MODMV KEYNOTE ADDRESS AT THE FLEURHOF HANDOVER EVENT OF HOUSING TO MILITARY VETERANS, 18TH DECEMBER 2018

Minister of Human Settlements Honourable Nomaindia Mfeketho

The Premier of Gauteng Province Mr. David Makhura

MEC for Human Settlements and COGTA Mr. Dikgang Uhuru Moiloa

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Senior Officials of the Departments of Military Veterans; Human Settlements and the Gauteng Province

The Leadership of the South African National Military Veterans Association (SANMVA) and its affiliates

The Military Veterans Advisory Council and the Military Veterans Appeals Board

Military Veterans

Ladies and Gentlemen
It is fitting that we are gathered here today just two days after the Day of Reconciliation, 16th December 2018. It is also significant in that the national reconciliation day this year marked nearly the end of the centenary of the country’s foremost leaders, our South African National Defence Force’s first Commander-in-Chief uTata Nelson Mandela and also leading activist and women’s rights icon uMama Albertina Nontsikelelo Sisulu. It was thus fitting that the 2018 Day of Reconciliation marked the 24th anniversary of this national day during the year of Nelson Mandela and Albertina Sisulu.

Even as we are celebrating these milestones, the event we are here about today must also be seen as one that aims to promote national unity, social cohesion, constitutional democracy, human rights and equality by highlighting and advancing the constitutional values and principles that bind together all South Africans. Therefore what better way to achieve these than through paying tribute to our military veterans for the sacrifices they have made and bringing about the freedom that we enjoy today?

We are today realizing a constitutional imperative of access to human settlements. Section 26 of our constitution enjoins and gives responsibility on the state to provide housing for the citizens of our country. To be even more specific to quote from the Constitution...“Everyone has the right to have access to adequate housing; and also, “the state must take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to achieve the progressive realization of this right.” It is within this context that various pieces of legislation were passed in the new democracy, most notable of which was the Housing Act of 1997 as amended. Other equally
important related pieces of legislation that followed this main act were the Social Housing Act, Rental Housing Act, to mention but a few of the myriad of laws. It is unfortunate that none of these specifically addressed the matter of housing for military veterans. It was only when the Military Veterans Act was passed in 2011 that there was specific mention and addressing housing for military veterans, in section five (5) on the eleven benefits military veterans are entitled to. This was almost twenty years after the dawn of our democracy!

Prior to that, whatever housing provisioning had been provided for military veterans was disjointed and uncoordinated across the three spheres of government, this even when resources have been available to deliver on this very important mandate. It was in recognition of what the constitution spelt out, which was further taken as an important preamble to the Housing Act of 1997 (as amended)...that:

“Whereas the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa recognizes that housing, as adequate shelter, fulfils a basic human need;

Housing is both a product and a process;

Housing is a vital part of integrated developmental planning;

Housing is a key sector of the national economy and lastly,

Housing is vital to the socio-economic well-being of the nation”.

These provisions have enabled the vast landscape of housing throughout the length and breadth of our country to be built, thus far almost four million human settlements. Of this national figure, military veterans make up a tiniest minutiae, a
fact that has created serious challenges for all of government. For the Ministry of Defence and Military Veterans charged with the responsibility to deliver on all aspects related to military veterans through the established Department of Military Veterans (DMV), housing is the most tangible delivery that the state, through the DMV, can give to military veterans. This is because the delivery brings honour and dignity to military veterans who have since lost hope of recognition of their struggles for this country and delivering democracy, especially those from the former non-statutory forces. The vast majority of the military veterans who are still alive continue to suffer due to the slow delivery of socio-economic benefits related to them as espoused in section 5 of the Military Veterans Act, specifically housing.

The annual targets and setting aside portion of the budget for delivery of housing have never ever been met! This is primarily due to lack of coherent and coordinated approach across government, the credibility of the data base of military veterans, lack of a common understanding amongst stakeholders, to mention but a few of the numerous challengers. In addition the DHS has its own national housing data bank and information system, which at times does not talk to the peculiar needs of the military veterans and blocks them from accessing a house. These are matters I instruct the officials of both departments to examine and bring proposals to the Ministers before the end of the financial year. In similar vein, there needs to be an update of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) entered into by the DMV and DHS signed off by the Deputy Minsters respectively.
I wish to indicate that in fact over previous financial years, there have been housing budget transfers from the DMV to provinces for delivery of housing.

It is sad to note and an indictment on us that there was very little if any houses delivered – for the record, by just by examining the 2014/15 financial year, out of total planned target to deliver at least one hundred and twenty (120) houses, only three (3) houses were completed and allocated. In the 2015/2016 financial year, the plan was to deliver three hundred and sixty three (363) houses, this including the rollover from the previous financial year 2014/2015. Only seven (7) were completed. In the 2016/2017 financial year, of the total target of eight hundred and thirty seven (837) houses, only twenty nine (29) houses were delivered!

In the 2017/2018 financial year just passed, there was a visible improvement, in that out of three hundred and fifty (350) planned houses, one hundred and thirteen (113) houses were delivered. Therefore to sum it all up...since the programme on housing delivery started in the 2014/2015 financial year started, overall delivery stands at only one hundred and fifty two (152) houses against the total target of one thousand five hundred and seventy (1570) houses.

To make a significant improvement to this state of affairs, the DMV has been tasked to deepen and tighten coordination with the sister Department of Human Settlements as well as the provincial DHS – this to ensure that the set targets are duly met.

It will also be important that the targets that are set are realistic given the different stakeholder involvement in the process until a housing unit is actually delivered. As part of our constitutional cooperative governance principle, we are happy that the Gauteng provincial government, through the MEC Uhuru Moiloa, has been able to
provide two hundred (200) flats in this Fleurhof Project, dedicated to our icons and leaders, centenarians’ uTata Mandela and uMaSisulu respectively and for the benefit of the most destitute military veterans.

For the event today, only ten (10) of the already approved, out of fifty seven (57) from across all military veterans formations, will be handed the flats. The remaining number to get to the total of two hundred and three units will be finalized in collaboration with the DMV, SANMVA, Gauteng province and the DHS.

I am cognisant of some of the challenges that have plagued this project and delayed the process, which we had actually originally intended to launch at the beginning of this month with the Gauteng province. I wish to urge the military veterans’ fraternity, especially the leadership, to ensure that they represent the interests of our military veterans honestly and transparently in the manner that will serve their (military veterans) best interests. This is because there have been many misrepresentations and moves to mobilize military veterans not to enlist for this housing opportunity. That is unacceptable, dishonest and mischievous!

It will be a sad day indeed when a destitute military veteran with no roof over their head misses this opportunity, simply because what is being offered “is simply a forty three (43) square metre two-bedroom flat” and not what was agreed a few years ago, for a housing specification of fifty (50) square metres!

Comrades! The reality is that the Gauteng province, the smallest province in the country by land size but the biggest in population, does not have sufficient land to build houses to meet all the human settlements requirement. This includes military veterans! I therefore wish to say to you...“a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush”!
I earnestly urge you to take advantage of this opportunity without any fail or further hesitation. I am addressing especially those with the most urgent and needy requirements and currently having no roof over their heads.

Honourable Premier, your executive and provincial government, I wish to heartily thank you for this very important step...delivering on the needs of our military veterans! You have risen to the challenge and I am confident that more can and will be done. We need to find innovative ways such as these to ensure delivery to our people and in this case especially military veterans. As I conclude, I hope that the planned key areas where there is expected delivery of housing units in the province will be realized before the end of the current financial year. Fleurhof is only a major start in the province, and it must spur on the other areas of Palm Ridge; Lufhereng; Soshanguve respectively. Similarly, the other provinces are urged to come to the party. Those areas that have already been occupied by military veterans need to be fully serviced with electricity and water, such as what we have with the Savannah settlement which has a number of military veterans.

I thank you.