



**public works**

Department:  
Public Works  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**International Union of Architects (UIA)**

**25<sup>th</sup> World Congress 3-7 August 2014  
ICC, Durban**

**Official Opening Ceremony**

**4 August 2014**

**Input: Honourable TW Nxesi MP  
Minister of Public Works**

Protocol

- Dr Blade Nzimande, Minister of Higher Education & Training,
- Mr Edward Senzo Mchunu, Kwazulu- Natal Premier
- Members of Executive Council (MECs) from the various Provinces
- Mr James Nxumalo, eThekweni Mayor

- Mr Albert Dubler, UIA President
- Mr Michael Barmaki: UIA Secretary-General
- Mr Sindile Ngonyama; SA Institute of Architects President
- Mr Yashaen Luckan, President of South African Council for the Architectural Profession
- Mr Hassan Asmal, President of UIA 2014 World Congress
- Professor Siphon Seepe
- Members of the UIA, architects and built environment professionals attending from around the world
- Officials from the three spheres of government led by the Director-General of Public Works
- Members of the media
- Ladies and gentlemen

Welcome all, and a very special welcome to our international visitors and guests. It gives me great pleasure to participate in the official opening of the 25<sup>th</sup> World Congress of the International Union of Architects which takes place here in Durban.

Six years ago, in 2008, the South African delegation headed to Turin, Italy and made a successful bid to host the 2014 World Congress of the International Union of Architects – a prestigious event which has been referred to as the Olympics of Architecture.

South African organisations representing built environment professionals and local government representatives from

eThekwini Municipality made up the delegation under the leadership of the then Minister of Public Works.

Three years later, in 2011, the same entourage visited Tokyo to receive the baton from the hosting nation, Japan. They made commitments to the International Union of Architects that Durban would successfully host the World Congress – building on our long record of successfully hosting similar events – most notably the 2010 FIFA World Cup. We are very sure that Durban will maintain that high standard.

The UIA 2014 Durban World Congress is hosted by the South African Institute of Architects with the support of the Department of Public Works and the local eThekwini municipality; private companies – PPC Cement, Itatile, Hewlett Packard, Intel, Barrisol; and the South African Council for the Architectural Profession, as with as the KwaZulu-Natal Institute of Architects.

The Congress takes place under the thought-provoking theme of “Architecture OTHERWHERE. It seeks to celebrate diversity by exploring OTHER communities, OTHER regions, OTHER disciplines, and OTHER ways of thinking about, practicing and teaching architecture. The intent is to acknowledge the built environment as a major force to improve the quality of life for all people and their communities.

The sub-themes of the Congress are Resilience, Ecology and Values – all point to a profession which is grappling with the larger socio-economic and environmental issues.

The sub-themes suggest a continuing debate on what role Architects and Urban Designers will play in relation to a number of global challenges, including:

- Persisting poverty, unemployment and inequality – and the need to adopt a more radical developmental agenda;
- Rapid urbanisation – as we see around us in the expansion of Durban. Already – globally – the urban population has reached 50%. By 2050 we are told the figure will be 80%. With urbanisation comes informal settlement and massive pressure on resources. We need to be working together – as architects, planners, governments and the private sector – working with communities to upgrade human settlements and to create safe liveable environments.
- We also have to address the depletion of natural resources – particularly water in our case - and environmental degradation; and the effects of globalisation on the built environment.

In order for developing nations, for Sub-Saharan Africa and South Africa to grow and prosper, a paradigm shift in creatively thinking about these and other challenges needs to occur.

From the side of government, these growing challenges demand that we engage with the architects, planners and designers to redefine how we interpret the built environment – and more importantly how that built environment is perceived by the communities who experience it. I trust that this Congress will provide an

important opportunity for engagement to develop into long term collaboration and mutual respect.

The opportunity to host the World Congress of Architects comes at a very special time in the history of South Africa:

- Central to Government's National Development Plan is the National Infrastructure Plan – a strategy of rolling out infrastructure to drive national and regional economic development and job creation. This strategy is now concretised in a series of Strategic Infrastructure Projects led by the Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Commission (PICC).
- At the heart of the infrastructure development programme is the need for specialized Built Environment skills and expertise necessary to drive the programme.
- At the same time my department – Public Works – has a mandate to regulate, develop and transform the built environment professions – which crucially includes the profession of architecture. We cannot be complacent that 20 years into democracy in South Africa, only 24% of built environment professionals are black; 9% are female.

As government, we have said that this next 5-year term of government marks a second more radical phase of transition to democracy. This includes the transformation of the Built Environment – the construction and property sectors – transforming

ownership and management of the sector to better reflect the country's demographics, and producing more black and female built environment professionals.

To this end, the Department of Public Works will work very closely with the Charter Councils to monitor BBBEE scorecards and transformation objectives.

We have also dedicated resources to help promote young professionals by firstly recruiting school leavers and supporting them to choose careers in the built environment, targeting children from historically disadvantaged backgrounds including black townships and rural schools, and girl children – so that they receive the resources and encouragement to carve a career for themselves in these fields.

We have also stepped up the Young Professional programme in the Department to assist graduates to get mentorships, accelerate learning and progress to register as professionals.

As government we are also acutely aware that at the heart of most service delivery protests lies the glaring paucity of our built professions skills to expedite provision of houses, water, sanitation, roads, and other basic public infrastructure.

- Transformation – for South Africans - also means challenging the old Apartheid model of spatial planning. We need architects and town planners committed to a new non-racial and egalitarian vision

of spatial development – which challenges the entrenchment of spatial planning along lines of class and race.

I believe that this World Congress of Architects – held here in South Africa - provides an opportunity to reflect on where we are going as a nation – and as a continent – in relation to the kind of built environment we want to create. I believe that this Congress provides an important opportunity for African architects - in particular - to contribute to a developmental agenda for architecture and urban design.

Crucially, we look to our built environment professionals – architects and planners – to ask the hard questions, including:

- What are we doing to entrench principles of sustainability and greening into our planned built environment? – and how do we roll these out to working class and rural communities?
- What are we doing concretely to break down entrenched inequality and segmentation in spatial planning – in the case of South Africa having its roots deep in the history of apartheid and colonialism.
- What are we doing to humanise the built environment? Beyond economic development, how are we incorporating community, human values and social development into our vision of the Built Environment?

- What are we doing to respond creatively to the massive challenges of homelessness and informal settlements – in such a way that we enlist the creativity and initiative of these communities?

These and other questions we hope will be debated at the World Congress.

The sub-themes for the Congress – “Resilience, Ecology and Values” - remind us that the Built Environment is about much more than glass, concrete and steel. This also speaks to our triple challenge of poverty, unemployment and inequality – and the need to take this struggle into the realms of planning, architecture and the Built Environment.

This struggle takes place within a global context of economic slowdown, climate change and global warming, urbanization, migration, population growth and massive pressure on land use, water and other resources. Our architects and planners need to speak to these challenges.

At the same time we need to incorporate cultural and national values in our designs so that we promote national identity and social cohesion – and we ensure that our story and history is incorporated and told in our designs and plans – so that our people will be happy and proud to live in the towns and communities that we – and they - create.

It is our belief, therefore, that the Architects World Congress – taking place on our shores – provides an



opportunity for self-reflection, to learn from the experiences and best practices of others, and to generate new ideas to create a built environment which is humane, supports communities, is sustainable and inclusive of all of the people.

I wish you well in your deliberations.