



11 OCTOBER 2016 | MEDIA STATEMENT

## MPUMALANGA PREMIER TAKES MUNICIPALITIES TO TASK OVER UNOCCUPIED GOVERNMENT-BUILT HOUSES

Mpumalanga Premier David Mabuza has taken Lekwa and Mbombela municipalities to task over government-built houses and hostels that had been standing unoccupied for the period of two years.

Speaking at a two-day Premier's Coordinating Forum in Mbombela today [Tuesday, 11 October 2016], Premier Mabuza demanded answers from the leadership of these municipalities as to why the houses and hostels were unoccupied by their owners when a number of people had no shelter.

The municipalities together with the provincial government are deliberating on their strategic plans for the 2016/17 financial year with the Premier, and during the discussions Human Settlements Department reported that many houses it had built for the two municipalities had been unoccupied for a while and there were concerns of possible vandalism.

The Premier said he expected an explanation as early as tomorrow [Wednesday, 12 October 2016] and demanded that both the houses and the hostels be occupied immediately by their rightful owners.

There are 500 unoccupied houses in Lekwa Municipality and the City of Mbombela Municipality also has another 500 units.

"People are waiting for their houses, and we are even failing to explain to them why they cannot rightfully occupy their homes. If this is how we work as government, it is disgusting and cannot be tolerated.

"This is what causes unnecessary conflict between us and our people. Are we really ready to govern? This is an indication of bad planning. It is clear that we invaded the land without taking into account integrated services required by the people in such settlements and decided to build houses. At the end we realize that people cannot occupy the houses because there are no services.

"I want the houses occupied by their owners immediately. Let us avoid these mistakes; they are unnecessary and costly. I need all the answers by tomorrow, after that the respective mayors should go and explain to the people as to when are they going to move into their houses," said Mabuza.



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Again, during the meeting, it was agreed that the province should undertake a process of establishing at least two metropolitan municipalities.

This will eliminate unguided settlements growth, informal settlements resulting in rising costs of eradicating informal settlements, proper resettlement of communities, and the provision of basic services.

The two envisaged metros would be a consolidation of Emalahleni, Steve Tshwete, Victor Khanye and Emakhazeni municipalities on one hand, and the consolidation of City of Mbombela and Nkomazi municipalities. Another consolidation will be explored around Govan Mbeki as the neighbouring municipality.

**ENDS...**

**Issued by Zibonele Mncwango**

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