

Remarks by South African President Cyril Ramaphosa on 27 February 2019

“My brother, Lester, talks about a matter that I addressed earlier, the spatial apartheid planning, which he says is still rife. That we are not utilising well-located land in the city. This is so correct but it’s not only in Cape Town. It is throughout our country. There are two things that the apartheid rulers did. In education where they effected a terrible system of education. But also in spatial planning, they so configured the architecture of our country to serve the interests of a minority. Now we have to reconstruct that but it is so difficult to reconstruct it when it is already set in the way that it is set.

Recently we had a meeting with a professor from the United States, from Harvard. And he said what other countries have done, they have utilised the spaces in their cities to good effect. They have actually massified the presence of people in cities, rather than what apartheid did. Apartheid spread people out of the city. Poor people were spread out of the city and rich people lived in the city. He said to us what you should now be doing, look out for spaces in your city and get people to get in there and increase the density of people in your cities. Because by so doing you reduce the cost of living for people who are poor.

Because in many cities around the world people live closer to their places of work. And even if they don’t work, they live much closer and inside the economic nodes of cities because that is where they get economic opportunities. This statement rung so true for us because our cities are not as dense as you will find in places like Sao Paulo and a number of other places where the cities have increased the density and have built right up. Because that way you are able to bring people closer to the economic opportunities in any city.

So that is the way we are beginning to think that in order to deal with the spatial planning of apartheid you have got to come up with initiatives that are going to get people away from the outer lying areas of cities, bring them closer to the places where they work, economic node places. So that they are able to find much easier economic opportunities.

In this case, we will then be able to reduce the cost of living to many people. So, my brother. Thank you for raising it, Lester. This is something that we want to focus on.

We have actually been saying cities need to release land. And utilising the expropriation of land without compensation we will be able to do that. Because quite often the pieces of land that one could focus on it owned by the city. And quite often pieces of land also that you often find in a number of places have been abandoned by owners that we no longer even know. So we are going now to be focusing on land because our interest is to bring our people closer to the economic opportunities in the cities where they should live.”