



public works

Department:
Public Works
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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

African Federation of Construction Constructors Associations (AFCCA)

Welcome Function

28 January 2012, Johannesburg

Opening Remarks:

TW Nxesi MP, Minister of Public Works

PROTOCOL

On behalf of the Department of Public Works – and South Africans in general - it gives me great pleasure to welcome the members of the Executive Committee of AFCCA – the African Federation of Construction Contractors Associations - from Egypt, Morocco, Ghana, Burundi, Malawi, Niger, Senegal, Sudan and South Africa.

The representative from Morocco – I hope you were able to see the AFCON match on Sunday night between our two nations – a really great game which ended in a 2:2 draw. I commiserate with you that Morocco did not get enough points to go through to the Quarter Finals.

This meeting of the Executive Committee of AFCCA in South Africa is a significant milestone. As the Department of Public Works – which is responsible for policy and regulation of the construction sector - we applaud the initiative of Master Builders South Africa in hosting the meeting in South Africa, and the Department supports this initiative.

This initiative also contributes towards the development of inter-regional trading opportunities in our continent. It is also very significant in light of the infrastructure development projects being delivered not only in South Africa but also across the continent.

I want to applaud the work that MBSA does in South Africa. It is the leading national federation of registered employer associations representing construction and building contractors in the formal sector in South Africa.

Let me also commend the important work done by AFCCA – representing Construction Contractors in 30 different countries. The aims of AFCCA resonate with our own thinking in South Africa, and include:

- Establishing ties among the contractors in African countries for developing the contracting sector.
- Promoting the contracting profession in fields of building and public works, to realize the highest level of quality.
- Establishing groups of contractors in each African country and developing mechanisms to give a competitive advantage to African contractors.
- Establishing networks of African contractors in various African countries, and an effective data base, in addition to establishing "consortiums" able to bid for large-scale projects.

The strengthening of the AFCCA organisation will have far reaching benefits, not only for the African contractors but also for professionals operating within the built environment. The AFCCA

meeting in Johannesburg is therefore significant for both the public sector and private sector as well as professionals that operate within the built environment.

Your efforts come at an important time in the history of our continent. Africa is the fastest growing region in the world and at the core of that growth is infrastructure development.

This is therefore an industry that is central to Africa's growth. In relation to developments here in South Africa, I need to make you aware of the Infrastructure Development Plan outlined by the President of South Africa in 2012. There are 18 Strategic Infrastructure Projects (SIPs) some of which will reach beyond the borders of South Africa.

SIP 1 – “Unlocking the Northern Mineral Belt” – which I coordinate – centred on coal and mineral mining will also have major impacts in terms of water distribution, power generation and road and rail transport linkages.

In coming months and years you will hear more about SIP 17 – “Regional integration for African cooperation and development” – developing linkages with the rest of the region and the continent through energy, road, mining, water, port, rail and air links.

In 2012, we met as Ministers with our counterparts from Namibia to look at areas of possible cooperation. In relation to Public Works, we discussed, amongst others, the following areas:

- Management of government immovable assets
- Maintenance of government properties
- Capacity building in the construction sector
- Exchange programmes between built environment professionals
- Labour intensive community projects for job creation, and
- Development of construction technologies.

The point I am making here is that we have so much that we can learn from each other. There are so many areas – in the construction sector – that require that we cooperate so that we move forward together. AFCCA is playing a role in this – and as governments we must be receptive to your needs and ideas so that we create an enabling environment for development and growth to take place.

In order for Africa to grow and develop at the rate that many analysts are predicting it will grow, there needs to be very strong

regional economic and social ties both within the public and the private sector. Growth and development in the continent will come about through cooperation and collaboration of our regions. Under the auspices of the AU this is already happening.

Ahead of the current AU Summit taking place in Addis Ababa, President Zuma highlighted the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa and the Presidential Infrastructure Champions Initiative, with the flagship project being the North-South Corridor, which South Africa has the honour to champion.

The reliance on the West for our growth is no longer an option. Africans must determine their growth agenda and their growth path. And, it is through initiatives such as those undertaken by AFCCA that we can begin to see the necessary cooperation amongst African countries, particularly in the private sector, needed to drive growth and development.

The theme for this year's AU Summit is "Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance" and key to some of the discussions will be deliberations on mechanisms to increase and promote intra-regional trade on the continent.

The Renaissance of Africa will come from Africans working together and tackling their own problems in an African manner. So, I am therefore very pleased about the initiative that AFCCA is taking.

We have seen recently that services of the South African built environment professionals are in high demand for infrastructure projects across the Continent. One of AFCCA's aims is to promote the contracting and built environment professionals skills and services across the continent.

My view is that these efforts must also include advocating for measures to streamline and align the qualification requirements of the built environment professionals across the continent so as to enable easier facilitation of export of the built environment professional services.

A Quantity surveyor and engineer who have qualified in Kenya or Ghana must be able to work on big infrastructure projects in Zambia and Morocco or South Africa without having to go through too much red tape to obtain the necessary permits to work in a different country. We need these skills everywhere on the

continent. Where we have them and we must utilize them. Where we don't have them we must provide training.

We do not have to depend on skills coming from Europe for our projects. This is what we are talking about when we talk about advancing the African agenda. We need to remove the red tape to allow exports of services and businesses if we are to succeed as a continent.

AFCCA also aims to champion sound governance of the built environment professions and to promote standards of training and development in the built environment in order to protect the interests of the public and to maintain a sustainable built environment and natural environment. Let us never lose sight of this bigger picture.

In relation to good governance, let me also mention the challenge of corruption – which is often associated with the construction sector – the world over. It is a challenge I face every day in Public Works. We have to deal with corrupt officials working with corrupt businessmen – who siphon off public funds preventing optimal service delivery to the poor.

The standards and ethical codes of practice that you put in place as contractors and the private sector will help us in the public sector as we clamp down on corrupt officials.

This need to maintain ethical standards is captured in the opinion piece prepared by President Zuma a few days ago on the eve of the AU Summit. I quote:

“We definitely need a new mindset in Africa and in South Africa, a renewed patriotism and love of the continent and its people.”

It starts with all of us.

I thank you.