

Programme Director/Facilitator;
Head of Human Settlements, Mr K Masange;
Chief Directors and Directors;
Human Settlements Associations;
National Department of Human Settlements
Office of the Premier,
Provincial Treasury,
Leadership of Labour Union, and
Officials and all Stakeholders.

Introduction

Let me take this opportunity to welcome all of you to the Department of Human Settlements Strategic Plan Session.

I have recently joined this department as the new political head, not to invent my plans but continuing with the very same policies and mandate given to the ruling African National Congress by the voting populace.

It is against that backdrop that we ought to hit the ground running. And of course it is heart-warming to be amongst your good selves and the welcome you gave is highly appreciated.

Though NOT new in the Provincial Administration, I must say this is a new portfolio and we will need to join hands and support each other as we deliver on it.

In my first meeting with top management and some officials I indicated that I am not here to change things, but enhance delivery.

Current Issues

As a country and the world we are mourning the passing on of the political icon Mama Winnie Madikizela-Mandela.

The mother of the nation who died few days ago made a great impact in the country's political landscape, despite some ill-treatment from the then Apartheid forces during the years when the politics of this country was at its worse.

Whilst we celebrate her passing and embrace her political impact she had in our lives – we ought NOT to forget where we come from as a nation.

This therefore – without any hesitation – should propel us to continue embrace her legacy and do our best to improve the lot of our people – especially as this Department.

A lot has been said (good by many and bad by few) about the late icon, but it is my conviction that her role and legacy in our country does not need any one's approval – however speaks for itself.

Indeed she was a resolute, feisty and selfless woman who – against all odds – dedicated her life at-least to bring about much needed development in our communities.

True to her professional calling as a social worker, the late Madikizela - Mandela has left an indelible mark in our lives as she continued to fight and defend the less fortunate in society.

It is therefore incumbent upon us that her passing should not be in vain as a caring government.

Whilst we are celebrating a life well lived – the country is this week commemorating 25 years of the killing of SACP's leader, Comrade Chris Hani.

Born Martin Thembisile Hani, he was the leader of the South African Communist Party and chief of staff of uMkhonto weSizwe, the armed wing of the African National Congress (ANC).

He was a fierce opponent of the apartheid government, and was assassinated on 10 April 1993 – inflicting much pain to the family, fellow comrades and the black community at large.

2018 has been declared the year of Nelson Mandela. The late Mandela was the first democratically elected president of South Africa. It was on the 27th April 1994 when he was inaugurated as president of the republic.

The three, but few events I have mentioned above represent the history of South African and depict how far we have come with the struggle. Gathered here today, we have a responsibility to translate the aspirations of these leaders into reality.

Strategic Session Issues

We are gathered here to spend two days with a view to craft smart plans to move the Department forward.

In his closing address at the 54th National Elective Conference, President Cyril Ramaphosa said, ***"Our people will judge this Conference not only by what we have done here over these five days, but - perhaps more importantly - by what we do next. The people of South Africa want action. They do not want words. Our people want an ANC that lives up to its promise and is true to its mission"***.

Much as such sessions are mandatory in government, ours has to be different.

As we are nearing the end of the current administration with only few months to go, it is incumbent upon all of us (politically and administratively) to reflect on how far we have come in delivering on the electoral mandate and government targets since 2014.

Our gathering should not be about always crafting new plans which is often characterised by shifting the targets, but be robust, hard and ask ourselves real questions of delivery.

As a member of the ANC and by extension the Executive Council, I am here to ensure that the party's policies are implemented through government programmes.

Yes off course it is true that plans developed here should not be necessarily new but a continuation and consolidation of a planning cycle as dictated by government planning cycle and prescripts.

The 2018/19 Annual Performance Plan contains the aspirations of building a better South African, mainly targeting the people of Mpumalanga.

This session is meant to assess the work done, what needs to be done moving forward and which gaps that needs to be closed.

Whilst doing all these, we ought to have the courage and the spirit of Mam' Winnie, Comrade Chris Hani and Tata Mandela and the rest who had the country's interest at heart - and dare not to fail.

Let me remind all that the 2018/19 financial year is the final period of the current medium-term strategic framework (MTSF).

The department can proud itself of achieving the following key priorities; approximately 50 000 (fifty thousand) housing opportunities have been achieved, including the upgrading of informal settlements programme, people's housing programme, and military veterans. But of course more is still needed.

Noting these achievements though, I must raise my concern about the variety of concerns and challenges that were raised by the community of eMalahleni during the recent Taking the Legislature to the People. We need to move swiftly in addressing these and other concerns that our communities continue to raise.

Having said that, I implore on the Accounting Officer and Management to develop a clear intervention plans to tackle these matters at eMalahleni and other areas.

I will need a progress report from time to time on these matters and better strategies are needed to prevent future occurrences.

At the rate at which these issues are being raised, it then suggests that it is imperative to strength our relations with stakeholders to work better and deliver efficient services to our people.

Let me re-emphasise what my predecessors in 2016 - ***"I am aware that our engagements with municipalities are not the way they should be in terms of the cooperative governance principle as contained in Chapter 3 of the Constitution of the Republic of Act 108 of 1996 South Africa, which deals with Intergovernmental Relations"***.

Immediate Issues

My office will ensure that we hold MuniMECs meetings to close the cracks between us and municipalities. These meetings will assist us to bring together these important spheres of government closer and clarify the apparent confusion that exists during and after performing our work.

We need municipalities in order to finalize township establishment processes to be able to increase the total yield of servicing of sites annually, construct top structure and issuing tittle deeds timeously.

Our commitment is to increase the pace of delivery of integrated human settlements against all odds in order to ensure that our people are dignified through adequate housing.

Therefore, this brings me to the point of emphasis I want to make where we should roll up our sleeves and put hands on the deck.

This simply means that we should dedicate our time and efforts today to plan on proper systems and controls against the agreed priority list so that we do not find ourselves with a single non achievements during implementation period, and it all start here from planning.

As we celebrate our freedom, let me remind you of what Nelson Mandela said when addressing the Joint Sitting of Parliament of Parliament to commemorate 10 years of democracy in South African - ***“let us never be unmindful of the terrible past from which we come – using that memory not as a means to keep us shackled to the past in a negative manner, but rather as a joyous reminder of how far we have come and how much we have achieved”***

Let me wish all a productive planning session.

I thank you