



## [Call for the establishment of an urban land commission](#)

By Afesis-corplan

The idea of establishing an urban land commission to provide an appropriate institutional response to land redistribution in cities solicited a heated debate during the Urban Land Dialogue hosted by the South African Cities Network (SACN) in Port Elizabeth on March 27th. Geoff Bickford of the SACN argued that while the land debate often focused on rural land and agrarian issues, “yet over the coming decades, urban areas are set to change dramatically. More people live in cities and they require more houses and services, public transport, jobs, and places of recreation and learning – all of which take up space and need land.” He argued that the establishment of an urban land commission will provide the appropriate institutional response to land redistribution in cities.

The establishment of such an “urban land commission” builds on the recommendation made by the Parliaments High Level Panel on Key Legislation that calls for a “coordinating structure” led by the office of the deputy President to be responsible for driving a coherent and co-ordinated spatial framework for South across urban and rural areas of the country.

A lively debate on this issue ensued with one participant, Rofhiwa Taula, who is studying towards a degree in human settlement studies at the Nelson Mandela University (NMU), arguing that an establishment of yet another land commission will be a waste of tax-payers’ monies. “We need land transformation. It is must happen now to ensure that we avoid social instability. The proposed urban land commission is not going to help because we already have the Housing Development Agency which assists in facilitating state owned land to fast track the delivery of houses closer to economic opportunities; therefore, the land commission which we are now calling for will be useless. In short, the instrument is already there, we simply need to focus on implementing it” Taula argued.

Another participant, Moki Cekisani, argued for an equitable share of land in the country. He said that “the land question still causes a lot of division between black and white South Africans. It is ownership of the land that is still making us think about being black and being white. Whites own about 87 percent of the land blacks own 13 percent, even though they are the indigenous rightful owners of the land. This is what’s causing anger and division amongst our people in the country.”

Representing private property owners, Ron Pask of the Port Elizabeth Inner-city Housing (Pty)Ltd which is made up of some 4900 properties said 85 percent of the rates they paid to the municipality were spent on disadvantaged communities.

Representing and speaking on behalf of Afesis-corplan, Ronald Eglin argued that “there appears to be confusion as to what an urban land commission is all about, most people would agree that some

form of institutional structure is needed to get government, the private sector and civil society stakeholders together to discuss what they would like the metro to look like in future and find ways to make sure that the right people are able to access the right pieces of land and use it for the right reasons.”

This dialogue was attended by stakeholders from NMU, Nelson Mandela Bay Metro Municipality, Mandela Bay Development Agency and members of various other government, private sector and non-governmental organizations operating in and around the metro. Its objective was to advance the inclusive urban land transformation discussion.