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MEDIA STATEMENT

DPWI DEPUTY MINISTER SIHLE ZIKALALA CALLS FOR INNOVATIVE CONSTRUCTION SOLUTIONS TO RESPOND TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Deputy Minister Sihle Zikalala has invited the built environment industry to introduce innovative construction solution to ensure that infrastructure being constructed in the country responds to the reality of climate change.

Zikalala was speaking during the opening day of the two-day CBE Built Environment Climate Change Indaba (BECCI) currently being held in Mandeni, KwaZulu Natal.

“All our infrastructure planning and construction must have climate changed in mind” warned Deputy Minister Sihle Zikalala.

Deputy Minister Zikalala said recent infrastructure collapse due to disasters, the calamitous 2022 floods which led to the death of over 400 people and damage to the infrastructure costing billions in provinces like the Western Cape, Limpopo, Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga have laid bare the new reality that we must deal with in our new construction methods and maintenance of infrastructure.

The recent events must jolt every player in the built environment into action. If action is not immediately taken to deal with the climate change crises, many African counties will face economic sinkholes, with some countries already losing up to 5% of GDP.

‘The Climate Change Act which was assented to by President Cyril Ramaphosa in July 2024, calls on all of us to take urgent steps to contribute to a just transition towards low-carbon, climate-resilient and ecologically sustainable economies and societies in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.

It calls for the need for decision-making to consider the special needs and circumstances of localities and people that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, including vulnerable workers and groups such as women, especially poor and rural women, children, and persons with disabilities', said Zikalala.

He called on Professionals and stakeholders in the Built Environment to create communities that are climate resilient and mitigate environmental degradation.

The Built Environment Climate Change Indaba is a direct response to pressing climate challenges, focused on bringing together stakeholders from the Engineering and the Built Environment sector, Disaster Management and the South African Weather Service (SAWS) to co-create sustainable, resilient, and equitable spaces that address climate change and socio-economic disparities.

'The Department of Public Works and Infrastructure is contributing in mitigating against climate change by developing a green building policy to ensure that all our construction projects comply with international standards and minimize their impact on the ozone layer. This policy will essentially dictate the building of new social infrastructure across the country', said Zikalala.

He called on the infusion of climate change wise planning strategies with climate resilience at their core, saying it was imperative that the industry weaves together the threads of climate science, architecture, and urban design to create cities and human settlements that can withstand the challenges of a changing climate.

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