

**ADDRESS BY L N SISULU, MP, MINISTER OF HUMAN  
SETTLEMENTS, AT THE PLANNING AFRICA CONFERENCE OF  
THE SOUTH AFRICAN PLANNING INSTITUTE  
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Mr Nthato Minyuku, SAPI President

Distinguished guests.

Ladies and Gentlemen

### **Introduction**

I would like to congratulate the South African Planning Institute on its 20 year celebration. This is a significant milestone notched up by the Institute and I am also very pleased to note that this conference will launch a book based on the last one whose theme was “Making Great Places”. This will ensure that the transfer and circulation of knowledge is so much easier. It is particularly pleasing for me, because in our need to professionalise the industry, we have been wanting to create a course around human settlements and, as you would know, unless there is a basis from which to teach, we will be so much poorer in our attempt to reach our goals.

Not long ago, we celebrated the delivery of 4.3 million houses and subsidies since 1994. This is no small feat, and but we have learnt that in our haste we did not plan for the long term. We were chasing an urgent need and as this conference suggests, we need to continue to plan for the future. The former President Nelson Mandela could not have expressed our challenge more eloquently when he said

“But I have discovered the secret that after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb. I have taken a moment here to rest, to steal a view of the glorious vista that surrounds me, to look back on the distance I have come. But I can only rest for a moment, for with freedom come responsibilities, and I dare not linger, for my long walk is not ended.”

After 22 years we too have taken a moment to reflect and we are pleased with the numbers, but our challenge remains enormous. Not least because of the uncertain future but also most importantly the stubborn past that continues to blight our human settlement.

It is often stated that those who fail to plan, plan to fail. But before we embark on the process of planning, it is important to understand the scale of the problem. In our country, two immediate challenges become obvious. One is that of correcting and redressing the legacy of the past, the other is to anticipate the future and respond accordingly.

This calls for a process of re-imagination. But to do so we need to understand the kind of logic that we should be undoing. Failure to do so will leave us incapacitated. Albert Einstein famously and profoundly observed that:

“We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.”

To appreciate both our challenge and what Einstein talks about, it might be necessary to take a short excursion into our past. About six decades ago, South Africans were faced with a choice between two contending ideologies. One was an ideology of oppression and sought to build a South Africa in which the majority

would be disenfranchised and alienated from their own land, the other found its formulation in the Freedom Charter. One sought to divide, the other sought to unite the country. By the time the apartheid ideology had been defeated, the country's geography had been scarred almost irreversibly. This fitted well with apartheid spatial planning.

For the architect of apartheid Dr. Hendrik Verwoerd, the instruction to successive administrations was unambiguous. He told the then parliament that "we must take the implementation of separate development so far that no future government will ever be able to reverse it".

Colonial and apartheid legacies still structure space across different scales. Whatever we may say about that evil system, Apartheid, they planned it well!

The challenge before us now is two fold – reverse the legacy of apartheid. Second, is to imagine the future that we would want while we simultaneously respond to the present day challenges; urban influx, changing demographics, energy scarcity, unemployment and depressed economic growth. This would require that we should transform our cities to be not only places of residence but also to become “laboratories for innovation” if we are to address the endemic socioeconomic and developmental challenges.

In thinking about future planning, we must appreciate that urban migration is rapid with some cities such as Tshwane experiencing an influx of almost 10 000 people a month.

## **The conference theme and the role of the planning profession**

The theme of this conference “Making sense of the future – disruption and reinvention” is particularly pertinent for this rather turbulent moment in the history of the world.

It is indeed a world disrupted which makes planning for a better future all the more challenging. The further into the future we try to plan the more likely it becomes that we will be wrong. What we do know is that we cannot sit back and do nothing. Planning is primarily about envisioning and strategising for a better future.

Again, I seek the wisdom of Albert Einstein and find it in the following:

“The world as we have created it is a process of our thinking. It cannot be changed without changing our thinking”.

If we are to make sense of the future we can look back at what we have achieved – what type of settlements we have created and look to the future of what needs to change – what needs to be reinvented and how we must change our thinking. Old planning paradigms no longer hold true.

The Planning Profession in particular cannot carry on with business as usual – it will have to adapt to the rapidly changing environment, and help us change the way we think, as we find ourselves at a cross roads with increasing pressure on our cities and towns, and the natural environment due to rapid urbanisation, and the effects of global warming.

These trends, together with deteriorating commodity markets and fewer available resources to address the needs of the growing numbers of poor and marginalised, present challenges to us all to re-invent not only what we are doing, but also how we improve the lives of everyone.

In short we need to be more creative and change our thinking about the future of our human settlements.

### **The State of African Cities Report**

Fortunately every challenge presents us with an opportunity. This is what we should use to help us change our thinking. And to change our thinking we have to think beyond ourselves.

The UN Habitat report on the State of African Cities (2014) provides valuable insight into the scale of the challenges in the African Region. The latest data provided reiterate that Africa is experiencing unprecedented population growth. The total African population is projected to nearly double from around one billion in 2010 to almost two billion by 2040 and may well surpass three billion by 2070. The good thing about 2070 is that none of us will be here!!

The shift from rural to urban population majorities - is, perhaps, the most decisive phenomenon since independence in most African nations. Increasing levels of urban poverty, inequality, inefficiency, and the concomitant impacts on vital renewable and non-renewable natural resources have so far, mirrored urban economic growth in Africa.

We have accepted that the time is ripe for a rethinking of past and present development trajectory choices and for exploring new visions, interventions, and adaptations in response to changing contexts.

A bold re-imagining of how Africa could best guide these transitions requires careful consideration of all the options.

Africa and the world community need to rethink what constitutes a “city” since the Western concept is no longer the sole legitimate template for its application in Africa.

Whereas a ‘re-imagined African urbanism’ would undoubtedly embrace some parts of the ‘Western urban model’, Africa has an opportunity to also seek policy and strategic directions that incorporate long-term sustainability for social, environmental and economic development, that are more conducive to our situation and that will better deliver than the imported urban paradigms have done so far. African cities may therefore have a competitive advantage because for instance their development could leapfrog conventional urban development paths to greener urban economies.

Greener solutions, climate change adaptations, vulnerability reduction, technological innovation, urbanization and the economic development of African cities all go hand in hand in this context. Planning and financing for sustainable urban growth are priorities that can generate opportunities towards higher employment elasticity, secure ecosystem services and affordable public services.

You assembled here have a major role to play in the process of rethinking our urban future. Governments are often called upon to take urban development decisions involving vast capital layouts that can lock cities or even entire countries in a particular development path. In other words: today’s decisions and

interventions fix the parameters into a particular development direction for decades. These constant interactions are therefore vital so as to ensure we are at one in our thinking and not end up with a future we will regret.

We have seen the devastating effects of exclusion and inequality brought about by the planning decisions made by the Apartheid regime. Twenty years on we are still struggling to reverse these. Many of the challenges ahead are of a trans-boundary nature and involve significant trans boundary migrations, sometimes overwhelming our cities and town's limited resources. Often in the past, planning in African cities had been focused on removing informal development rather than identifying, and rectifying, existing segregatory practices brought about by our colonial heritage.

However, we have had to admit that urbanisation is upon us for a long time, to come with its concomitant urbanisation of poverty. Therefore the planning profession has to re-invent the ways in which we plan for inclusive settlements that will find a balance between embracing informality while planning for sustainable service delivery. We have also found that over pre-occupation with removal of informality has deprived us of the opportunity to reverse Apartheid spatial planning.

Sustainable urban planning is necessary to eliminate the causes of segregation and exclusion. Urban planning needs to review how investment is made in African cities to enable adaptive planning and management that is risk averse, pro-poor and sustainable.

The roots of the planning profession lie in the industrial revolution in Europe and designing and regulating for health and safety. It has since grown in complexity in theory and practice, but has largely focused on ensuring the

efficiency of the formal city. How it will address the pressing issues of social, economic and spatial exclusion, and informality remains to be seen. This is the challenge of the New Urban Agenda for Africa and you are called upon to rise to the occasion.

### **Preparing for Habitat III**

The Third United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat III), set to take place in Quito, Ecuador in October presents an opportunity to craft a New Urban Agenda for the world at large, and in particular for Africa. The Planning Profession is an important stakeholder and also needs to make a creative contribution, to re-invent how we go about crafting a New Urban Agenda for Africa. A point of emphasis for Habitat III is an integrated planning approach that brings together the strands of spatial, economic and social planning, and development.

The good news is that as a region, Africa has made a good start in preparing for the discussions in Quito by the African Union approving a Common African Position on Habitat III, earlier this year. A substantive South African Country report has also been submitted to the UN.

Both these reports recognise urbanisation as an opportunity for economic, social, and spatial transformation by harnessing the advantages of agglomeration and concentration of population to share in the so-called “urban dividend”. In particular the African Position notes the current efforts to harness the creative energies of the informal sector, as well as to consolidate the accumulated and diverse human and physical assets embedded within it through, especially the empowerment of women and the participation of the youth.

## **South African position on a New Urban Agenda**

South Africa's cities still reflect apartheid planning with the poorest communities tending to live far away from services and employment. They suffer not only spatial, but also social and economic exclusion. The form and structure of apartheid cities could also not cope with the dismantling of apartheid, especially the continuing massive rural to urban, and urban to urban migration. The resultant growth of informal settlements, that lack connections to public transport and infrastructure networks, makes it costly for new urbanites to commute and find and retain formal employment.

We are very aware of the sometimes less than optimal outcomes of our policy and practice over the past twenty years— often continuing the legacy of urban apartheid - and the need to rethink how in future we develop our settlements to be more inclusive, sustainable, and liveable. We are turning this around.

Hence, the New South African Urban Agenda promotes a new model of urban development that is able to integrate all facets of sustainable development to promote equity, welfare and shared prosperity. We build this on some 20 years of experience and learning in implementing housing and related human settlements programmes targeting the most vulnerable members of our society: the indigent, the elderly, people with disabilities and child headed households and people's housing projects for the able bodied.

Our "New" Urban Agenda encourages an integrated approach to human settlement planning that is based on a sustainable livelihoods approach and promotes higher densities in good locations, universal design (ensuring access to all), an emphasis on the green economy, spatial economic inclusivity and the

revitalisation of our inner cities. Our Agenda includes the provision of transport, a healthy and 'liveable' urban environment, clean drinking water, energy provision, sanitation, health, education, roads, job opportunities, and food security. And importantly, cities with by-laws that are enforced, ensuring among other things that we have clean, well maintained cities.

The national norms and standards for requisite infrastructure and services for settlements will be set in the Guidelines for Human Settlements Planning and Design – the so-called “Red Book” - that is currently being upgraded to meet the requirements of our new urban agenda.

### **The National Human Settlements Code**

The National Housing Code is being amended to reflect a more comprehensive approach required for sustainable Human Settlements. The Human Settlements Code will provide practical guidance by setting the form, funding and institutional arrangements. The Code provides for existing settlements to be retrofitted with the requisite infrastructure and services to be determined through the assessment of community needs.

In rural areas priority will be given to connective infrastructure that strengthens linkages between urban and rural areas and to infrastructure that supports the provision of basic universal services such as water and sanitation.

### **Funding**

In support of these endeavours, Government is committed to providing R840 billion for infrastructure development over the next five years. Capital subsidies shall remain the cornerstone of government intervention in facilitating

access to adequate housing for poor and moderate-income households. Our focus is on households that are unable to resolve their housing needs without the assistance of government; and on re-activating communities to participate in the progressive realisation of their housing needs.

In other words we have an inclusive package of policies, programmes, and a commitment of funds to pursue the realisation of our New Urban Agenda.

### **The catalytic projects**

One of the important lessons we have learnt is that small isolated “housing” projects are not conducive to fostering integrated and inclusive human settlements and delivery at scale in order to deal expeditiously with housing and service backlogs. We have thus embarked on repositioning human settlement projects based on the so-called 3C protocol:

- Coordination;
- Cooperation; and
- Collaboration,

to develop catalytic Mega projects of no less than 15 000 rental, subsidised and mortgaged housing units supported by engineering, social, and economic infrastructure.

These projects will each provide housing for an estimated 45 000 to 60 000 individuals. The strategic levers for the successful delivery of the Mega projects include:

- Integrated development planning;
- Radical spatial transformation;
- Mixed housing and tenure typologies;
- Security of tenure;

- Urban renewal;
- Strengthening institutional delivery capacity;
- End user management; and
- Most importantly strategic partnerships with the financial sector, developers, the built environment professions and communities.

## **Job creation**

These will make a substantial contribution to employment creation, both during and post development. It is estimated that, in Gauteng alone, we will over the next 15 years directly create 250 000 jobs in construction of housing and infrastructure. These will of course further increase by the number of strategic partners in both private and public sector as they invest to serve the new client portfolio of Mega projects with retail, office, entertainment, and social facility developments.

## **Informal settlements**

The upgrading of informal settlements will be an integral part of the Mega project approach. The focus will be on community participation and skills development, livelihood creation, incremental housing development and support.

## **Township regeneration and mining towns**

We will also include the revitalisation of “old townships” and support mining towns through improving infrastructure and housing, supporting the development of businesses, and recreational facilities – in fact all the elements that go into make settlements sustainable and liveable. We will strive to change these settlements from ...”desperate and desolate to positive and participating”.

## **Partnerships and the role of the professions**

We are all partners in this great venture to turn our common destiny around and make our cities, towns and other settlements vibrant, productive, sustainable, and great places to live in. A key success factor for our collective New Urban Agenda is that all stakeholders need to be behind the agenda.

To quote Mr Josep Roig, the Secretary General of United Cities and Local Governments:

“The only sustainable city is the one created by all of us”

In South Africa we are well on our way to a new urban development paradigm. I have given you a glimpse of our New Urban Agenda and how we rely on partnerships to achieve our vision.

We have formed a Social Compact with all our stakeholders including the planning profession. The Planning Profession has undertaken to assist government with training officials, assisting the youth to enter the planning profession, and empowering communities to plan their settlements and fulfil their own settlement needs. I need to see more of you on site than I do at conferences!

Every human settlement has common, but also locally specific needs as far as planning and interventions go. I believe that together in partnership we can “make sense of the future” and “re-invent” our cities and towns. We have already begun to do so. Africa has agreed on the pillars of our common urban future. I therefore challenge planners across the continent to let go of the old paradigms that no longer serve our needs, and to develop and embrace new approaches that

are locally appropriate. We cannot afford to lose this one in twenty year opportunity to fully participate in setting a New Agenda.

In closing let me wish you productive and insightful deliberations and an enjoyable stay in our beautiful city, which through our planned intervention will continue to improve and provide a better future for all its inhabitants.

I thank you