



public works

Department:  
Public Works  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**COP17: Celebration of the Cato Manor Green Street “Initiative”**

**5 December 2011**

**Input by: Hon Thulas Nxesi MP**

CHECK PROTOCOL

- Programme Director
- The British High Commissioner
- The Secretary of the Australian Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency
- The Representative of the World Green Building Council
- The representative of the eThekweni Municipality
- The Chairperson and members of the Green Building Council of South Africa
- Representatives and members of the Cato Manor community
- Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

I am very excited by what I am seeing today. As Public Works we have celebrated the greening of individual buildings from time to time – but the people of Cato Manor have gone further with the greening of the entire street. I congratulate you, the sponsors, the many companies and organisations involved and the technical people who made this happen.

We also pay tribute to the collaborative process which you embarked upon when you set out on this project. At all times it is vital that we get the buy in of all stakeholders – and particularly communities. It is communities that must be the main beneficiaries of green policies and projects – but not in a passive way – but by taking control of their own destinies.

Allow me to thank the organisers of this event – and in particular the Green Building Council of South Africa – for inviting me to join you in this celebration and to share some thoughts with you.

Last week, as part of COP17, the Department of Public Works participated in the official launch of the Eco-labelling project for the built environment in South Africa. We also engaged in a consultative session on the Green Building Framework, under the theme of *“The Built Environment Contribution to the South African Green Economy”* – the first of a series of external consultations to come.

As the policy custodian in the growth and transformation of the property and construction industries, my role as Minister is to ensure that the Department of Public Works helps to move the country towards a green sustainable built environment responsive to the material conditions of South Africa and Africa.

As responsible global citizens we need to re-think policy, technology, and methods of production and develop new ways of doing business that takes into account the long term sustainability of our environment and the interrelationships between people, resources, environment and development.

These considerations and debates are necessary because the built environment has the potential to undermine our natural environment severely, particularly considering the effect on the quality of life and the quantity of the natural resources involved. The construction industry has therefore been recognised as a key sector to mitigate the negative effects of unsustainable economic development.

Ladies and Gentlemen, infrastructure development is the backbone of every growing and established nation within the global community. The expansion of

economic and social infrastructure remains the springboard from which poverty is eradicated, health services are improved upon, education expands, social-cohesion grows and wealth creation is built.

I believe that this is particularly true in the present global economic slowdown. We know that the private sector is unlikely to drive economic recovery and create jobs in the present climate, so the role of government-led infrastructure development becomes crucial.

At the same time government remains conscious of the need to ensure environmental sustainability, alongside targeted benefits for the poorest of the poor – ever cognisant of the balance that must be maintained between human advancement and environmental sustainability – as espoused in the South African National Climate Change Response Strategy White Paper.

This, after all, is one of the challenges that faces this 17<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties. As negotiations unfold in the heart of this city (Durban), one of the recurring themes is the balance between satisfying economic growth and development required for a better life and increased hope for the peoples of the world, and the moral obligation of human societies, industries, and Governments to ensure that we collectively defend the environment from which we draw life, and allow the same benefit to accrue to future generations.

Towards this end, the Department of Public Works has taken decisive steps in implementing programmes that will ensure that the property and construction industries lesson their environmental impact through the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and facilitating sustainable building technologies.

Consistent with this thinking, the Department of Public Works in conjunction with Indalo Yethu has undertaken to join forces to develop the South African Eco-

Labelling Scheme (SANES) for the built environment, comprising both the property and construction industries. This is a South African initiative and is a direct outcome of the principles DPW identified in its Green Building Framework and shall be located under the auspices of the Department's Green Building Programme.

This process of eco-labelling will track the extraction of natural resources, which are then manufactured into final products for use in the built industry, through to monitoring the construction and disposal phases in the life cycle of a building.

I have referred to the Department's Green Building Framework. The premise that our framework moves from is the recognition that the built environment contributes heavily to utilisation of scarce natural resources, and the total of industrial Greenhouse gases which are responsible for climate change.

It is also our responsibility as government to make sure that research and development into the green economy and consequent manufacturing activities benefits our communities. In this regard, the Department of Public Works seeks to ensure that the Green Building Programme provides a platform for home-grown industrial and research innovations which would include the development of a uniquely South African - and eventually African - Green Building rating system.

Such a tool would not only align to international best practice and scientific models, but also facilitate social-cohesion, enterprise development, the creation of green jobs, and most importantly reflect African philosophy and thinking on environmental sustainability. This will ensure that South Africa is not simply an importer of foreign ideas and manufactured products and services. The development of this tool is planned to start in mid 2012.

Eco-Labelling of construction materials and property development processes will be an integral part of the development of a specifically South African Green

Building Framework under the auspices of DPW. Thus when Government undertakes the greening of any of its buildings, there will be uniform norms and standards provided through the Green Building Rating Tool and Eco-labelling. Accordingly, all retrofitting of existing buildings and construction of new properties by Government will be in line with this agreed measure.

The Department of Public Works intends to lead the South African construction and property industries towards a regulated Green Building dispensation, beyond the "*nice to do*" concept currently in place. This is a long term project and requires partnerships amongst others with the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS) and the Department of Trade and Industry.

In pursuing these objectives, DPW in partnership with the Centre for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), will undertake an international study early in 2012 to research and compare best practices where Green Building regulations or processes have been put in place.

Programme Director, the South Africa government embraces the notion of green government buildings and human settlements.

Many of the expectations placed on the Copenhagen summit in December 2009 in regard to limiting global warming have not been met. Weaknesses and limitations are evident in current international climate policies and architecture which have failed to deliver efficient responses for limiting global carbon emissions.

There is a need therefore, to strengthen alternative approaches to dealing with climate change. We are firmly of the view that sector-based initiatives such as Eco-Labelling for the Built Industry is a correct direction to take in support of broader mitigation and adaptation measures that South Africa has committed to through international declarations and its National Climate Change Response Strategy

White Paper. The latter identified DPW as a key department in its Near-Term Priority Programmes on climate change mitigation and adaptation.

As the custodian of state properties and the state's construction programme, Public Works is the largest South African player in the property and construction fields. As such:

- It has the responsibility to set industry standards and to provide leadership – including in relation to the Green Building Programme.
- As part of the Department's Green Building Programme we seek to develop a uniquely South African - and eventually African – Green Building rating tool – which is in line with international best practices and also encourages innovative South African products which are sustainable and lead to the creation of green jobs.
- The Department of Public Works is committed to the principles underlying the Green Economy Accord. To this effect the Department is currently developing Policy on the Green Economy and the role of Public Works.
- Over the last year, we have retrofitted 1,000 public buildings with energy saving devices. A further 100 buildings have been fitted with water saving technology.
- Over the next year we plan to fundamentally rehabilitate 70 state buildings to comply with a Green Star Rating – including state of the art

water and energy saving devices, intelligent lighting and air conditioning, solar technology and roof-top vegetation.

We are very clear as Public Works that we have to give leadership in relation to the property and construction industry, as we struggle as a society – and as humanity – to shift towards sustainable technologies and to stem environmental degradation and the wastage of the world’s resources.

I thank you