



# public works & infrastructure

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Public Works and Infrastructure  
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## ZIKALALA DELIVERS THE KEYNOTE ADDRESS AT THE 1ST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE CONSTRUCTION AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT



**Article by Fanisa Makhubela, Pictures by Mahlogonolo Makwela**

Deputy Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure Sihle Zikalala, has urged built environment professionals, academics and institutions to pursue African-rooted solutions tailored to local challenges, instead of relying solely on global models.

Speaking at the International Conference on Sustainable Construction and the Built Environment (ICSCBE) at the Walter Sisulu University, Zikalala said while benchmarking with countries like Britain and Australia is useful, Africa must also "learn from Africa, work with Africa, and provide solutions for Africa."

The four-day conference, hosted in partnership with the Council for the Built Environment (CBE), focuses on the theme: "The Future of the Built Environment in Developing Countries."

Zikalala hailed the CBE for turning the event into a national platform for collaboration between government, academia and professionals. He linked the discussions to South Africa's G20 presidency theme "Solidarity, Equality, Sustainability" which prioritises disaster resilience, inclusive growth and climate-ready infrastructure.

He commended the CBE's leadership in the Eastern Cape, particularly for mobilising stakeholders to build climate-resilient infrastructure in a province that has faced repeated natural disasters. He said such efforts show that sustainability must be central to planning and not treated as an afterthought.

The Deputy Minister also praised WSU for its role in advancing research on the proposed Office of the Engineer-General, a policy initiative that will help prevent engineering failures by ensuring greater oversight, technical excellence and accountability in infrastructure development.

"We must see this conference as a transformative moment where research, policy and practice converge to tackle the Eastern Cape's dual challenges of climate resilience and sustainable infrastructure development," he added.

The Deputy Minister expressed support for future editions of the conference, calling for it to become a rotating national event hosted by universities across South Africa to ensure consistent knowledge exchange, policy alignment and professional development in the built environment sector.



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