

SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF HUMAN SETTLEMENTS, REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA ON THE THEME OF THE 26TH SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL IN NAIROBI, KENYA. 11 MAY 2017.

THEME: “OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW URBAN AGENDA”

SUB-THEME ONE: “TOWARDS INCLUSIVE, SUSTAINABLE AND ADEQUATE HOUSING FOR A BETTER FUTURE”

President of the Governing Council

Executive Director of UN-Habitat, Mr Joan Clos

Ministers

Ambassadors

Heads of delegations

Mayors

All distinguished delegates, ladies and gentleman.

I feel very honored in getting this opportunity of addressing this august gathering on behalf of my country, South Africa. I wish to align myself with the statement delivered by G77 + China and the Africa Group.

Let me congratulate the Republic of Kenya for the successful hosting of this event, more in particular the address made by the President of Kenya, his Excellency President Uhuru Kenyatta.

Allow me also to congratulate all members of the Bureau on their election, also the Executive Director and Deputy Executive Director for their hard work at UN-Habitat as well as their successful hosting of the Habitat III conference in Quito. We wish them well in their future endeavours.

At Habitat III we finalized the New Urban Agenda for the next 20 years, whose objective is to create sustainable human settlements in cognizance of a rapidly urbanizing world. Central to the New Urban Agenda is a strong desire to do things differently. In the introductory parts of the New Urban Agenda we commit to paradigm shift and new thinking. In this context in South Africa we have entered into social contracts and partnerships in the built environment. Our view is to transform our cities, towns and villages through changed thinking that seeks to harness the potential of all our citizens more in particular the eradication of informal settlements. We do so making a point that informal settlement dwellers are at the centre of development.

Sadly, the reality is that informal settlements persist as a global phenomenon. If the Urban Agenda is calling for us to leave no one behind, how then can we allow people to live under these conditions?

CONTEXTUALISING THE GLOBAL CHALLENGE

The effects of unprecedented urbanization are currently a major global challenge. The rapid growth of urban areas not only reflects the migration pattern of the population from rural areas and regional neighbors to urban areas, but also reflects the continuing high natural growth rate of the resident population.

The end result is often the mushrooming of informal settlements on the periphery of the cities and towns as people end being forced into precarious living environments. This phenomenon on its own generates many challenges for towns and cities in dealing with increase in urban population.

Particularly in the issue of provision of basic services such as descent housing, water, electricity and sanitation, as well as creating employment opportunities.

The New Urban Agenda calls on all of us to plan for migration in advance, that is why as South Africa we support Agenda 2030 as it provides clear directives as to the way forward and have crucial policy implications for all urban actors.

Firstly, the specific urban goal “SDG 11 and its target 11.1” are a clear call to address informality as well as endorsement of the fact that well managed urbanization can improve the lives of slum and informal settlement dwellers.

Housing has a particular role in the New Urban Agenda and should be at the centre of policy and practice. Policies must be pro-poor, must speak to each other and reflect an integrated overview and vision for the city. All geographic areas, including the peri-urban and the informal settlements areas must be

understood as linked. All sectors must be recognised as playing a part. Legislative frameworks must support policy whilst at the same time, be firmly rooted in the local context of municipal government who are likely to be responsible for the enacting National Urban Policy.

In this context in South Africa, we have developed an Integrated Development Framework known as (IUDF. This is driven by Ministers of Local Government, Human Settlements, Water and Sanitation, Transport, Public Works and Treasury.

This blue print calls for use of integrated planning as far as the use of rural and urban space is concerned by all spheres of government. It puts at centre the importance of urban planning and design as well as related legislation and financial mechanism.

The New Urban Agenda recognizes that “eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development”.

That is why in South Africa we embarked on a number of poverty alleviation strategies in all our work aimed at empowering the vulnerable groups such women, youth and people with disabilities. These are public works programmes such as Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), provision of Social grants to elderly, foster children and people with disabilities as well as providing housing subsidies to the poor to mention just a few.

South Africa has been recognised internationally for our achievement in providing adequate housing to the poorest of the poor and also enhancing our programme of informal settlements upgrading.

We have provided more than 4, 3 million houses and housing opportunities since 1994, thus significantly improving the lives of roughly 22 million people. Yet the current backlog is about 2.1 million households that need government assistance to improve their living conditions.

This means we must strive hard to do more and in a climate where economic decline both domestically and internationally means fewer resources are available to us than previously.

The South African government identified the need to establish a focused programme to improve lives of people living in informal settlements. We have a National Upgrading Support Programme. In the process of informal settlement upgrading we encourage the participation of residents. In driving this process we involve all stakeholders and we develop more democratic forms of co-operative governance.

This enables citizens to become active social agents in discussions and activities that affect their present and future livelihoods and settlements.

South Africa draws strength from the Pretoria Declaration, thanks to all those who were present at this historic conference on Informal Settlements which was a thematic in preparation for Habitat III.

In conclusion President, I wish to state categorically clear that South Africa set aside on yearly basis a budget of more than 3 billion rands for building of houses. We do so because we take the issues of shelter seriously but we are saying that houses cannot be delivered by government alone, we need partnerships with the private sector, NGO'S, CBO'S and the religious sector.

On the 31st October which is the Habitat month, we will be hosting the World Cities Day jointly with eThekweni Municipality (City of Durban) and you are all invited.

I thank you