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SPEECH EXTRACT

MINISTER MACPHERSON REMAINS FOCUSED ON TURNING SOUTH AFRICA INTO A CONSTRUCTION SITE

(Note to editors: The following address was delivered by Public Works & Infrastructure Minister, Dean Macpherson, at the 'Build KZN Better' which took place at the Durban International Convention Centre (ICC) on Tuesday, 28 January, 2024. A full copy of the speech can be found [here](#).)

- **The Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure, Dean Macpherson, said South Africans should not get distracted by power plays, but remain focussed on building a better country.**
- **The Minister said his department had laid a firm foundation in the past seven months to turn the country into a construction site, help ignite economic growth and create thousands of new jobs.**
- **The Minister said the KwaZulu-Natal Government of Provincial Unity has set a prime example for the rest of the country to follow.**

“When the National Government of Unity was formed after the historic May elections, the 10-party coalition decided to set aside their differences for the greater good of the country.

At a Cabinet Lekgotla shortly after our appointment as Ministers, the entire Cabinet agreed that the number one focus of the Government of National Unity for the next five years should be growing the economy and creating jobs.

We agreed that every single government policy and intervention should be evaluated through this lens.

We agreed that if policies stand in the way of meaningful job creation, they should be reviewed and reformed.

Indeed, the primary measure of success—if not the only measure of success—for the Government of National Unity will be whether it has meaningfully reduced the country’s stubbornly high unemployment rate.

If we fail to bring down unemployment, we will have failed in our mission.

Therefore, when we emphasise the importance of an easily understood property regime, underpinned by Section 25 of the Constitution, it is because we want to attract investment and development into South Africa to grow the economy and create jobs.

We all know that uncertainty deters investment.

I remain resolute in turning the Department of Public Works & Infrastructure into the economic delivery unit of South Africa, but we will never achieve this goal if the Government of National Unity does not communicate with clarity and uniformity.

This is why I look forward to Cabinet Ministers using the upcoming Cabinet Lekgotla on Wednesday and Thursday as an opportunity to resolve differences and emerge with a unified plan of action to expedite economic and job growth.

I look forward to constructive dialogue and compromises being made for the greater good of South Africa.”

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“Over the past few months, the Department of Public Works & Infrastructure has laid a firm foundation to play its role in delivering economic growth and creating thousands of new jobs.

We aim to attract more infrastructure investment to get more shovels in the ground and cranes in the sky, which will undoubtedly serve as a catalyst for our economy.

In short, we want to turn South Africa into a construction site and use public assets for the public good.

Here in Durban, alongside MEC Meyer and Mayor Xaba, we signed a historic memorandum of understanding to start using public assets for the public good by releasing underutilised properties for requests for proposals.

Approximately a month later, we released the first round of 27 properties owned by the National Department of Public Works for requests for proposals, with additional properties to follow in later stages.

This means buildings such as Excelsior Court and the Police Barracks in the CBD will no longer stand empty but can be revitalised through public-private partnerships, leasing, or even sale to the private sector.

I am advised that in the technical briefing by the Department for bidders on these properties, 663 companies and individuals attended the briefing which is unheard of.

It is a testament to the immense interest in the property and construction sector working with the government to drive a construction boom in our country.

We have tackled the construction mafia head-on, signing the Durban Declaration with the Department of Police to develop a sector-wide response to bring an end to construction site stoppages once and for all.

Together with the National Treasury, we are working to reform regulations surrounding public-private partnerships to make it easier for the private sector to invest in our projects, including those here in KwaZulu-Natal.

We are engaging multinational funders to attract more infrastructure funding and launching investigations into failed projects to hold officials accountable and recover state funds.

This includes a commitment to get a number of stalled projects back on track and completed.

Furthermore, we are reforming governance in the built environment sector to eliminate loopholes that enable abuse.

Step by step, we are professionalising the department to become a construction and infrastructure partner.

Within a short time, we have already seen the fruits of our labour, with the construction industry adding close to 180,000 new jobs in the third quarter of last year alone—the first major growth after years of consecutive decline.”

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“It is therefore essential not to be distracted by power plays, but to remain focused on the work we are doing to steer South Africa onto a better path.

There will always be individuals who have no interest in growing our economy and creating jobs—individuals who prioritise their own interests over building a better country for all.

We cannot allow them to have the final say.

As Minister of Public Works & Infrastructure, I am here to work, and I will do so every single day.

My commitment to turning South Africa into a construction site that grows our economy and creates jobs is non-negotiable.

I will not be deterred by coordinated attacks against me, including false articles and spurious accusations, designed to derail us from cleaning up and cleaning out.

As the late Pravin Gordhan said, “Join the dots” and you will see what is really going on.

My daily motivation is to stand alongside and fight for the millions of South Africans who tirelessly work for the greater good of this nation—people who remain unshaken in their belief in this country’s potential.

As the theme of today’s conference highlights, these South Africans are committed to building better, both here in KwaZulu-Natal and across the nation.

By working together, we are building a better South Africa.

This is why I applaud the work underway in KwaZulu-Natal under Premier Ntuli.

Not only is he an excellent leader, but I am also grateful to call him my friend.

As I mentioned earlier, you and your Cabinet have set an excellent example for the rest of us to follow.

You have not allowed yourself to be distracted by the naysayers but have remained focused on the job at hand.

We trust in you and have faith in you to deliver the province we dream of.”

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