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Head of Human Settlements, Mr K Masange;  
Chief Directors and Directors;  
Human Settlements Associations;  
National Department of Human Settlements  
Other Supporting Institutions;  
Labour Union Leadership;  
Office of the Premier;  
Provincial Treasury;  
Officials; and  
All Stakeholders.

## INTRODUCTION

Allow me to take this opportunity to welcome you to this important gathering in the Department's calendar.

I had joined the department at the end of the fifth administration - as the new political head – and now I am back here again to continue with what we started.

When Minister Lindiwe Sisulu was re-deployed to the same portfolio at the beginning of this period – she retorted that it is good to be back – I guess the same goes for me.

This is not to invent my plans, but to continue with the very same policies and mandate given to the ruling African National Congress – and consolidate on service delivery.

The reconfiguration of the portfolio seeks to enhance coordination and improved outputs.

Now that we are co-joined with Water and Sanitation – it then makes it a comprehensive package to deliver and coordinate key services as advocated by our enhanced mandate.

As the country enters the sixth administration, the ruling party held its Lekgotla and outlined the government wide programme of action.

Delivering his State of the Nation Address (SONA) in Parliament, the President said: **"that the time for idle talk was now over — everything comes down to implementation if the country is to realize the vision of the National Development Plan (NDP)".**

The President announced the following bold priorities as focus areas:

1. Economic transformation and job creation;
2. Education, skills and health;
3. Consolidating the social wage through reliable and quality basic services;
4. Spatial integration, human settlements and local government;
5. Social cohesion and safe communities;
6. A capable, ethical and developmental state and
7. A better Africa and World.

### STRATEGIC SESSION ISSUES

According to these priorities, the Human Settlements Sector is priority number 4 that is; Spatial integration, human settlements and local government.

This new approach is not doing away with the Outcome 8 that guided the previous Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF); it is in fact concretizing the objective of the National Development Plan (NDP), however with a spatial integration, localized and district planning as the main focal point.

The department has submitted its MTSF plans to the Executive Council of the Province. These plans are long-term in nature, yet they are district based in focus.

As we enter into the next MTSF period, the department is expected to detail its five (5) year priorities into a Strategic plan 2020 - 2025 as well as its 2020 -21 Annual Performance Plan.

We must critically assess ourselves, internally and externally. The objective is to improve our institutional capacity in order to deliver on our mandate.

The main policy guidelines that the Department will be judged upon are;

- **Spatial integration.** South Africa has not yet reached that level of integration between all races and people of all classes.

We all know that this is an undesired legacy which we inherited from our history. This enormous task is on our shoulders, we must change it for the better.

- **The upgrading of informal Settlements.** It is disheartening to see that our people continue to find shelter wherever they wish; such informal dwellings are unhealthy, dangerous and inhabitable.

They give rise to all sorts of emergencies such as diseases, flooding emergencies and disasters. We need to prioritize the upgrading of informal settlements.

- We must continue with the **issuing of title deeds** to rightful owners of properties that we deliver. Our people out there are worried and way tired, they need this important service.

- We have emphasized over the year that the **integrated human settlements** that we deliver should have all the necessary amenities and should be closer to places that present work opportunities.

I have taken a decision to revisit challenging municipalities to unlock persistent problems for improved delivery.

I think we have all observed that as the financial position of our people improves so is the improvement of their homes. In most places our low cost housing stock are being improved into big beautiful homes.

If we are to learn a lesson from this trend, we might realize that we need to increase the number of serviced sites and reduce the number of housing units. This must be our long term goal.

It is important to promote the release of land for Leandra and surroundings.

Our plans should also reflect interventions in mining towns. In the next MTSF we must see more and more of the likes of Klarinet and Siyanqoba.

These are catalytic projects that deliver human settlements opportunities in larger scales.

### **IMMEDIATE ISSUES**

In our recently held MUNMEC, we called on municipalities to foster good working relations with the department.

The session aimed at activating working relations, enhanced understanding of roles and fast-tracking service delivery in different spheres of government.

What then becomes more critical henceforth is to continue to work on transforming 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 inhumane living conditions.

In ensuring the security of tenure, the department remains steadfast to address title deeds backlog – thus bestowing people's dignity and sense of property ownership.

Whilst we forge ahead with focused planning, we must address spatial dislocation and target government investment, rapid release of suitable land for human settlements development and the development of a functional residential property market, amongst others.

### **CONCLUSION**

Lastly, we have set the bar high for ourselves in that we were declared the Best Province in the annual Govan Mbeki Award.

So we are the reigning champions – thus don't have to drop the ball – but have ourselves to compete against.

We shall not fail ourselves and most importantly the people of Mpumalanga.

I wish you a successful strategic planning session.

### **I THANK YOU**