



## **KEY NOTE ADDRESS IN SUPPORT OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF URBAN AND REGIONAL PLANNING CONFERENCE**

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Good evening ladies and gentlemen, the academic fraternity gathered here, experts in the field of human settlements, students and guests. I am honoured to be invited by one of our great university this evening to give a talk on behalf of the Free State Government and the departments of Human Settlement and Public Works. And highlight Apex strategic issues as we seek to move forward with determination to try to make a difference into the lives of our people.

This invitation by the university come at a critical moment when we begin to roll our sleeves and in attempt to transform the lives



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of our people and efforts to modernise our cities and towns to attain sustainable livelihood.

I am acutely aware that over the last ten years the University of the Free State had made considerable strides to transform and become a truly South African and one of Africa's outstanding university in terms of transformation it has undertaken and inclusive of the academic curriculum related in particular to government spatial transformation agenda.

I have noted the aim of this conference, and I would like to restate and emphasise its importance as it read thus "To be a National inclusive, interactive and fun learning and knowledge sharing experience for Human Settlement students". This aim finds resonance in the work that my department is currently doing in terms of research and knowledge sharing.

It is in this context that I am able to note an alignment in relation to your academic curriculum and the department of Human Settlements' work. I have also take note of the four objectives that you have outlined for this conference, which speaks directly



to our fundamental vision as a department. For me the objectives 2 to 4 are very useful and informative to us as the department because these are fundamental issues that we grapple with on daily basis.

Let me also acknowledge in absentia, the Rector and Vice Chancellor, Prof Francis Petersen, the Dean of the Faculty, Prof Danie Vermeulen, Head of Department of Urban and Regional Planning, Prof Male'ne Campbell and Student Dean, Mr Pura Mgolombane. We acknowledge overall the visionary work that seeks to improve the country's provision of sustainable human settlements.

This conference, and therefore this speech, is presented in the context of the United Nations Habitat Month, with the World Habitat Day celebrated on the first Monday of October annually. This year the day fell on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2019 and sought to reflect on the state of our towns and cities, and critically, on the basic right of all to adequate shelter. This adequate shelter is expressed in Chapter 2 of our Constitution as a right to a home



and accentuated in its origin in the 1955 Freedom Charter adage; ‘there shall be houses, security and comfort for all.’

In our endeavour to pursue ‘Sustainable Human Settlement and improved quality of household life’, the department of Human Settlements has been mandated by NDP to achieve the three outputs namely:

1. Output 1: Adequate housing and improved living Environments;
2. Output 2: Functionally equitable residential property Market;
3. Output 3: Enhanced institutional capacity for effective coordination of spatial investment decisions.

For us as the department these are the key outcomes that guide our work, so that we change lives, meet the needs and the aspirations of our people and further give them hope.

We are mindful of the fact that the democratic dispensation has inherited enormous challenges that has far reaching implications for Service Delivery to meet the expectations and demands from



the masses of our people. And that our mandate to reach each and every citizen of our country is huge.

The United Nations states that the world has 1.6 billion people living in inadequate shelter. Here at home, this number is illustrated in the number of informal settlements growing yearly. The Free State Province alone has recorded 143 informal settlements. We are aware that most of these are in the urban peripheries of our cities and towns as our people seek jobs nearer cities where they hope to better their lives.

In 2018, the United Nations stated that 55% of the world's population lived in urban areas, and it is expected that this number will increase to 68% by 2050. To illustrate this rapid growth, the United Nations mentions that, "The urban population of the world has grown rapidly from 751 million in 1950 to 4.2 billion in 2018."



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This is one of the main challenges that we are facing as a government and as the world. For with this growth, comes the growth in need for decent living spaces that are also well planned and sustainable; critically these spaces have to contribute towards development of our population.

How do we plan for rapid urbanisation in a sustainable and efficient manner? How do we accommodate every citizen adequately in a dwindling economy, in an economy with 29% unemployment and even higher unemployment among youth and women population? How do we provide for sustainable human settlements development in an environment where skills shortage and skills misalignment in this sector is common knowledge, and to which the education system responds slowly?

How do we cater for unemployed youth, redress the inadequacy of skills among women and any previously disadvantaged individuals whom we seek to develop throughout the value chain?



For all these questions we turn to the academic world for continuous research in various fields related to human settlements development. These questions are meant to probe thought, and to redirect our thinking towards addressing challenges facing the housing sector overall.

In addressing provision of sustainable human settlements and achieving the NDP's Chapter 8 objectives, the ruling party, the African National Congress, in its 2019 Manifesto taken at NASREC resolved on human settlements as follows:

“Through the National Development Plan, we seek to advance a coherent programme to transform human settlements and to ensure that the delivery of housing is used to restructure towns and cities and strengthen the livelihood prospects of households and overcome apartheid spatial patterns.



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We will:

- Work closely with the private sector to develop major development projects that brings together economic nodes, human settlements, smart technologies and public transportation that impact on spatial transformation. These include building at least one new South Africa city of the future.
- Transform the property market to promote access to urban opportunity and social integration through access to well-located, affordable housing and decent shelter, thereby reversing urban fragmentation and highly inefficient sprawl.
- Release land at the disposal of the state for site and service to afford households the opportunity to build and own their own homes.
- Transform the composition and functioning of the property industry and accelerate legislative measures to eliminate speculative behaviour, including the establishment of a Property Sector Ombudsman.
- Improve the alignment of housing provision with other public investments and service provision, including schools and health facilities and transport networks, complementing more integrated residential, industrial and commercial development.





- Address the title deeds backlog, along with associated institutional and capacity gaps, to ensure that the transfer of title deeds move with higher speed.

His Excellency President Cyril Ramaphosa, in the June 2019 State of the Nation Address outlined seven priorities for the 6<sup>th</sup> democratic government. These emanate from the resolutions taken at the ruling party's 54<sup>th</sup> National Conference and the 2019 African National Congress Manifesto, which essentially outlined key issues to be addressed by this administration:

- Economic transformation and job creation
- Education, skills and health
- Consolidating the social wage through reliable and quality basic services
- **Spatial integration, human settlements and local government**
- Social cohesion and safe communities



- A capable, ethical and developmental state
- A better Africa and World.

The human settlements development programme is central to the achievement of these priorities. For without adequate shelter, without a home, we cannot grow adequately and function equally so as a society.

Linked to these priorities are international imperatives as set out in the United Nations Habitat Agenda. As a member state, we derive our mandate in what the world has identified as priorities for development. Vision 2030, Vision 2050, Vision 2063 and the Millennium Development Goals as agreed upon by the United Nations member states, form part of our focus as we develop our settlements.

Since 2015, member states of the United Nations have been expected to develop their agendas and political policies for a period of 15 years according to the theme: “Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.



Commonly referred to as the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, this is a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity.” Many of the goals are relevant to human settlements, but Goal 11 deals specifically with sustainable cities and communities: “Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.” (Sustainable Development Goals)

The country is also expected to continue realising the obligations in the Millennium Development Goals which states that, “by 2020 a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers will be achieved”. Government should ensure access to drinking water, access to improved sanitation facilities, secure tenure, sufficient living area and durability of housing.

Within this context, the country evolved from housing to human settlements in 2009 where the Outcomes Based Approach to the work of government was implemented.

Still in pursuit of attaining sustainable human settlements, the national Department of Human Settlements recently presented the human settlements fraternity with the Neighbourhood



Planning Guide, Creating Sustainable Human Settlements, also dubbed, the Red Book. The purpose of this Guide is to provide practical information related to the planning and design of the range of services and infrastructure typically provided as part of a neighbourhood development project. The application of the guidelines should ultimately result in the delivery of infrastructure and services that are effective and efficient and that contribute to the creation of sustainable human settlements.

Topics covered in the book range from the context of human settlements development in South Africa, vision for human settlements, design and inclusion of services such as transport, waste management and basic services to name a few.

Spatial planning and integrated planning in government and related sectors together with municipalities forms a critical part of this guide. I mention this here to illustrate the link between our work to that of the academia and private sector and, overall practitioners in the human settlements development value chain.



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Our common goal as stakeholders is to provide integrated human settlements that would support our country towards sustainability.

In this guide and Human Settlements value chain, I foresee various research topics that could be pursued. These could include land identification, town planning and design, township establishment etc. As a young democracy that has taken on a major task such as creation of sustainable human settlements, in which the process also seeks to address sustainability issues such as economic development, environmental care, job creation, skills development etc., we are dependent on formalised studies in this sector in order to realise our goals in a much more structured and ascertained manner.

Our challenges as a sector have been mentioned in various government documents in this regard. The National Development Plan sums up our challenges in redressing the imbalances of the past such as spatial disparities. Addressing these spatial disparities has taken centre stage in our focus.



Key spatial issues such as: spatial justice where the historic policy of confining particular groups to limited space, as in informal settlements and segregation, and the unfair allocation of public resources between areas, must be reversed to ensure that the needs of the poor are addressed first rather than last.

Other spatial concerns that I must mention and which according to the Planning Guide must be addresses are: spatial sustainability, spatial resilience, spatial quality and spatial efficiency. These concepts have to find meaning in our work as we seek to realise integrated and sustainable human settlements.

Clearly, integrated and aligned planning is the only way we would achieve the objective of the cities of the future, cities that meet the objectives of the Millennium Goals, the Agendas 2030,2050 and 2063, and of our own National Development Plan, transformation of human settlements in this regard.



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The role of the university and of this department cannot be overestimated. With the objectives of this conference and of the course in mind, clearly we need to forge partnerships where the department could benefit from ongoing research towards improvement of its value chain and programmes.

In return, all 3 spheres of government and its entities such as the Housing Development Agency, the National Home Builders Registration Council and others, could offer bursaries and internship opportunities for students to zoom into areas where their knowledge and skills could be applied. Government could also create opportunities for students to gain work experience throughout in its value chain.

Let me, at this point, mention key challenges faced by the department in the provision on sustainable human settlements. Through this, I am highlighting the need for a concerted effort towards resolving such challenges through parallel academic work.



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The challenges I detailed in my current 2019-2020 Budget Vote Speech are as follows:

- Addressing demands of rapid urbanisation on provision of human settlements in an economy that is financially drained
- Integrated and aligned planning with relevant stakeholders
- Managing our beneficiaries to speed up allocation of housing projects so that houses are built where there is the highest need
- Optimisation of resources through using technology.
- Business processes re-engineering – could we conduct our value chain better for optimal resource utilisation and therefore achieving more with less?
- Land availability and related processes in an effort to address social cohesion and promote densification.
- Acquisition of suitable land for human settlements development.
- Address delay factors to ensure quicker processes for township establishment





Technology is a phenomenon that could be applied to address some of our challenges. In his State of the Nation Address, Honourable President Ramaphosa spoke about the development of SMART cities. This brings our focus on technology and human settlements, a challenge yet to be addressed. The topic finds resonance in the theme for the United Nations Habitat Day: 'Frontier Technologies as an innovative tool to transform waste to wealth.' Elaborating on this theme, the

United Nations states among others that; 'Technology has great potential to improve how people work and live, to significantly accelerate efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and address climate change.

In this regard, the United Nations message for the 2019 Habitat Day is that the task ahead is to harness frontier technologies to achieve sustainable waste management while mitigating their possible adverse economic, social and political consequences.



My plea, is for us to include this in pursuit of our studies; using technology towards efficiency and creating sustainable communities as we take into account the concept of the 4<sup>th</sup> industrial revolution. Understandably, we cannot expect technology to answer all of our problems.

At this stage let me pause and wish the university well in its endeavours and implementation of its very brilliant programme. I wish to congratulate the University of the Free State for introducing the Bachelor of Spatial Planning Honours with a Specialisation in Human Settlements and thank the National Department of Human Settlements for supporting the initiative. The aim of this programme is to equip students with the necessary skills needed to work specifically as Human Settlement (Housing) specialists and practitioners.

The need for practitioners in human settlements has never in the world history been more relevant, yet very few people are trained in the holistic and comprehensive science of human settlements development. There are people with training and skills in the design and building of houses; the social and



anthropological dynamics of communities, the environmental impact of property development and financing houses.

However, it is a rare skill to have all of these disciplines combined in a single person or tertiary education course. I believe this is what the University of the Free State is striving to achieve.

I would like to thank the university for this opportunity, and to wish you the best in launching this new programme which I have no doubt will benefit this country and the world in its effort to meet the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals, National Development Plan and overall, meet the promise of the 1955 Freedom Charter to build a better nation for a better world.

I thank you.