

OFFICIAL OPENING SPEECH OF THE AFRICAN UNION FOR HOUSING FINANCE CONFERENCE - MR G.LEKULA

It is a great pleasure for me to have been afforded this rare occasion to grace this August Conference of the African Union for Housing Finance which Botswana is hosting for the first time. Allow me to start my very brief remarks by welcoming all the delegates particularly those on their first visit to Botswana. I hope you experienced the good hospitality of Botswana since our arrival here.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am informed that you are gathered here this week to deliberate on a very important issue which affects one of our basic human rights - which housing - more specifically Housing Finance. The importance of housing as a social need in any society can not be over stressed - particularly in Africa. It is therefore fitting that your organization found it appropriate to meet here today for week to deliberate on issues pertaining to housing finance. You know better than I do that, housing finance is a challenge for all developing countries. We face similar challenges, which I believe this conference will address and afford you the opportunity to share experiences. Housing challenges are common in most developing countries, and related to these, are issues of rural urban migration, poverty, squatting and of course Housing Finance.

I am informed that the Theme for this year's Conference is "Building towards a boom: African Housing Markets in 2010". There could have been no better theme than this given that the world is still reacting from an economic crises. The good thing about this conference is that it has brought together delegates mainly from Housing and Housing Finance Institutions. I am informed therefore that, the theme is about reflecting on the Global Financial Crises and what this might mean for Africa. Further, it is about

thinking towards a future for the Housing Finance Sector in Africa and more critically on what the African Union for Housing Finance can do to assist market players to strengthen their positions as the housing sector grows. This is a challenge for the AUHF. While I will be the first to admit that the challenges facing the African Housing Finance are immense, I will be the last to admit that they are insurmountable. What gives me courage and hope is the confidence I have in the brains that are gathered here today. I am confident that your experiences put you in a better place to confidently articulate the challenges facing Housing Finance in your respective jurisdictions. This subsequently will enable you to come up with innovative ways of addressing them and finding opportunities of addressing them and finding opportunities out of these challenges.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is my believe that the outcome of this conference will not only challenge you to re-think your strategies - but will even more importantly challenge African Governments to review their housing policies, strategies and re-focus their facilitation role in housing delivery.

In Botswana, like I believe is the case in most African Countries, Government plays a facilitation role by coming up with housing policies, and strategies to direct and deal with housing needs for the different categories of people in our society. It is the responsibility of Government to provide land for housing (serviced or unserviced). Government is more specifically concerned with low income categories, leaving the rest for the market. Government's interest is for Financial Institutions to provide affordable housing finance which will be tied to building affordable houses. Equally important are the cheaper but durable methods of building. It is my hope that, this conference will find time to interrogate our architectural inclinations, building regulations and standards, building materials and environmental compatability and all other considerations which makes housing unaffordable to the majority of our citizens.

As mine was to officially open this conference, I have deliberately left the topical issues to you experts. As respective Governments, we will be awaiting the resolutions of this conference with keen interest.

Before concluding my brief remarks, let me hasten to comment the AUHF for having seen it fit to congregate annually to deliberate on these very important issues of housing. Let me also commend the Botswana Housing Corporation for having hosted this event in our shares. I hope our delegates will spare some of their valuable time not only some of our tourist areas but to around and see how we struggle to house our people. I wish you a successful conference and fruitful deliberation.

I therefore now declare this officially opened.

PULA!

PULA!

PULA!