

**Minister of Public Works  
Ms Stella Sigcau  
15 August 2001**

[Back](#)

## **Afribuild/Afriwater/Plumbdrain Africa 2001 exhibition**

Distinguished guests,  
Sponsors, Exhibitors and Participants  
It gives me great pleasure to join you at the opening of this vibrant exhibition.

### **1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

The Afribuild/Afriwater/Plumbdrain Africa 2001 exhibition continues a fine tradition, drawing together a wide spectrum of national and international role players, particularly those within southern Africa, to review construction industry innovation over the past few years.

I would like to congratulate the organisers, Reed Exhibitions and associated organisations, who continue to play a pivotal role in focussing our attention on the development of a sector which is vital to the economy of our country and, indeed, of our region.

I would also like to congratulate fellow exhibitors in their pursuit of excellence and of innovative solutions that **must** benefit all our people.

This, surely, is the objective that is brought alive in the exhibition theme of "Building a Winning Nation!" In this common endeavour, Afribuild 2001 provides an outstanding opportunity to showcase the capability of our construction industry as a national asset.

### **2. OUR EFFORTS TO PROMOTE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

You are all critical partners in the endeavour to Build a Winning Nation and to improve the lives of our people and those of our neighbouring countries.

Our coming together is underpinned by this commitment which is inexorably linked to the African Renaissance and the role that construction must play in the development of our region.

The Department of Public Works is proud to be associated with this great event, as an exhibitor and as an active industry partner. Indeed, the theme of our stand characterises both our approach and our vision for ongoing cooperation. We are therefore exhibiting as (and I quote) *"Your Partner in the Growth, Development and Transformation of the Construction Industry."*

(I invite you to visit our stand).

Since 1994 the Department of Public Works has championed a range of initiatives and coordinated a comprehensive industry development strategy in partnership with all stakeholders.

Industry roleplayers have cooperated on many development initiatives ranging from policy development and legislation to practical implementation.

At a practical implementation level, these initiatives have addressed skills training, emerging contractor development as well as public sector delivery capacity and bottlenecks such as delayed payment.

The initiatives to promote best practice have also addressed procurement improvement and the new consultant's roster.

All of these initiatives have involved active partnership with the industry and this year we have begun to establish provincial committees with key industry role-players to address issues of common concern

Undoubtedly, the most significant milestone of cooperation has been the passage of legislation at the end of

last year that creates the framework for ongoing progress towards the goals of industry development.

It is of immense significance that all stakeholders supported the new legislation, which they helped to shape through the various formations of industry, including the Construction Industries Confederation, the Construction Alliance, organised labour, the emerging sector and the professions.

The legislation has given birth to the recently established Construction Industry Development Board as well as new Councils for the Built Environment Professions. These new institutions must significantly contribute to a number of critical development outcomes. These include:

- Industry growth, investment and stability,
- enhanced industry performance and innovation,
- improved public sector delivery capacity,
- industry training and human resource development,
- improved access to the industry by previously marginalised sectors of our society, specifically blacks and women.

To support these central goals, Public Works has initiated a study on the current state of the industry and its performance. This will promote a cooperative process to establish targets for construction industry improvement and for growth, delivery and transformation.

These goals will require intensive co-operation between the industry and its clients in the public and private sector. Together we must address a range of challenges.

### **3. CHALLENGES**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Within the scope of developing a competitive, fast-growing economy that creates jobs for all work seekers, Government is implementing innovative measures to generate higher levels of growth and much higher levels of employment and equity.

Our policy and programmes are geared to systematically empower and build capacity for ordinary South Africans to become active participants in the economy. We are making significant progress and we will continue to do so in a structured manner.

In this context I would like reiterate Government's position that we will not tolerate land invasions. We will not allow political opportunism to mislead poor people on false promises of possible land acquisition, nor will we as Government, tolerate any acts of land invasion that run contrary to our structured programme of land reform.

Our country and region face many challenges that require the active input of the construction industry and demand of us that we elevate our partnership to new heights.

The backlog of infrastructure, housing, roads and clean water require a constant search for solutions that can boost our programmes and can promote accelerated delivery, not only in the urban areas but particularly in support of Government's integrated rural development strategy.

The construction industry has immense potential to find solutions and to address the legacy of our infrastructure backlog. The key to unlocking this potential lies in innovation and the ingenuity of all of you who are exhibiting here today.

The other challenge I would like to ask you, especially the big construction companies, is to actively participate in the transformation agenda of our country. In addition to what you are already doing, you need to make it your responsibility to accelerate black economic empowerment in the construction industry. One of the ways of achieving this is through conducting mentorship programmes for promising emerging contractors. In addition we as government will be considering equity structures of major companies with a view to promote black economic empowerment. We hope that the industry will take up this challenge as their own.

### **4. CONCLUSION**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, let me thank the organisers of Afribuild for enabling the Department of Public Works and myself to share our ideas through this exhibition.

The Department takes this opportunity to reconfirm its support and commitment to all industry role players as a reliable partner.

Together, we will continue to promote our industry as the national asset, which it is.

Together we will build a winning nation.

[top](#)