

## SA city planners face many challenges

18 September 2012

By Suren Naidoo

[www.iol.co.za](http://www.iol.co.za)

Durban - South Africa and the African continent would experience unprecedented levels of urbanisation in the next few decades which would present major challenges that governments and urban planners needed to be more aware of, Planning Minister Trevor Manuel warned on Monday.

He was addressing more than 500 town and regional planners, government leaders and other delegates at the Africa Planning 2012 conference in Durban yesterday organised by the SA Planning Institute.

"To take Africa forward, we need a different political perspective and planners who appreciate the enormous burden they bear of physically transforming their societies.

"Planners need to be cognisant of the challenges that lie ahead. Around half the world's population is already living in cities, and the number looks set to rise. In SA we estimate that 8 million more people will live in cities by 2030," said Manuel.

Doudou Mbye, a human settlements adviser at UN Habitat, said that Africa was experiencing the fastest rate of urbanisation in the world, which planners needed to prepare for.

"The rapid urbanisation of Africa will see half of the continent's population live in cities in the next few years from about 42 percent currently. In eight years Africa's urban population will be bigger than that of Europe, and this is something we have to plan for," he said.

Manuel added that the economic and health imperative to plan for and create sustainable cities was not a luxury but a necessity if the 21st century was to provide a secure and sustainable way of life for a world population that, over the next four decades, would increase by a third.

He added that, in dealing with urbanisation and "pervasive spatial challenges" that were "trapping and marginalising" the poor, the layout of SA cities and other human settlements were set for a major transformation over the next few decades.

"Our settlement patterns place a disproportionate financial burden on the poorest members of society. These patterns increase the cost of getting to or searching for work, lengthens commute times, raises the costs of moving goods to consumers. The ripple effect of this is felt throughout the economy."

Manuel said an entire chapter in the government's national development plan had been committed to transforming human settlements and the "national space economy".

The plan aimed to do this through creating a strong and efficient spatial planning system that was well integrated across the different spheres of government.

Part of the plan included the "upgrading of all informal settlements on suitable, well located land by 2030".

The plan would result in more people living closer to their places of work, better quality public transport and more jobs in or close to dense, urban townships.

- The Mercury