

Success of SA cities crucial to rural areas – Deputy Minister

By: [Petronel Smit](#)

20 April 2011

www.engineeringnews.co.za

The success of South Africa's cities, which provide 60% of the country's economic output, is crucial to the strengthening of the rural areas and the country as a whole, Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs Deputy Minister **Yunus Carrim** said on Wednesday.

Speaking at the launch of the '2011 State of the Cities' report, Carrim said increased support from provincial and national government through a more integrated cooperative governance system, would be key to the success of the cities in the future.

The report, which was a project of the South African Cities Network (SACN) and the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, intended to assist a new generation of civic leaders and officials who would be in charge of planning, developing and managing cities after the 2011 municipal elections, by providing a framework for local innovation.

The report looked at the challenges and opportunities facing the cities from an economic, spatial, structural, environmental, governmental and financial perspective.

It placed emphasis on Johannesburg, Tshwane, Ekurhuleni, Cape Town, eThekweni, Nelson Mandela Bay, Mangaung, Buffalo City and Msunduzi, and assessed the progress of the metros and secondary cities over the past ten years in improving service delivery, development and governance. It also identified trends that have emerged and challenges that must be tackled in the period ahead.

"For all the difficulties the cities have experienced over the past ten years, the report points to the resilience they have shown," Carrim noted.

SACN CEO **Sithole Mbanga** said the cities enjoyed a period of robust growth over the past decade, primarily as a result of the consumer spending boom.

"Higher levels of investment in research and development, human capital, greater external connectivity and higher investment in physical capital were the points of success for the cities," he noted.

However, he added that much more needed to be done so that cities could spread prosperities to other municipalities, which were not so resilient during the economic downturn.

According to the report, the economies of the cities were quite strong, but had significant potential for future growth. Regarding the built environment, cities needed more access to strategic land, while sustainability had to be kept in mind when developing land, public transport and human settlement. Government systems should be strengthened and municipal finances had to be revised away from national fiscus dependence.

The report stated that limited progress had been made in transforming the geographical patterns inherited from the past or promoting urban integration from a built environment point of view.

“City municipalities need to improve their strategic capabilities, vision and resources to more effectively transform the urban landscape. Metros also need a period of greater stability, political will and high-level national support.”

The public sector reportedly struggled to keep up with urbanisation and natural population growth and limited progress had been made in providing city households with access to essential services over the past few years. The transport system was also found to be facing rising demand, with long commuter flows and growing congestion.

The report recommended that the developmental vision of metropolitan government must be refreshed, metro government must be stabilised and trust must be restored, keeping in mind the reshaping and reconfiguration of the cities.

Meanwhile, Carrim stressed the need to significantly reduce the racial spatial patterns of the cities and improve the density of the population to encourage greater integration, lower transport costs and more effective use of limited energy resources.

“Although the actual delivery of basic services in the metros is better than in the rest of the country, there is room for significant improvement. The community protests suggest the need for this, as do other social and economic pressures,” he pointed out.

He added that the success of cities is crucial to the strengthening of the rural areas and the country as a whole. However, the magnitude of the transformation of metropolitan areas over the past ten years must not be underestimated, and a realistic adaptation period must be allowed.

“All of us – national and provincial government, business, labour, civil society and individual residents – have an interest and role in ensuring that our cities are developmentally more effective, and need to work together to ensure this,” he concluded.

****Download the [full text](#) of the report.***