



human settlements

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STATEMENT BY THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA DURING THE SECOND SESSION OF THE OPEN-ENDED INTERGOVERNMENTAL EXPERT WORKING GROUP ON ADEQUATE HOUSING FOR ALL: AGENDA ITEMS ON, SOCIAL HOUSING, INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS, TENURE SECURITY AND HOUSING FINANCE

Thank you, Chair, for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the delegation from the Republic of South Africa.

As this is our delegation's first time addressing this session, we would like to express our gratitude to the Secretariat for organising this Second Session of the Open-Ended Working Group on Adequate Housing for All.

Chair, I would also like to extend our sincere condolences to the Government and people of Kenya following the recent passing of former statesman His Excellency Mr. Raila Amolo Odinga. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family, friends, and all Kenyans during this difficult time of mourning.

In South Africa, social housing remains a policy priority driven by our constitutional obligations. Over the years, it has been facilitated through subsidised rental options available through programmes such as the Institutional Subsidy Programme, Social Housing Programme, and Community Residential Unit Programmes. However, these initiatives have not sufficiently met demand relative to the need for affordable rental

housing nationwide. The government's housing subsidy scheme has made significant progress in creating homeownership opportunities for millions of people. However, many low- and middle-income families still struggle to obtain mortgage financing or to bear property ownership costs. To tackle this issue effectively, the 2024 White Paper on Human Settlements makes provision for reforms aimed at enhancing social housing initiatives while addressing existing deficiencies in current policies and amending relevant legislation.

Resolution HSP/HA.2/Res.7 concerning Adequate Housing for All is closely linked with Resolution HSP/HA.2/Res.2 focused on Accelerating Progress in Transforming Informal Settlements and Slums by 2030. The transformation of these areas remains a key concern for this Working Group. Therefore, my government endorses global efforts aimed at swiftly resolving challenges related to informal settlements so that we can build homes that promote resilience, safety, and social cohesion, particularly when our interventions prioritise vulnerable populations such as women, youth, children, the elderly individuals and persons with disabilities. South Africa has a dedicated grant funding that enables the provinces and metropolitan municipalities to transform informal settlements. We consider transforming informal settlements as vital not only for urban development but also for achieving objectives outlined in the African Union's Agenda 2063 and United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development alongside the transformative commitments in the New Urban Agenda.

Current policy reforms in South Africa's housing sector focus on, inter alia, improving tenure security through a system that would accommodate recorded incremental tenure options, both individual and collective, inclusive of all residents while allowing households to securely invest in permanent structures. Special attention will be given to advancing land rights and tenure security among women, older persons, child-headed households, individuals with disabilities as well as other marginalised groups. This will be supported by the intergovernmental intervention of promoting land assembly through release of state-owned land for housing development. South Africa is currently implementing a title deed restoration programme which ensures security of tenu

Regarding housing finance strategies, we are actively reviewing additional funding models in cooperation with essential national departments such as the National Treasury, to establish flexible financing avenues tailored for various household income levels, in order to enhance both access and affordability for eligible families. It is crucial that diverse partners within the housing sector seek public-private partnerships centred around community needs rather than merely business interests. We believe government should facilitate private sector investment in public human settlements along with necessary infrastructure support services; financial institutions must also be encouraged to lend to low- and middle-income earners thereby minimising dependency on public funds or subsidies alone.

Given that South Africa's savings rate is relatively low, a situation highlighting an urgent need for innovation, we recognise fostering a sustainable savings culture is critical moving forward; learning best practices from other nations may assist us in expanding access to housing finance for lower-income households. Moreover, it is important to embrace use of innovative building methods that are climate resilient, reduce construction costs and accelerate housing delivery through localisation. In this light, South Africa will host its inaugural International Conference on Innovative Building Technologies which aims to showcase ideas that enable effective and efficient housing delivery techniques.

South Africa aligns itself with developing countries' perspectives emphasising that governments with social and economic partners, together play an indispensable role in achieving safe, resilient and sustainable adequate housing ensuring inclusive, integrated, well-planned communities as envisioned in the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 11 along with New Urban Agenda transformative commitments toward 2030. South Africa's commitment to sustained integrated human settlements development is demonstrated by the recently signed agreement to open the UN-Habitat Country Office. We envision that one of the priority areas of collaboration will be the establishment of a Knowledge Hub to enforce data driven policy development and sharing of global best practices.

Thank you for your attention.

