

**THE MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS, Ms THOKO DIDIZA, MP, GIVES A KEYNOTE ADDRESS AT THE INAUGURATION OF NEW MEMBERS FOR THE SECOND TERM OF THE CBE COUNCIL**

**VENUE: KEMPTON PARK, GAUTENG**

**DATE: 11 AUGUST 2006**

- The new Chairperson of the Council, Mr. Siphon Madonsela
- The Deputy Chairperson, Professor Gwen Breedlove
- The Chief Executive Officer of the Council, Dr Malindi Neluheni
- All the new and outgoing members of the Council
- The Acting Director-General of Public Works, Dr Sean Phillips
- Distinguished Guests
- Ladies and Gentlemen:

The appointment of the new members of the Council for the Built Environment (CBE) marks a milestone in the history of the Council. Like any milestone, it does not mean the end of the road. Rather it signifies the end of one stretch and the beginning of another. It represents an opportunity for us to take stock of the achievements, challenges and lessons learnt in the first term and incorporate these experiences into the body of knowledge as we sail into the future.

The process towards establishing the Council for the Built Environment started in 1994 when the Built Environment Forum was appointed to review the regulation of the professions actively involved within the Built Environment in order to establish proper coordination between the professions in respect of national development priorities and bring consistency in the execution of core functions of different councils. This work laid the basis for the legislation which saw the CBE established through an Act of Parliament at the end of 2000 with the explicit purpose to, among others:

- Promote and protect the interests of the public in the built environment
- Promote and maintain a sustainable built environment and natural environment
- Promote ongoing human resource development in the built environment, as well as,
- Ensure the uniform application of norms and guidelines set by the councils for the professions throughout the built environment

However, the first term of the CBE could only commence in 2002 when all the six councils comprising the CBE had been established. These six councils represent the following professions: architecture, engineering, landscape architecture, quantity surveying, property valuation as well as the project & construction management.

Although Section 10.(1) (a) of the CBE Act requires that the Minister must, within 30 days of the appointment of the Council, determine the time and place of the first meeting, the new CBE Council was appointed in May 2006 amidst the disruption to our schedules brought by the death of the late Minister Stella Sigcau. Today marks the first such meeting.

I believe that the newly appointed members collectively represent the necessary leadership capability, expertise and knowledge in the built environment while maintaining a reasonable balance in terms of competence, race, gender and geographical composition. This is imperative as they assume the important role in this second term of office with attention required in the areas of provision of strategic direction in the built environment, addressing the issues of transformation and skills development while strengthening good corporate governance including the signing of the CEO's appointment letter and the finalization of their annual performance contract.

As the country emerges from the ruins of apartheid, South Africa is standing on the edge of new challenges and the nation requires institutional arrangements in the mould of the CBE which will harness the opportunities available to promote the agenda of development, growth and transformation. Apartheid and its myopic social and economic planning left the country a legacy characterized by broken communities, poor quality and quantity of skills, and the workforce that was not representative of the demographics of the country.

In response, this government has embarked on poverty alleviation programmes to reverse the ills of yesteryears. Chief among them is the reconstruction of existing as well as the development of new essential public infrastructure to improve public service delivery. Consequently government has announced a robust multi billion rand infrastructure capital expenditure plan led by government and the state-owned entities. The professions falling under the CBE are integral to this ambitious undertaking and unless the likes of the CBE begin to deliver on their mandate, the country will be perpetually forced to look beyond our own borders to find necessary skills and expertise.

Project & Construction Management which is one of the professions regulated by the CBE has been singled out by President Thabo Mbeki in his efforts to internationalize the Joint Initiative for Skills Acquisition (JIPSA). Countries such as the United Kingdom, Japan and India have been targeted to cooperate with South Africa to transfer requisite skills. According to the President, an audit of skills has been done and ***“we have identified a very urgent matter, which is a global problem- project managers....You need those people and that kind of skill with experience to make sure that these ambitious projects happen.”***

This was confirmed by the Minister of Public Service and Administration, Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, following an agreement signed between South Africa and India on recruiting especially local government professionals to work on contract in South Africa. She remarked that “***we are not looking at recruiting large numbers of people. We are looking for professionals in particular areas***”.

The same can be said about the property valuation profession. If government wants to unlock the value of its fixed asset portfolio as per its newly drawn fixed asset management strategic business plan, the government through the Department of Public Works needs to undertake proper valuations of this portfolio. In the past the paucity of qualified property valuers has delayed even the successful completion of the asset register.

Interventions by government such as the Infrastructure Development Improvement Programme (IDIP) aimed at improving the ability of the public sector to successfully plan for, and expediently execute large multi million rand projects in support of public service delivery, will require a healthy built environment nourished by the Council for the Built Environment.

The Accelerated Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGISA) is explicit on its wish to rein in the civil society in working with government to find lasting solutions to economic growth, skills development and employment creation. The CBE Act under the functions, powers and duties of the Council echoes this sentiment of ASGISA and calls on the CBE to “***advise government on any matter falling within the scope of the built environment, including resource utilization, socio-economic development, public health and safety and the environment...***”

In the last week we celebrated two important events, namely the successful conclusion to our maiden National Construction Week Campaign and the 50<sup>th</sup>

anniversary of the historic women's march in 1956. I want to recognize the contribution played by the CBE in promoting the Construction Week and finding time to highlight the activities of the Council. I also want to thank those professionals who took time to share the intricacies of their professional lives with the ordinary South Africans particularly our youth. Unknown to you, you could have planted a seed in the minds of these youths which will germinate into a decision to follow a career in one of these disciplines, and thereby contribute to the aspirations of JIPSA and ASGISA.

The Council needs to strengthen its marketing efforts to demystify its professions to the women. We need to remove cultural barriers many of which are man-made to the successful participation of women in the built environment professions, both at the technical and management levels.

I want to congratulate the old Council members for successfully handing over the baton. Yours was a path finding experience and I believe that the lessons learnt and experiences gained will continuously be invested in the CBE to improve and strength its value chain. To the new members, I say your job is cut out for you and you have the responsibility to make the CBE relevant to the socio-economic transformation agenda of the country. We shall continue to give you our support in exchange for your valuable contribution to the mandate you are today accepting. I wish you all well and good luck.