

**SOUTH AFRICA'S STATEMENT AT THE UN-HABITAT GOVERNING
COUNCIL, 30 MARCH – 03 APRIL 2008**

NAIROBI, KENYA

**Mr. Itumeleng Kotsoane: Director-General, National Department of
Housing, South Africa**

Date: ___ April 2009

President and Vice President of the Governing Council
Executive Director of UN-HABITAT
Honourable Ministers
Ambassadors/High Commissioners
Mayors
Excellencies
Delegates

I wish to congratulate the President, the Vice President and the Bureau for the election to this important forum.

It is indeed an honour to address you at this occasion of the 22nd UN-HABITAT Governing Council.

South Africa, like most of the countries represented here, remains committed to the UN-HABITAT Agenda, the Istanbul Declaration and the achievement of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. In this challenging global financial crisis, it is necessary to remind ourselves of these commitments and their relevance as we try to bring normality in the global financial system. There should be no doubt that the poor who have contributed the least bear the greatest brunt of the crisis.

To this end, adequate shelter and secure accommodation within functional and sustainable human settlements are central to South Africa's commitment to reducing poverty and improving people's lives. This is within a composite inventory of efforts towards poverty alleviation and nurturing human capital by prioritising the vulnerable.

While our approach to housing provision – particularly the subsidy – has been subject to various criticisms, it was only during the current mortgage-induced international financial crisis since late 2008 that the provision of subsidies acquired a greater currency of acceptance. Our subsidy policy has successfully helped low-income earners to access affordable housing finance with guarantees for security of tenure.

Housing subsidies have had an important distributional effect on more than a quarter of South Africa's population – those who would not otherwise be able to afford an acceptable standard of housing and basic services. About 13 million South Africans have benefited from our subsidized housing opportunities since 1994. We are proud that 53 per cent of our beneficiaries are women.

One of the achievements of our housing provision has been to stabilize the social landscape by meeting people's value expectations. This is important primarily because social stability remains a precondition for any meaningful appreciation of the objectives to improve the quality of life for all in any society.

However, inadequate shelter arising from increasing rural-urban migration remains a challenge that confronts us. We also continue to seek solutions to improve our planning approaches to respond to informal settlements upgrading. In addition, issues of poverty, affordability and technical limitations to address the scale and scope of human settlement challenges remain.

Despite these challenges we are committed to harnessing community and private sector partnerships towards addressing the scope of our human settlement problems. We also remain committed to our engagements with various organisations which seek to address shelter needs under the auspices of Slum Dwellers International.

Further, through our engagements in multilateral institutions, amongst others, AMCHUD, IBSA, UN-HABITAT and Cities Alliance - we remain committed to