

**Minister of Public Works  
Ms S Sigcau  
13 September 2002**

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**Launch of the BEET**

The Chairperson of Africon, Professor Jakes Gerwel  
The Chief Executive Officer of Africon, Dr Thys Celliers  
Member of the Board of Directors  
Other senior personnel  
Ladies and Gentlemen

I was told that tonight's event is a light-hearted affair, characterised by an evening of fine art, best-select local wines and smooth sounds of jazz.

To keep up with the mood, I prepared a short speech. Most importantly I remembered to bring along my dancing shoes. Unfortunately I had to pass my shoes to Professor Gerwel, at his request, to lead us in the Africon dance. Not wanting to be a spoil-sport, I obliged.

In line with the celebratory spirit, I want to congratulate Africon on its golden jubilee. The 50th anniversary marks an important milestone in the growth and development of any organisation.

Like any other milestone, it does not mean the end of the road. Rather it signifies the end of one stretch and the beginning of another. Therefore more challenges still lie ahead for all sectors of our society in meeting development needs.

The New Partnership for Africa's Development and the challenges of the Millennium Declaration are going to require an intellectual and technological resolution unparalleled in history, to close the gap between the rich and the poor, the haves and the have-nots.

The Department of Public Works and I are proud to be associated with Africon. Our relationship with our organisation spans more than 40 years of the 50 that you have been in existence. And it still continues to grow even today.

It is mutually beneficial relationships such as these that strengthen our resolve as government to involve the selfless expertise and unconditional willingness of the private sector in strategic partnerships designed to create a better life for all and push back the frontiers of poverty.

This strategic pathfinder in the form of Public Private Partnerships was immortalised in the State of the Nation Address by President Mbeki on 04 February 2000 when he said:

I would like to take this opportunity once more to emphasise the importance we attach to the strategic objective of building partnerships between the public and private sector.

We will therefore further intensify our links and cooperation with the private sector for successful implementation of the various economic initiatives ...

Early this year during the Department of Public Works' Budget Vote speech, I mentioned that for the first time in a long and memorable history of the Department, Public Works has managed to utilise just about 100% of its capital expenditure budget of R1.736 billion.

This mean feat of excellence was the direct result of the introduction of a Programme for Accelerated Capital Expenditure, simply called PACE. It (PACE) is a stringent reporting rates on Capital Projects, and to detect at an early stage, where under-expenditure occurs in order to institute corrective, remedial measures.

Once again, we thank the cooperation and relationship we have come to establish with Africon. In the past two weeks the Department of Public Works handed over the first phase of its successfully completed Repair and Maintenance Programme at both the Empangeni Medium (9.4 million) Mafikeng Prisons (R4 million).

Repair and Maintenance Programme which is run in consultation with Africon, is the brainchild of the Department and an innovative initiative to overcome problems of structural decay brought by decades of poor maintenance backlog resulting from insufficient maintenance budget.

Both prisons had become dysfunctional and abandoned, symptomatic of many other government-owned fixed properties. At Empangeni Medium Prison, thanks to RAMP, 247 awaiting-trial prisoners were relocated from the newly built Qalakabusha Maximum Security Prison, also at Empangeni. This move eased a problem of overcrowding at Qalakabusha which negatively affects the success of our rehabilitation programmes.

To date, Public Works has awarded repair and maintenance contracts valued at nearly R2 billion since the programme started in 1999. Other departments such as Justice, Labour, Environmental Affairs and Tourism have asked to be replaced under RAMP.

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