

**ADDRESS BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS BERNICE SWARTS DURING THE
LAUNCH OF THE B.U.I.L.D PROGRAMME, RIVER MEADOW, IRENE, 14 MARCH 2024**

Chairperson of the cidb Board, Mr Khulile Nzo;
Deputy Chairperson of the cidb Board, Professor Susan Bouillon;
CEO of the cidb, Mr Bongani Dladla;
Construction Companies and Industry Professionals;
Senior Government Officials;
Representatives of Labour and Civil Society;
Social Partners;
Members of the Media;
Distinguished Guests;
Ladies and Gentlemen;

We take this opportunity to congratulate the cidb, an important entity of the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, for hosting the official launch of the B.U.I.L.D Programme.

In 2000, our democratic state passed the cidb Act to support the constitutional imperative of transformation and to create an industry that reflects our demographics, one which we could proclaim belongs to all, black and white.

Meeting during Human Rights Month which our nation is commemorating under the theme, “**Three Decades of Respect for and Promotion of Human Rights**”, we must take pride in the strides we have made together to create a truly united, non-racial, non-sexist, equal and prosperous society from a history of division, exclusion, and the nightmare of national oppression.

In launching the B.U.I.L.D Programme, we recall the words of Founding President Nelson Mandela who in his inauguration speech on 10 May 1994 said, “***the time to build is upon us.***”

We can report to our icon, tata Madiba that today's launch of the B.U.I.L.D Programme is indeed a result of his inspiration and unifying message for our nation.

It is a culmination of work in the construction sector over many years to develop the key interventions that are implemented as part of the B.U.I.L.D Programme.

The is a programme conceived to advance and accelerate inclusive development of the construction industry, opening doors for emerging contractors, and driving skills development in the construction industry.

We see it as a solid anchor for the industry, ensuring that infrastructure initiatives significantly advance the country's development goals.

Both Human Rights Month and the B.U.I.L.D Programme remind us that we have a collective responsibility to strive for inclusive socio-economic development to construct a new South Africa free from race-based and gender-based inequality.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the B.U.I.L.D Programme was established in terms of Section 23 of the Construction Industry Development Board Act (38 of 2000) and the related Regulations published in September 2020.

In this regard, the B.U.I.L.D Programme is comprised of the Register of Projects, Best Practice standards for industry development and the B.U.I.L.D Fund.

Through the B.U.I.L.D Programme, the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure seeks to make a qualitative and measurable contribution to the transformation of the construction industry.

We have an objective to see a wider participation of emerging enterprises, women, and youth in the sector.

The Programme defines standards and measures to which all projects above the prescribed thresholds must contribute to developmental goals.

We are pleased to report that the Standard for Enterprise Development and the Standard for Skills Development are the first standards to be gazetted for implementation in terms of the Programme.

The B.U.I.L.D Programme is intended to serve as a framework for national departments, public entities, implementers of Strategic Integrated Projects (SIPs), provincial departments, metros, districts, and local municipalities, to build development goals into infrastructure projects.

The cidb provides guidelines on how these standards must be incorporated into procurement processes when public sector clients invite tenderers for construction work projects.

We have thus directed the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure to lead in the implementation of the B.U.I.L.D Programme on Public Works projects.

Compatriots, you will know that the CIDB Act empowers the cidb to set up the B.U.I.L.D Fund which requires that for projects above the prescribed thresholds, 0.2% must be contributed, up to a maximum cap of R 2 million.

Through the B.U.I.L.D Programme, in the current financial year, about 160 women-owned Grade 5 to 8 contractors have undergone training on Construction Management Systems (CMS's).

This is part of a target for an intake of 250 contractors, which will be ramped up to 2000 contractors over a three-to-five-year period.

Within the framework of the B.U.I.L.D Programme, the cidb has commenced the process for the assessment of contractor competence aligned to the cidb Register of Contractors. This will be followed by targeted development in the areas where contractors need support.

We are also pleased to announce that the cidb has established a partnership with the Small Enterprise Finance Agency (SEFA) to increase financial support for the emerging sector, through the B.U.I.L.D Fund.

In addition, the cidb has, through the B.U.I.L.D Fund appointed two universities - the University of Johannesburg (UJ) and the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits)- as construction Centres of Excellence to promote industry research and build academic capacity, providing opportunities to targeted groups.

It is important that we work closely with academia and the private sector to develop the skills pipeline that will build and sustain an transformed, Built Environment of the future.

As DPWI, we will continue to support STEM subjects at our impoverished township and rural schools and fund students at our universities pursuing degrees in the Built Environment through the Department's Bursary Scheme. On the 25th of January, we awarded 100 bursaries, and we are encouraged to see more and more black girls passing Maths and Science and pursuing careers in the construction sector.

Equally, we must all work together to build artisans in the construction sector to meet the NDP target of 30 000 artisans per year by 2030.

We cannot overemphasize that we will never achieve full transformation and the empowerment of black women in an industry which was historically dominated by men if we ignore addressing the skills gaps that exists.

Equally, the role of mentorship and internships is crucial in building a competent and thriving construction sector in our country.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Best Practice Standards, Construction Management Systems, Contractor Competence Assessment and Centre's of Excellence are part of the first phase of the rollout of the cidb development strategy, enabled through the B.U.I.L.D Programme.

Through the cidb, the full suite of development interventions will be rolled out, including mentorship support in the construction industry, and supporting the rollout of contractor development programs aligned, with the National Contractor Development Framework developed by the cidb.

Today's launch presents a significant opportunity to strengthen the implementation of the B.U.I.L.D Programme which drives the inclusive

development of the construction industry through the implementation of the Standard for Enterprise Development and the Standard for Skills Development, and the B.U.I.L.D Fund, harnessed through the infrastructure procurement process.

The B.U.I.L.D Programme can be seen as a cornerstone in the transformation of the construction industry and the wider participation of emerging enterprises, women, and youth in the sector.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure has a vision to turn South Africa into a construction site because of the importance of infrastructure and its value chain in economic development, job creation, and indeed the provision of much needed infrastructure.

Our government accounts for at least 40% of overall infrastructure investment in South Africa, a country with more women than men according to the latest Census released last year.

We should all be concerned that women constitute around 37% of those represented on the cidb Register of Contractors.

Around 19% grade 9s are women-owned, 25% of grades 7 to 8 are women-owned; and 34% of grades 2 to 4 are women-owned.

Research shows too that about 25% of Built Environment professional service providers are women-owned and the picture is the same among registered women engineers.

Reports from the United Nations on the progress of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have raised an alarm on the slow progress being made to achieve gender equality. At the pace we are going, the UN suggests that it will take 300 years to achieve the SDG target when 2030 is only five years away.

While we have made progress on many fronts since our democratic breakthrough in 1994, we cannot be happy that today South Africa is known to the most unequal country on earth.

The high levels of youth unemployment and feelings of marginalisation and hopelessness by millions of young people remain a worrying ticking time bomb that we must address, and the construction sector can be the loadstar and torchbearer given its potential to absorb young people in employment.

Vision 2030 of the National Development Plan places emphasis on the construction sector as an engine and driver of economic development and job creation.

Faced with no less than three calamities in the 6th Administration – COVID-19, devastating floods, and a civil unrest – government produced the Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (ERRP) to stimulate economic growth and job creation.

The ERRP prioritised infrastructure-led growth given its catalytic impact, multiplier effect, and potential in creating much needed jobs.

Equally, the cidb developed the Construction Industry Recovery Plan (CIRP) led by the Department and the cidb provides a focused approach for the inclusive development of the construction industry.

The CIRP has become a construction industry-wide plan focusing on the public and private sectors. It enables a focus on the entire infrastructure delivery and maintenance value chain. It supports the NDP, the Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (ERRP) and the National Infrastructure Plan (NIP 2050).

We want to use the CIRP to support the construction sector so that it can regain its position as a catalyst for job creation, investment attraction, and revitalised entrepreneurship.

Economic recovery has to be accelerated through the CIRP's focus on project bankability, innovative practices, and streamlined processes.

The Construction Industry Recovery Plan is built on:

- 1) Robust Infrastructure Project Pipeline with Sustainable Funding
- 2) Industry Capacity and Transformation

- 3) Elevating Industry Growth and Performance to instill confidence in the investor community, assuring them that projects will be delivered with precision, efficiently, and on time.
- 4) Green Economy Implementation
- 5) Strengthening the Public Sector capacity to expedite infrastructure delivery.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the B.U.I.L.D is thus an important pillar of both the Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (ERRP) as well as the Construction Industry Recovery Plan (CIRP) to meet the objectives of the NDP. Its success is paramount and requires the collaboration of all stakeholders.

We wish to send a word of appreciation to all individuals and companies that are in the South African construction industry.

We applaud your tenacity, resilience and patriotism.

Let us continue to speak more positively about the construction sector in this country.

Let us lead by example and be the first to invest in it to build investor confidence.

It is in your hands to make the B.U.I.L.D programme a success and to transform the construction industry and make it truly inclusive.

We would be naïve to think everything is rosy, especially for small black contractors, and so we urge the cidb to pay attention to their concerns and address all the challenges.

We need to be results driven and must have clear targets and work tirelessly to meet them.

We implore the cidb to come up with a concrete plan of action to address impediments in accelerating transformation informed by evidence-based research.

It is in our national interest to see a thriving, inclusive construction sector, and as the Department, we stand ready to support and to see the B.U.I.L.D Programme becoming a resounding success.

Let us roll our sleeves and get to work.

Indeed, the time to build is upon us.

South Africa Works Because of Public Works!

I thank you.