

Moving with Greater Speed to Develop Integrated and Sustainable Human Settlement

Closing Remarks by the Chief Whip of the NCOP, Hon. SJ Mohai

Tuesday, 8 March 2022

Programme Director;

Honourable Minister of Human Settlement;

The Deputy Minister;

Honourable Members;

Distinguished Special Delegates;

MEC's present here today;

Representatives of the South African Local Government Association;

Members of the Media;

Ladies and Gentle Men;

It is indeed a great honour for me to do closing remarks to this all-important Ministerial Briefing on Human Settlement. As we all know, human settlement is among the critical pillars of our post-apartheid socio economic Reconstruction and Development priorities to address the socio economic injustices of the past.

Honourable Minister, I am sure you will concede that ours is not just about the statistics and numbers of bricks and mortars we lay, but addressing the triple challenges of restoring the dignity of our people, social cohesion and reversing the apartheid colonial patterns of racialized spatial development.

Programme Director, our policy shift from the provision of housing to integrated human settlement was not a coincidence of history, but a conscious

desire to align the provision of housing to the fundamental vision of the Freedom Charter. As the Freedom Charter proclaims: “There shall be housing, security and comfort”.

This vision statement is underpinned by the following strategic and policy intent:

“All people shall have the right to live where they choose, be decently housed, and 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;

A preventive health scheme shall be run by the state;

Free medical care and hospitalisation shall be provided for all, with special care for mothers and young children;

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

The aged, the orphans, the disabled and the sick shall be cared for by the state;

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

Fenced locations and ghettos shall be abolished, and laws which breaks up families shall be repealed”.

Honourable Members, this speaks to the foot prints of our government in the last 27 years of democracy to the plight of millions of men, women, youth and children who daily travel long distances from their homes to work places and schools at huge transport costs.

It speaks to the plight of families that live in overcrowded spaces with no basic public infrastructure and services like roads, streetlights, electricity and water supply.

Honourable Chairperson, this also speaks to women who have been denied the fundamental right of property ownership by the apartheid colonial government. It therefore calls upon us honourable Minister that, as housing units are allocated we should always ask a fundamental question of how many female house headed families are the beneficiaries?

Whilst we may be proud about the dent we have made in pursuance of this noble vision of the Freedom Charter, there is abiding consensus that more still need to be done. The government 10 year and twenty year reviews, respectively, do make this bold acknowledgement.

The deliberations of today also point to the need to for an accelerated tempo in our national collective efforts towards an integrated human settlement. Flowing from these deliberations and sharing of insights across the different spheres of government, the following subjective weaknesses comes into sharp focus:

- Poor planning, coordination and synergy across the three spheres;
- Uneven development and capacity between different provinces and municipalities in terms of spatial development planning;
- Procurement and contract management challenges that continue to lead to poor workmanship and unfinished projects by contractors;
- Poor land use management by municipalities; and
- Land scarcity for residential and commercial development;
- Poor coordination, synergy and integration between sector departments across the three spheres of government;

Honourable Minister, over the recent past, a phenomenon has emerged whereby the provinces set out their own norms and standards in terms of the size of the

RDP Houses contrary to the national norms and standards. Whilst this may look enticing, but as a fundamental policy question it should not be encouraged because it undermines national uniformity, and undermines the capacity to build more housing units per financial year.

Honourable Minister, it is against this background that we welcome your policy reforms, which include integrated policy monitoring, evaluation and interventions so that the fault lines are identified and addressed in the process of the life cycle of the project. This will assist to arrest the persistent problem of unfinished projects and poor workmanship.

It is given that Provincial government plays a critical role throughout the policy planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation cycle. For the National Department to play an effective oversight, coordination, monitoring and intervention in the human settlement projects, requires on time, reliable and credible reports from the provinces.

Programme Director, the presentation by the MEC's clearly points to the local government as the weakest link in the provision of integrated human settlement both from the point of planning and provision of infrastructure. Honourable Minister we may have to explore the approach of Kwa Zulu Natal whereby the province has taken over the functions of the provision of infrastructure.

It should however be qualified that, this can not be done arbitrarily, but within the context of the constitutional imperatives of co-operative governance. Accordingly, it will require negotiation, co-operation and partnerships between the provinces and affected municipalities.

Programme Director, allow me as I close to thank all the honourable Minister, the Deputy Minister and all the MEC's present today. This engagement was indeed fruitful as it afforded us the opportunity to take stock of the progress we are making as a country in providing integrated human settlement.

We leave the ball in the relevant Select Committee to follow up on the issues going forward through co-operation with the Legislatures and ongoing oversight of the national executive.

I thank you