



public works

Department:
Public Works
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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

COP17: on the Occasion of the Stakeholder Consultative Session:

Built Industry Contribution to the South African Green Economy

CCR Expo, 2 December 2011

Address by: Hon Thulas Nxesi MP

CHECK PROTOCOL

- Programme Director
- Professional Panel Members
- MECs present
- The Executives of the Council for Built Environment
- The Executives of the Independent Development Trust
- Representatives of the South African Black Property Practitioners Association
- Representatives of the South African Property Owners Association
- Officials of the Department of Public Works
- Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

Welcome.

The Department of Public Works is hosting this stakeholder engagement session just two days after the official launch of the Eco-labelling project for the built environment in South Africa.

Today's event also marks the commencement of external consultative sessions on the Green Building Framework, under the theme of *"The Built Environment Contribution to the South African Green Economy"*.

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 achieves the required intellectual engagement to move the country towards a green sustainable built environment responsive to the material conditions of South Africa and Africa.

The evolution of our societies hinge on the following:

- Economic growth and transformation
- Employment creation
- Poverty and inequality reduction
- Improved access to Health and Education
- Social cohesion
- Safety and security
- International relations and cooperation, and
- Good governance

I would want us to locate our discourse today within this context and ask how we, in the Built Environment sector locate ourselves in relation to the developmental agenda.

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 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, based on the following two arguments. Firstly, one of the key strategies towards a low

carbon economy is resource decoupling or 'dematerialisation' which implies using less material, energy, water and land resources for the same economic output.

Secondly, an enlightened approach to construction utilizes the life-cycle approach to construction recognising that the environmental impacts of infrastructure development begins at the point of extraction of raw materials (mining and harvesting), through the processing and distribution of components, through the building phase on site, to the building occupation and even the decommissioning, demolition and disposal phases. The life-cycle approach therefore prioritises sustainability criteria throughout the life-cycle of the building.

THE TRAJECTORY TOWARDS GREEN BUILDING

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, the challenge of the 21st century remains one of ensuring that Africa takes its place in the global development map, informed by the United Nation's agenda on Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the African Union's socio-economic agenda. South Africa, as a developing African country, faces many of the same economic challenges as the other BRICS countries in regard to

Comment [DP1]: Mfundo, I don't believe this statement is true. What is SA competitive advantage?

poverty, inequality and the need for redress. Redress mechanisms are clearly indicated through the Industrial Action Plan (IPAP II) and the New Growth Path.

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 17th Conference of the Parties. As negotiations unfold in the heart of this city (Durban), one of the recurring themes will be 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.

As we grapple with these historical and consequential issues of development and climate change, we are encouraged that they also signal the growing maturity of man-kind. The vigour with which ordinary South Africans are supporting Greenhouse gas emission mitigation programmes (including the notion of a Carbon Tax) is indicative of this fact.

As we move towards one of the biggest political events in the history of South Africa taking place in 2012, the centenary of the African National Congress (ANC), we need to debate what the mission of the ANC needs to be in the coming years. Perhaps it should be: to struggle for an equal society at peace with the environment within which it exists.

Comment [DP2]: I do not know what you are trying to say here.

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.

This is of paramount importance because the built industry has major impacts not only on economic and social life, but also on the natural environment and cities in particular. Various building activities, such as the design, construction, use, refurbishment and demolition of buildings, directly and indirectly affect the environmental performance of the economy.

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.

Our view is that this approach: the scientific eco-endorsement of construction materials and property development processes – provides a useful tool for ensuring the balance between environmental considerations necessary to guard against climate change and the developmental agenda required for a better life for all. 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.

The Green Building Framework

- The premise that our framework moves from is the recognition that the built industry contributes heavily to utilisation of scarce natural resources, and the total of industrial Greenhouse gases (including carbon emissions) which are responsible for climate change;

Given the sector's various subsets i.e. residential (Human Settlements), commercial (office buildings), and industrial (factories and warehouses), the construction and property industries take up significant amounts of energy and scarce natural resources such as water and timber during the construction phase and the management/operations phases. This means buildings in CBDs and industrial buildings compete directly with surrounding communities, mostly the poor, for scarce resources and also exerts pressure on the power and municipal waste grid.

- The Green Building Programme strives to align Government's socio-economic development imperatives and environmental concerns, to ensure that our road to a green economy is responsive to material socio-economic conditions in South Africa and the African continent. It is our responsibility 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-Labeling 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 policy will be rolled out at national, provincial, and eventually at local Government level.

- Energy efficiency is a critical component of the Green Building Programme and innovative mechanisms will be researched to promote this goal, particularly around photovoltaic (solar power) technologies. Southern Africa, geographically, is favoured by having over 30% of the world's best sunlight for solar power generation. It is one of the few regions where renewable solar energy can be harnessed over a full 12 month cycle, rain or shine. This would also reduce the negative impact on the environment of the current energy sources used, and also open opportunities for job creation, skills development, and positive savings on carbon emissions.
- 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.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we have made a commitment to accelerate the advent of Green Building in South Africa. As part of a consultative process, in March this year, the DPW coordinated a Government Green Building workshop to solicit suggestions for pilot Green Building projects within the DPW – drawing on best practices.

Consultative processes on DPW's Green Building Framework have commenced to engage Government and industry stakeholders. Planned road shows and workshops will be communicated to industry organisations in due course.

In Conclusion

Programme Director, the South Africa government embraces the notion of sustainable government buildings and human settlements. In December 2009, at the Copenhagen Summit, twenty-nine Heads of State and Governments reinforced the European Union's (EU) commitment to limit global warming.

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

Comment [DP3]: is this correct? if it is the list a few.

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 thanks you