

**Minister of Public Works
Ms Stella Sigcau
25 August 2000**

[Back](#)

**Building & Drainage Control Conference
"2001 Plus, Convention / Innovation / Vision"**

Honourable Chairperson,
Distinguished Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

1. INTRODUCTION

I indeed appreciate the invitation to be part of this gathering, which draws together specialists and practitioners to reflect on a theme of critical significance to the construction industry and its development.

To my understanding, the common purpose at this conference is to advance the critical role of the Building Control sector in applying standards and protecting the interests of end users in construction and building.

Such deliberations as you are going to have can lead to the promotion of performance excellence and industry best practice.

As a leading industry client and a proponent of construction industry development, the Department of Public Works is an interested participant in this conference, underlining our deep appreciation of the work being done by other stakeholders in our country to promote an efficient and effective industry.

2. STANDARDS, CONTROL AND INNOVATION

The significance of this convention is well reflected by its focus on "innovation" and on "vision". In exercising control and protecting the interests of end users, it is important that we are guided by a vision of delivery to our people, and that our methods and control mechanisms do not stifle innovation that is critical to this central objective of Government.

Basic infrastructure delivery to overcome the legacy of Apartheid is at the heart of Government's vision for development and transformation of our country. It is this fundamental vision that must underpin the endeavour of this conference in assessing the role of standards and our control function.

In short, our standards and control measures must be responsive to innovation and change in South Africa and the global environment in which our industry competes. Standards and control measures should not be a barrier to the emerging sector, nor to industry innovators.

Unfortunately this is not always the case. The important exercise of control to maintain standards is all too often undertaken in a rigid and mechanical way. It sometimes takes years to recognise valuable innovation introduced by our own industry. In the context of globalisation and fierce competition a slow response to new approaches can wipe out the competitive edge of our own innovators to the advantage of international competitors.

This problem applies equally to our specification methods, which sometimes constitute a barrier to progress. Take for example a specification for a septic tank servicing a remote police station - and Government has thousands of such installations. The introduction of a new technology to deal with waste water may save end users and the taxpayer millions of Rands per month, but because our specifications do not permit the application of this new technology, the public may be deprived of the potential benefits because our response to change can sometimes take years.

3. TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The question of appropriate training of both inspectors and built environment professionals is therefore of the utmost importance and I am delighted that the convention will be addressing the first ever National Course for Building Inspectors.

Inspectors, standards setting bodies and the professions need to be equipped not only to ensure that standards are adhered to but that they remain relevant. There is a need to proactively engage together in the constant review and upgrading of standards and specifications and to ensure that they become less input focussed and more output oriented.

Thus I would like to thank the South African Bureau of Standards and the Agreement Board of South Africa, as well as the Joint Acceptance Scheme for their considerable role in setting standards and providing an enabling environment within which our Building Inspectors can function effectively.

With regard to the professions regulated by the Department of Public Works, we have placed legislation before Parliament that completely overhauls outdated approaches and will ensure that the built environment professions continue to apply their skills at the cutting edge of global endeavour. One of the objectives of this legislation is to promote an obligation for continuous professional development.

This is a demand of our time. The days are over when graduates in Engineering, Architecture and Quantity Surveying registered a lifelong professional status at the outset of their careers. Our era of increasingly rapid technological progress requires that those who lay claim to the title of "professional" should indeed continuously demonstrate competence in their respective fields.

Perhaps consideration should be given to the need to apply this principle equally to Inspectors dealing with building and drainage control.

4. CONTROL AND CORRUPTION

Ladies and Gentlemen, the exercise of control is a function that is prone to corruption. I believe that this conference would fall short of its responsibility if it does not address the vulnerability of our inspectors to unscrupulous operators who seek to duck their obligation through bribery.

Unfortunately our own Department has uncovered all too many examples of this kind of corruption and we have established a Fraud Awareness Unit that is investigating corrupt practices, some of which involve the collusion of Building Inspectors who bring the very concept of monitoring and control into disrepute. At the same time, inspectors sometimes delay payment to contractors and consultants on some pretext - and this practice is threatening the sustainability of our construction industry, particularly the emerging sector.

In fact it is a practice that has been raised by industry stakeholders with the Minister of Finance and myself and we will soon be reporting back to industry on the progress made by my Department in addressing delayed public sector payment.

The scourge of corruption confronts us and cannot be allowed to undermine our promise to deliver infrastructure and empowerment to our people. I call upon all role-players to respond to this challenge. Our conference deliberations must reflect a commitment to deal with this matter openly in relation to matters such as training, a code of conduct and mechanisms to ensure that such a code is adhered to.

This is a challenge that I hope will be taken up by all role players.

5. CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT BOARD AND GOVERNMENT'S VISION

Ladies and Gentlemen

On the 28th of this month officials from my Department will report back to the Reference Group of all construction industry stakeholders on the progress of legislation to establish the Construction Industry Development Board.

It is our hope that the legislation will be enacted during Parliament's final session this year and that the CIDB will soon be established to implement a comprehensive industry development strategy that will support initiatives such as those emanating from this conference.

This strategy flows from Government's vision for the construction industry. The strategy is about actions to stimulate positive change, to promote growth, the increased participation of the emerging sector, improved labour relations and sustainable employment. It is about appropriate human resource development and improved industry and client performance. It is about establishing and promoting the benchmarks of industry "best practice" against the backdrop of South Africa's ongoing transformation.

Above all, the strategy, and the road we are on, must lead to accelerated and efficient delivery to the people of South Africa, who are the ultimate stakeholders in this process to shape the industry.

CONCLUSION

I am confident that the work of this conference will constructively contribute to these objectives. Please accept

my sincere wishes for a successful convention.

I thank you all for your participation.

[top](#)