

**Minister of Public Works  
Ms Stella Sigcau  
12 February 2000**

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## **Keynote address at the Opening of Umtata Sub-Regional Office**

Master of Ceremonies  
Distinguished guests  
Ladies and gentlemen, ...

I trust that you share in my joy that Public Works is today opening this sub-regional office in Umtata - that we are indeed bringing the executing arms of the Department within accessible reach of the poor rural communities to enhance and better facilitate service delivery.

The cost of having this office in Umtata, in terms of our businesslike approach, should be off-set against improved response times and address of our clients' needs. Considering the projected savings on time and cost in terms of travelling from Port Elizabeth, we believe that this office, however small (10-12 staff members), will be of sufficient benefit to emerging contractors and previously disadvantaged individuals from former homelands who indeed are finding it difficult to access the office in Port Elizabeth.

Neglected development and the dilapidated state of many government buildings and infrastructure in this area have created a backlog in planned and unplanned maintenance as well as capital projects. In our decision to locate this office in Umtata, these aspects were considered in conjunction with criteria such as relocation cost, financial and developmental impact and the geographical spread of projects. During the monitored period, an average of 45% of unplanned maintenance, 53% of planned maintenance expenditure and 55% of capital works expenditure occurred in the former Transkei area of the Eastern Cape - indicating that Umtata would be the right location for our sub-regional office. It is also the most densely populated area and close to the rural base of the Eastern Province.

I trust that our staff here will be dedicated to the Department's vision and mission, and will proactively contribute to the achievement expected from them, according to our five year plan that I announced on 20 January 2000. The title of this plan means "Actions speak louder than words".

Aspects from this five year plan that will directly impact on the performance of our Umtata office and which bring great opportunity to development in the region, include:

- The creation of Community Production Centres and multipurpose Centres to ensure a focused government impact on poverty alleviation, greater economy of scale on projects, enhance an integrated rural development programme and bring well co-ordinated development and service delivery through the creation of economic nodes in rural areas that are sustainable and offer attractive opportunities.
- Accelerated delivery on all Community Based Public Works projects. Some projects in this area include the R80 million access roads that are under construction as well as 35 more projects in the Kei District and 38 in the Wild Coast district. These latter spans access roads, multi-purpose centres, sports facilities, markets, irrigation schemes, pre-school facilities and stream crossings.
- Reducing the maintenance backlog.
- Intensified implementation of the Construction Industry Development Programme (CIDP), using the Affirmative Procurement Programme (APP) to create economic and business opportunities for emerging contractors whilst addressing the supply side constraints such as finance, training and information. A key area within the CIDP is the empowerment of women within the construction industry - building on what women traditionally contributed, but expanding on training in business skills, tendering procedures and technical advice. We also aim to link the training of youth from local communities to employment of construction projects, to improve the skills base and create employment through the Youth Skills Development and Mentorship Programme.
- We need data to be captured on time and accurately to establish and maintain a National Register of Contractors and Register of Projects as an instrument to promote best practice. Ultimately we want to optimise the achievement of socio-economic goals through the transformation and development of the construction industry.

In addition, allow me to refer to our agreement with MECs for Public Works on greater co-operation in the execution of our functions, in particular in respect of the drive against fraud and corruption. We adopted a five point plan in this anti-corruption drive, comprising:

- The training of officials on procedures and control measures to render them less vulnerable to corruption - particularly in the areas of tender and authorisation procedures and regulations.
- Instituting stringent internal control measures.
- Proactive corruption busting investigation in identified high risk areas.
- Taking harsh action against officials and contractors involved in or promoting corruption, and
- Strengthening financial and administrative capacity, addressing the not uncommon situation where junior officials with inadequate expertise are expected to manage large sums of money and large projects.

I trust that management and staff will discharge their responsibility with enthusiasm, that they will indeed accelerate service delivery to our clients and the community - to the benefit of growth and development of our country.

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