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There has been a significant drop in construction site disruption since the National Summit on Crime-Free Construction Sites held in November 2025, according to the Public Works and Infrastructure Department. The summit culminated in the signing of the Durban Declaration.

Minister Dean Macpherson (pictured) told the media yesterday that progress had been achieved since the signing of the declaration, with more than 770 reported cases, 241 arrests and 176 convictions. He said construction disruptions in KwaZulu-Natal had reduced from more than 60 a month to fewer than 10.

Macpherson said the figures demonstrated the impact of a co-ordinated national strategy to combat the so-called construction mafia, whose activities have delayed infrastructure projects, inflated costs and threatened workers across the country. He said the government had shifted from reacting to site disruptions to preventing them through stronger law enforcement, contractor blacklisting, enhanced monitoring and structured community engagement.

A key development, he said, was the Cabinet's approval of the Integrated Social Facilitation Framework as binding national policy aimed at preventing community-related disruptions before they occur.

The framework standardises community engagement across all spheres of government and infrastructure projects by ensuring communities are consulted from the planning stage through to project completion. It introduces accredited social facilitators, formal governance structures and continuous monitoring to identify and resolve disputes before they escalate into protests or criminal activity.

Macpherson said the policy was intended to prevent criminal groups from exploiting poor communication between project developers and communities. "In plain language, this means that communities must no longer be engaged only after conflict begins. They must be engaged before a project starts. They must understand what is being built, why it is being built, what opportunities exist, what the rules are, and how concerns can be raised lawfully," he said.

He said the framework replaced



fragmented community engagement with a structured approach that promoted lawful local participation while denying extortionists opportunities to hijack projects.

"The construction mafia activity had evolved from isolated incidents into organised criminal networks that infiltrated projects through intimidation, subcontracting arrangements, front companies, and self-appointed community representatives. This problem, which first gained prominence in KwaZulu-Natal, had spread nationally, disrupting more than 180 infrastructure projects worth an estimated R63 billion before the government intervened," he said.

He said the Durban Declaration marked a turning point by bringing together government departments, law enforcement agencies, municipalities, state entities and the construction industry to co-ordinate a national response against construction-related extortion and intimidation.

Despite the progress, Macpherson warned that criminal syndicates continued attempting to infiltrate projects through front companies and by manipulating community structures and subcontracting opportunities.

The president of the South African Council for the Project and Construction Management Professions, Sharon Shunmugam, said the professionalisation of social facilitators would improve project delivery by ensuring appointments were based on competence rather than informal arrangements. She said the three key measures of a successful infrastructure project were time, cost and quality, adding that professional social facilitation would help the government deliver projects that met community expectations.

She said the reforms meant that, going forward, social facilitators on infrastructure projects would be appointed based on their competencies, skills and professional conduct.