**​​Opening Remarks To The Advisory Panel on Land Reform's Colloquium On “Unpacking Land Issues for Inclusive and Sustainable Reform"**

**BIRCHWOOD**

**7 December 2018**

Programme Director

Chairperson of the Expert Advisory Panel on Land Reform, Dr Vuyo Mahlati

Members of the Panel

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

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I wish to extend the apology of the Deputy President who would have wished to be here but owing to other engagements he requested us to participate in this landmark dialogue.

This colloquium on land reform comes at a very opportune moment in our democratic dispensation.  This week, Parliament adopted the report of the Joint Committee on Constitutional Review.  In our view, this colloquium and that report are important contributors in securing the dignity of our people.  We believe that the report and this colloquium will lay a solid foundation in the pursuit for a better quality of life, shared prosperity and the restoration of the birth right of all South Africans, regardless of race, gender and class.

This colloquium therefore stands at the watershed of our development as a nation and it is also a reminder of the centrality of land in the struggles of our people. Those struggles began long before the enactment of the 1913 Native Land Act.  Our people's struggles began closer to the time when the*Dromedaris*, *Reijge*r and *Goede Hoop* anchored on our shores in 1652 OR maybe in 1488 when Bartolomeu Dias named the Great Fish River the “*Rio de Infante"* in total disregard of African culture, occupancy and naming conventions.[*[1]*](file:///\\vmpme-ptaho-fnp02\users\obert.hlungwani\DPME\DPME%20Website\Speeches\Land%20Colloquium%207%20December%20FINAL.docx#_ftn1)

That era was followed by almost three centuries of mass conquest and land seizures that were achieved through mass murder and warfare which were complemented by dubious '*treaties*' and '*agreements*' climaxing with the 1913 Land Act.  The consequences were dire with Sol ka Plaatje commenting at the wake of the enactment of the 1913 Land Act: *“Awakening on Friday morning, June 20, 1913, the South African native found himself, not actually a slave but a pariah in the land of his birth."*[*[2]*](file:///\\vmpme-ptaho-fnp02\users\obert.hlungwani\DPME\DPME%20Website\Speeches\Land%20Colloquium%207%20December%20FINAL.docx#_ftn1)

The actions and policies of the regime sought to disempower the African whilst consolidating and entrenching colonial rule in support of the Gold Rush and the faltering large scale commercial farming of the early settlers.  Indeed, commercial interests superseded any interest in humanity.

Battle after battle for centuries our people fought in defence of the land and our livelihoods.  In response the regime introduced tax after tax with the sole purpose of migrating the African away from their productive land and into the belly of the emergent mining and struggling agriculture sectors that had an insatiable for cheap manual labour.  This was the beginning of what we now eloquently call migration and structural poverty, which have affected mainly Africans.

This is the historical context which this Presidential Advisory Committee on Land Reform needs to take into account.  This Committee must also take into account that at the advent of democracy there had been no less than 17 000 statutory measures to control land division and segregation.[*[3]*](file:///\\vmpme-ptaho-fnp02\users\obert.hlungwani\DPME\DPME%20Website\Speeches\Land%20Colloquium%207%20December%20FINAL.docx#_ftn2)  The consequences of this was the significant change in the African's productive life systematically moving them from landowners to a landless mass.

This in itself can account for why South Africa remains the most unequal society in the world.

African women in particular suffered the triple oppression of Apartheid on account of race, gender and class.  White women in South Africa would only receive suffrage in 1933 and Indian and Coloured women would only receive it in 1983, thus by implication these sections of women could only own land with the acquisition of suffrage, for up to that point they too were treated as minors.  The consequences of this persist and contribute for us being the most unequal society in the world with the World Economic Forum estimating the Purchasing Power Parity at US$9 938 for women and at US$16 635 for men in 2017.

**Panel Members**, it is by now an accepted fact that the design and structure of the Apartheid South Africa economy and its spatial plans were also designed to keep Africans far from places of production and work.  Through these spatial plans Africans were confined to reserves which constituted 13% of the landmass.  This phenomenon continues to this day with many rural residents carrying dual 'citizenship' in rural and urban South Africa.

Despite the phenomenal and inequitable growth of the economy, the land allocated to Africans remained consistent with a marginal growth from 7% in 1913 to 13% at the advent of democracy, thus the historic springing up of urban informal settlements and backyard dwellers as well as 'tenant' farm workers.

We therefore cannot avoid addressing these historic injustices of dispossession and their consequences, which include poverty, inequality and unemployment.  A task we recognised since the advent of our democracy, thus our attempts at amassing a 'market assisted' land reform programme premised on the principle of “willing buyer and willing seller".

Unfortunately, this approach has yielded very little results with the result by 2017 only 8.7 million hectares or 10.6% of the land had been transferred, which is way below the 30% target which had been set and rolled over from 1994.   The High-Level Panel on Land Restitution informs us that at the current pace of delivery it would take another 43 years to just reach the 30% target set in 1994.  The pace of land reform is far too slow and is testing the patience of our people.  If unattended it will be a threat to our socio-economic transformation, social cohesion, economic growth, and peace and stability.  A worrying trend has been the one in which resettled claimants opt for cash payments or the resale of the land.

Whichever way we look at it the fact is we need land for every aspect of our development as a nation, be it to grow food to feed all of us or to build factories for all of to secure jobs.  Whatever venture we wish to pursue, land is at its centre.  Consequently, the National Development Plan (NDP), South Africa's overarching plan, recognises that land reform is an important contributor to inclusive economic growth and the rural economy.

Given the pace of delivery, we must pay greater attention to our implementation plans, more so as they relate to expropriation without compensation as a measure to speed up land reform.  We must develop these plans in manner that they provide effective and impactful results which change the quality of life of our people whilst reinstalling their dignity. Already many landowners have expressed an interest in giving up portions of their land since they recognise the importance of this to the growth and diversification of our economy.

These willing owners have also committed to assist those communities whom land shall be transferred to, with the necessary skills, know-how and access to markets so that they may turn the land into a real asset.

**Programme director,**we are pleased to see that this colloquium draws lessons from our continent and beyond.  In the end the selected path for land reform you will propose to us must also modify “*the existing institutional arrangements governing the possession and use of land… [so as to] strengthen land rights, enhance productivity, secure livelihoods of all citizens and ensure political stability*".[*[4]*](file:///\\vmpme-ptaho-fnp02\users\obert.hlungwani\DPME\DPME%20Website\Speeches\Land%20Colloquium%207%20December%20FINAL.docx#_ftn1)  This will require an interrelated and integrated system which include land restitution, agrarian reform, and land tenure reform that must be directed by appropriate institutional and legal reforms.  In the end we must address past injustices whilst providing for improved and diverse forms of tenure security for all, especially for women and farm dwellers.

We will look to this Advisor Committee to provide guidance and complement the work of the executive and legislature.  We also look to the outcomes of this colloquium to guide our young democracy on the emotive matter of land reform.  We embark on this reform journey not because we seek to further polarize our society.  We pursue this journey so as to also advance agrarian reform, industrialisation, the body politic and the broad economic development of our country.

As we advance on that journey we are reminded of the words of another great patriot whose 94th birthday we celebrated two days ago, one Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe who once said “*there is only one race the human race [and] economically we [must] aim at the rapid extension of industrial development in order to alleviate the pressure on the land, which is what progress means in terms of modern society. We stand committed to a policy guaranteeing the most equitable distribution of wealth*."

**Land reform key messages**

* The report and this colloquium will lay a solid foundation in the pursuit for a better quality of life, shared prosperity and the restoration of the birth right of all South Africans, regardless of race, gender and class.
* African women in particular suffered the triple oppression of Apartheid on account of race, gender and class.  White women in South Africa would only receive suffrage in 1933 and Indian and Coloured women would only receive it in 1983, thus by implication these sections of women could only own land with the acquisition of suffrage, for up to that point they too were treated as minors.
* The design and structure of the Apartheid South Africa economy and its spatial plans were also designed to keep Africans far from places of production and work.
* The pace of land reform is far too slow and is testing the patience of our people.  If unattended it will be a threat to our socio-economic transformation, social cohesion, economic growth, and peace and stability.
* A worrying trend has been the one in which resettled claimants opt for cash payments or the resale of the land.
* The National Development Plan (NDP), South Africa's overarching plan, recognises that land reform is an important contributor to inclusive economic growth and the rural economy.
* We must pay greater attention to our implementation plans, more so as they relate to expropriation without compensation as a measure to speed up land reform.
* We must address past injustices whilst providing for improved and diverse forms of tenure security for all, especially for women and farm dwellers.
* ​ We will look to this Advisor Committee to provide guidance and complement the work of the executive and legislature.  We also look to the outcomes of this colloquium to guide our young democracy on the emotive matter of land reform.
* We pursue this journey so as to also advance agrarian reform, industrialisation, the body politic and the broad economic development of our country. ​

**I thank you**