

**REMARKS BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS AND INFRASTRUCTURE SIHLE
ZIKALALA AT THE PUBLIC WORKS INFRASTRUCTURE SUMMIT, 03 JULY 2026**

Programme Director, Mr. Jandré Bakker, from the Department of Infrastructure in the WC Provincial Government;

Our Host, the Executive Mayor of the City of Johannesburg, His Worship Cllr. Dada Morero;

The Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure, Mr. Dean Macpherson;

Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Public Works and Infrastructure, Ms. Carol Phiri;

MPs, MPLs, MECs, and Councillors;

The Director-General of the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, Mr. Sifiso Mdakane;

Head of PMTE, Mr. Siza Sibande;

CBE Council Member, Dr. Tshepo Monakedi;

CBE CEO, Dr. Msizi Myeza;

CEOs of DPWI Entities;

Senior Government Officials;

Captains of Industry;

Social Partners;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

“From Collapse to Confidence: Strengthening Public and Building Safety, Asset Management and Infrastructure Delivery” is a crucial and timely theme for the 2026 Public Works Summit.

The theme recognizes that infrastructure development is the backbone of economic growth, job creation, and service delivery.

Informed by the numerous, costly and fatalistic disasters at construction sites, this summit calls on all of us to embed safety and sustainability as the hallmarks of infrastructure-led growth and asset management.

Implicit in the theme is also a call to action from all stakeholders in the construction and property sectors to work together to fight corruption and organized crime that jeopardize infrastructure delivery, maintenance and service delivery to clients and communities.

Beyond uncompromising law enforcement against criminal syndicates who sabotage infrastructure development, the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure is forging ahead with the Social Facilitation Framework which has been broadly consulted with relevant stakeholders to eliminate crime and obtain community buy-in on infrastructure projects.

As we gather here, we should recall that beyond the resolutions and safety framework we will adopt, South Africa ultimately depends on its cadre of professionals with requisite technical skills to deliver infrastructure safely and sustainably while improving service delivery.

In this regard, we must recognize the significance of engineering as a crucial technical discipline that we must invest in to deliver quality infrastructure sustainably, within budgets and on time.

Ongoing public consultations led by the Department on the envisaged Office of the Engineer-General of South Africa - a response to a call that came from South African Engineers themselves – reveal the need to build and strengthen engineering leadership in the country if we are indeed to succeed in turning South Africa into a construction site or optimizing the value in the huge property portfolio of the state.

There can be no doubt that engineering excellence and strong engineering leadership is essential if South Africa is to get infrastructure working effectively again.

It is engineers who possess technical expertise, who physically create dams, roads, bridges, power stations, and transport systems that didn't exist before, thereby facilitating trade and creating sustainable livelihoods.

Let us remember the wise words of author and broadcaster Victor Kgomoewana in 2019 when he wrote, *“It's hard for a country to progress when its busiest professionals are lawyers and politicians, not engineers. Africa needs busy engineers, not just busy politicians.”*

Bemoaning in 2022 the lack of critical skills and engineering planning which results in South Africa's failure to deliver safe drinking water and sanitation, former UJ Vice Chancellor, Professor Tshildzi Marwala said, *“For want of an engineer, the water was lost; for want of the water...a country was lost – all for the want of an engineer.”*

This Summit enjoins all of us to also pay attention to the science and complex task of maintenance which involves logistics, finance, engineering and above all, leadership.

As we gather here, we are all challenged to find solutions to urban decay, dilapidated public infrastructure, and the hijacking of public and private buildings by criminal syndicates.

This Summit must bring fresh ideas on how Operation Bring Back can be reinvigorated and made successful in reclaiming public buildings that are illegally occupied and used as dens of crime.

It must help us with suggestions on the best models for the state property company which was announced by His Excellency President Ramaphosa in the State of the Nation Address.

The emergency of climate change and the need to embed climate resilience in construction, facilities management and maintenance cannot be overemphasised.

Responsible property ownership in our constantly changing environment means that property owners must understand their responsibilities with regards to climate change.

Government as the largest property owner in South Africa has taken very seriously the various studies conducted by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP).

Research tells us that buildings are responsible for about 40% of global energy consumptions, 35-40% of freshwater consumption, and no less than 30 % of waste generated through buildings.

On the other hand, the Built environment has the highest potential to contribute to the green economy and attainment of sustainable development goals including the creation of green jobs as well as SMME development.

DPWI together with Infrastructure South Africa and Government Technical Advisory Centre which is a unit within National Treasury introduced the Integrated Renewable Energy and Resource Efficiency Programme which aims to promote the use of renewable energy, e.g. solar, clean energy like natural gas and energy efficiency in buildings in order to introduce costs savings in its in Governments immovable asset portfolio.

The iREREP programme also focusses on water efficiency and waste management. The iREREP programme came as a response to the Presidents Strategic Projects and was designated the category of Strategic Integrated Project 28 (SIP28) through ISA.

As the leader of infrastructure in Government and the largest property owner in the country, it is incumbent on us to provide leadership and direction to the private sector property industry.

We are aware that our Facilities Management and Green Buildings Directorate were in discussions with our Real Estate Management Services Branch to introduce green leases which incorporate, for example, energy efficiency, water efficiency, land efficiency, design efficiency, and reduction of greenhouse gases.

What this essentially means is that you will have to provide property solutions and buildings that comply with DPWI's Green Building Policy.

As DPWI, we must continue to explore ways of incentivising property owners who meet these resource efficiency imperatives through green leasing.

It is commendable that every project entering the Strategic Integrated Projects (SIPs) through ISA is assessed for:

- Carbon footprint and energy efficiency,
- Social value, such as job creation for youth and women,

- Climate vulnerability and resilience to future shocks.

To lease buildings to Government departments, we must ensure compliance with the principles of value for money, sustainability, safe co-existence between people and the buildings they occupy.

It is time DPWI was known for professionalized asset management and improved customer satisfaction from our client departments.

We therefore look forward to this Summit and future engagements to help DPWI:

1. **Establish Robust Revenue Models:** Identify mechanisms for "bankable" projects and revenue generation through land value capture and commercialized leasing.
2. **Strengthen Debt Recovery and Enforcement:** Adopt international best practices for enforcing payments from client departments.
3. **Consolidate Technical and Professional Capacity:** Achieve a meritocratic, technical workforce capable of managing complex infrastructure lifecycles.
4. **Implement Advanced Digitization:** Guide the adoption of Building Information Modelling (BIM), digital twins, and predictive analytics to replace paper-based systems.
5. **Enhance Governance and Corruption Mitigation:** Identify structural safeguards to fight corruption and ensure transparency in procurement and asset disposal.

Finally, we wish to encourage all our entities – CBE, CIDB, ASA, IDT, and ISA to recognise each other's mandates and statutory obligations. We want to see a cohesive Department that is aligned to the mandate of the Department and work together in achieving the strategic objectives of our government in the 7th Administration.

To the private sector, come and partner with us through the various forms of PPPs to support sustainable infrastructure development and asset management.

I thank you.