully operational by March 2026.

Delivering title deeds to rightful owners remains one of our top priorities. Between 2024 and 2029, we aim to register and hand over 80,000 title deeds, unlocking over R16 billion in asset value.

Last month, in August, we relaunched the Title Deeds Fridays Campaign to mobilise all spheres of government to release available title deeds to the rightful beneficiaries of state-subsidised housing programmes. The results of the Title Deeds Fridays Campaign speak for themselves. Since the campaign's initial inception in 2023, a total of 68,460 title deeds have been issued nationwide.

Since the relaunch of this campaign on 08 August 2025 in Polokwane, we have already issued 1,026 title deeds in municipalities including Lephalale, Nelson Mandela Bay, kwaMhlanga, Siyacuma, Overstrand, Mandeni, and Matzikama, including here in Cape Town in Bishop Lavis, unlocking nearly R200 million in asset value for beneficiaries.

We commend Provincial MECs, Mayors and Councillors for dedicating time each Friday to this important initiative. Title deeds are not just legal documents, they are instruments of dignity, economic empowerment, security and a promise of a better future. We will be taking the campaign

to the Govan Mbeki Local Municipality, Emzisoni, in Mpumalanga this week, as part of our collective effort to restore the dignity of the people through the housing programmes of the department of human settlements.

One of our key priorities remains the revitalisation and completion of all blocked projects. Progress is being made, and we will continue to work closely with stakeholders to ensure that these projects are delivered to beneficiaries as a matter of urgency. A clear directive has been issued to the sector to prioritise the completion of projects that have already commenced, wherever it is feasible to do so. This was reaffirmed in our February meeting with MECs for Human Settlements. We cannot allow public resources to be wasted, nor can we allow communities to wait endlessly for homes that were promised.

However, it must be noted that to revitalise and expedite the completion of these blocked projects is mainly dependent on a sustainable integrated financial model. The latter is influenced by the reality that our conditional grants such as the Humans Settlements Development Grant (HSDG), Urban Settlements Development Grant (USDG) and Informal Settlements Upgrading Partnership Grant (ISUPG) are not sufficient to respond to the

increasing costs of construction materials and demand for housing opportunities due to rapid urbanisation.

To operationalise the blended financing mechanism, the Affordable Rental & Social Housing Branch of the department has initiated working sessions with the unit responsible for Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) and Government Technical Advisory Centre (GTAC) at National Treasury. The aim of these engagements is to explore various funding mechanisms that the Human Settlements sector can leverage on to expedite the planning, budgeting and implementation of the existing 50 catalytic mixed development projects across the country, that have to yield more than 600 000 housing opportunities of mixed typologies.

The guidance received thus far is that all provincial departments (through their MECs) would need to identify and commit the category of work that they intend to handover to the private sector as a strategy to augment the technical capacity in government departments, especially those that are responsible for providing bulk water and sanitation infrastructure as the main components of a serviced site.

Upon completion of the technical needs assessments, the National Department of Human Settlements intends to develop a Public-Private Partnership Framework for the sector. This framework will set out the essential criteria for proposed housing developments to qualify as

catalytic projects, as well as the process by which the private sector can participate.

Honourable Chairperson

I must also indicate that as the sector, we are also focusing on expediting the implementation of smart cities such as Lanseria Smart City and Matlosana Smart City to mention a few. These types of projects have the capacity to advance the country's Digital Transformation agenda, particularly in the realm of spatial planning. Hence, the establishment of the PPP framework will position the sector to adopt more efficient and contemporary construction methods going forward.

Honourable Chairperson

Before I conclude, allow me to emphasise that spatial transformation should not merely focus on infrastructure development but should also consider the following Public Value measurement dimensions by (Faulkner and Kaufman, 2017) as means of measuring the dignity that needs to be restored. These dimensions are:

1. **Efficiency:** in relation to Stakeholder value, Innovation, Productivity, Effectiveness and Parsimony.

2. **Outcome achievement:** in terms of common good, social cohesion, Public Interest, Fairness, Equity, Access to Knowledge, Employment and Benefits of economic endeavours.
3. **Trust and legitimacy:** by promoting Accountability, Dialogue, Responsiveness, Integrity, Honesty, Openness, Citizen Involvement, Self-development, Professionalism and User democracy.
4. **Service Delivery Quality:** User-orientation, Adaptability, Friendliness, Stability, Reliability and Timeliness.

Lastly, the impact of the expected spatial transformation should demonstrate our contribution towards the realisation of the following United Nations Sustainable Development Goals:

- **SDG 6:** Ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
- **SDG 10:** Reduce Inequality within and among countries
- **SDG 11:** Make Cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.
- **SDG 13:** Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

Honourable Chairperson

Let me conclude by reaffirming our unwavering commitment to the noble idea of sustainable and inclusive growth and in shaping the future we want, we wish to restore the dignity and improve the quality of life for all residents, while protecting the environment, and fostering innovation.

We do this, guided by the historic Freedom Charter's perspective that:

There Shall be Houses, Security and Comfort!

All people shall have the right to live where they choose, be decently housed, and to bring up their families in comfort and security;

Unused housing space to be made available to the people;

Rent and prices shall be lowered, food plentiful and no-one shall go hungry;

Slums shall be demolished, and new suburbs built where all have transport, roads, lighting, playing fields, creches and social centres;

Rest, leisure, and recreation shall be the right of all:

Fenced locations and ghettos shall be abolished, and laws which break up families shall be repealed.

I thank you.