

**Minister of Public Works
Ms Stella Sigcau
29 June 2000**

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Address at the roof wetting ceremony of the Botshabelo Magistrate's Office

Master of Ceremonies
Ms Winkie Direko, Premier of the Free State
Mr Sekhopi Malebo, MEC for Public Works, Roads and Transport
Mr Gauta Lefuo, Mayor of Botshabelo
Mr Petrus Molemela, the prime contractor on this project
Distinguished Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen ...

On April 27 1994, millions of South Africans, the majority of whom were black South Africans, spoke in one voice saying they want a government that is committed to improving the quality of life of all South Africans - a government that will bring back dignity to those who suffered at the hands of the oppressors, a government that will understand the needs of the poorest of our society.

Since then this ANC led Government has rolled out a reconstruction and development programme, a socio-economic programme towards rebuilding our nation. As Government we have single-mindedly pursued strategies that will ensure that our economy is able to perform so as to stand its own ground among the economies of the world. We have prioritised service delivery in line with the requirements of our Constitution, which says in the Preamble, and I quote: "... to improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person ..."

Today marks yet another step towards the realisation of such a noble objective. None among you would say that there is improved quality of life when you do not even have proper facilities to ensure protection of your families from the rule of law.

My Department has been given a mandate by the Government of President Mbeki to ensure that we provide facilities to support Government departments in delivering services to communities.

As you all know we have inherited government buildings that have been neglected over many decades, run down to the extent that many of them are barely able to support government services. Although the media will make you believe that these buildings have become dilapidated since 1994, I take comfort from the knowledge that the people of South Africa know what the reality is. Studies have indicated that in order to effectively deal with the maintenance backlog, the State must invest R1 billion per annum for more than ten years. Quite clearly the state cannot afford this amount of money without negatively impacting on other community services.

But, as the Department of Public Works, we cannot be immobilised to inaction because of limited financial resources. Therefore we have embarked upon a number of strategies to ensure that service delivery is supported and enhanced. For the first time in the history of this Government, we are about to launch a partnership with the private sector that will significantly contribute to our efforts. Announcements in this regard will be made in the near future.

I am as such happy to share this opportunity with you – to bring public services to our communities through the provision of infrastructure and accommodation for departments, in this instance the family court to Botshabelo.

Throughout South Africa, we are currently dealing with the planning and construction of 1 745 capital projects. An amount of almost R840 million has been allocated to these projects in the current financial year and on completion, the total estimated construction cost of these facilities will amount to more than R4 billion. Apart from this project at Botshabelo, the Department of Public Works is involved in more than 250 capital projects throughout the Free State to provide accommodation to Departments such as SAPS, Correctional Services, SANDF, Justice, Home Affairs, Labour, NIDS and Arts Culture Science and Technology as well as Community Based Public Works Projects. The projects cover upgrading, refurbishment, as well as the provision of new infrastructure.

Our commitment to Black Economic Empowerment is once again demonstrated quite visibly in this project.

Although significant participation and other gains have been achieved in the application of the Affirmative Procurement Programme (APP), both the wider application of the APP and intensified mobilisation and reinforcement of the sustainable growth of the black construction entities are continuously pursued to create large-scale black construction capacity in South Africa.

This new magistrates' office in Botshabelo is part of the Strategic Projects Initiative (SPI) introduced by the Department of Public Works in May 1998. The Strategic Projects Initiative is aimed at the development and promotion of the sustainable growth of black construction capacity at prime contractor level.

The SPI includes creating a preference for black contractors wishing to participate on large scale public works contracts as prime contractors.

Therefore, appropriate projects are identified, an appropriate mentorship program has been compiled to guide the development of the participating black construction enterprises, appropriate private sector financial resources for initial capitalisation are mobilised and easier access to plant and materials are ensured.

Geographically spread country wide, some 30 SPI projects have been identified, to an estimated maximum value of R400 million. It illustrates Government's endeavour to address the previous imbalances within the construction industry in South Africa and a response to the present economic and political reality confronting us. We remain committed to ensure that significant democratisation of ownership and operation take place within the construction industry.

With contractors such as Mr Petrus Molemela, we are ensuring that service delivery in respect of the administration of Justice for the community of Botshabelo is enhanced. This project, answering to all the objectives of the Strategic Projects Initiative, is ahead of schedule on construction and is meeting time, cost and quality requirements – a definite indication of efficiency.

The structure will comprise five courtrooms: three for criminal, one for regional and one for civil cases. Facilities include a Children's and Family Court with rooms for investigation and a matrimonial room. Adequate waiting areas for witnesses, consultation rooms for councillors, room for a district surgeon, a cash hall for payments as well as offices for administrative staff and holding cell facilities with direct access to the courts will be provided. Air conditioning is being provided, as is sufficient parking and security.

The design of this building is extremely user friendly, with open spaces for additional activities and utilisation by the community, provision for disabled access both in ramps and toilets and the utilisation of natural light. The whole complex was designed within cost and space norms, meeting all the requirements of the Department of Justice, while being aesthetically acceptable.

Life cycle maintenance of the building will be enhanced by the quality material used, such as the face bricks that reduce repainting cost.

The construction of this complex created temporary job opportunities for 110 local community members, as it was designed to be a labour-intensive construction method.

At the moment the building is almost 60% complete, on schedule for early delivery towards the end of this year. The total contract value amounts to R9,945 million.

I believe that this project is doing justice to the objectives of Government, to work and build together as we envisage a better life for all.

Despite criticism being leveled at the Department of Public Works, including complaints from our client departments, we have managed, over the previous four years, to increase our annual effective expenditure against budgeted allocation on capital projects with 20%. This directly translates into improved delivery. We believe that transformation and improved goal oriented management, and in particular the efficiency of the introduced project management operation coupled to single point of accountability, are major contributors to this achievement.

Completion of and service delivery from this complex here in Botshabelo, will, I believe, further testify to the Department of Public Works' commitment to effect the spirit of our democracy.

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