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PRESS RELEASE

Joint SA Cities Network (SACN) Board of Directors Meets with Metropolis Board

Johannesburg: The state of finances of South Africa's municipalities will come under the spotlight next month when the South African Cities Network (SACN) releases its much anticipated report.

This emerged after South African mayors and city executives from 21 municipalities today met with their colleagues from around the world to tackle the universal issue of increasing urbanisation.

Members of the SACN board of directors met with their counterparts at Metropolis, a global networking body comprising 150 cities from across the globe. The Metropolis annual meeting this year takes place for the first time in Africa at the Hilton Hotel in Sandton in Johannesburg starting from tomorrow July 16, 2013 and runs until Friday July 19, 2013.

Today's meeting was a precursor to the conference to see how the two organisations can develop and improve cities within an urban development and long-term city development context.

Urbanisation fuels crime and social tensions, creates greater environmental and health risks, and poses challenges for service provision and the session was structured to find solutions around these challenges.

The SACN Strategic Conversation with the Metropolis board was facilitated by the MEC for Local Government and Housing, Hon Ntombi Mekingwe, and opened by the Executive Mayor of Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality, Hon Mondli Gungubele, with introductory remarks done by Mpho Franklyn Parks Tau, the Executive Mayor of Johannesburg. He also chairs the SACN.

In outlining the role of the SACN - to track development, share knowledge and benchmark best practice procedures - Mayor Tau said its key priority was to track development for the 2016 State of the Cities Report which is released every five years. However, he said, next month it will release the State of the Cities Finance Report.

He said the Metropolis conference would also reveal how SA's cities were caring for its citizens and whether they met their needs. The Metropolis conference aims to this week tackle issues relating to food security, energy resilience, social cohesion, creating a greener and safer city and developmental funding.

On urbanisation the Mayor said: "As people come in their numbers you find there is no adequate housing, no adequate services, no adequate transportation ... so we must share our respective experiences to see on we deal with these things. Thus there is a need o interface and interact with our colleagues."

His counterpart, Executive Mayor Gungubele, said the Gauteng population was a relatively young one and thus vulnerable. To this end, he said, youth-oriented programmes were in place and therefore vital as their well-being meant a stronger local economy.

Talking of inter-city transport, he said the different modes made it easier for movement with cities given South Africa's world class infrastructure. He said, however, South African now had an opportunity at the Metropolis meeting to set higher benchmarks for themselves.

Also speaking was the Mayor of Dakar, Khalifa Ababacar Sall, who said: "South Africa is a trendsetter in Africa" He spoke of managing the relationship between the state and local communities, the responsibilities of citizens in local government and how to manage the thorny issue of land ownership and housing.

The director of planning in Brazil's São Paulo region, Rovena Negreiros, said there was a need for great participation in the different spheres of government. She said that, in Brazil, one of their key projects was transforming its rural communities into urban environments.

The Vice President Mayor of Rabat in Morocco, Abdelmounim El Madani, told of how his city was still grappling with its ailing transport system. On waste management he said there was a real need for public-public partnerships to maintain and develop a city's infrastructure.

About Urbanisation in South Africa

South Africa is becoming largely an urban society. According to the most recent World Bank survey released by the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) on 24 January 2013, two-thirds of South Africa's population now live in urban areas. The United Nations estimates the figure will rise to 71,3% by 2030 and 80% by 2050.

In South Africa the most rapid urbanisation is occurring around the largest cities namely Joburg, Durban, Cape Town, Pretoria, Port Elizabeth, Pietermaritzburg, and Bloemfontein which presents various challenges for city managers.

The Mayor of Johannesburg, Parks Tau has previously said: "Even though living in urban areas brings about much opportunity, it also presents challenges such as social unrest, pollution, poverty, inequality, unemployment and social-political instability."

The SACN today provided a full scope of urban management processes that includes promoting sustainable cities, economic growth, poverty eradication, urban renewal, good governance, integrated land management, service delivery and city development strategies.

The SACN is an established network of nine of the country's largest municipalities that encourages the exchange of information, experience and best practices on urban development and city management between different spheres of government to strengthen linkages between

cities, towns and rural areas. The SACN is an initiative of the Minister for Provincial and Local Government in partnership with the South African Local Government Association (SALGA).

About Metropolis

The Metropolis annual meeting takes place at the the Hilton Hotel in Sandton on 138 Rivonia Rd Sandton from July 16 to 19, 2013. For a full programme visit Joburg.org.za or www.metropolis.org

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