

Without the right transformation the future will remain unbuilt v2

13 July 2016, Johannesburg, South Africa. Africa must stop believing that it cannot think for itself in the construction industry and grab the opportunities on the continent, says the head of one of the biggest construction companies south of the Sahara. "The future is unbuilt without the right transformation. If mind-sets and the general attitude do not change, the future will pass us by and leave Africa wondering what happened to our future," says Frans Pienaar, chairman of Inyatsi Construction.

An unbuilt future means people focus on the present without considering the importance of a sustainable future in the construction industry. This includes exploring trends and innovative ways to stay relevant in the industry.

Pienaar warns that countries such as China and India will grab our development opportunities if we do not act to ensure that we control the future of Africa. "While we wait and fight internally about smaller and sometimes petty issues, the rest of the world takes what is theirs for the taking, including development opportunities and investments in infrastructure, such as educational and development infrastructure.

"Foreign direct investment will go to countries that embrace investment and actively seek investment, which makes it good business for the funding agencies. While Africa focuses on internal problems and issues, these opportunities will pass us by," he said.

According to Pienaar, a special kind of transformation is needed in construction to prevent an unbuilt future. "Unlike other industries, the engineering and construction sector has been slow to adopt new technologies and there was no major transformation in the industry. As a result, productivity has stagnated over the past 40 years, or in some cases, even declined."

Client bodies can help to alleviate this problem by embracing a new future and acting with political courage, says Pienaar. He calls on industry players to make courageous changes now instead of waiting for the political landscape to improve. "Let's not worry about what is in it for me, but rather worry about how quickly we can implement something that will benefit everyone. Do not blame the past. Build a new future that we can be proud of in a decade from now."

Sustainability is increasingly becoming a requirement rather than simply a desirable characteristic. The pursuit of sustainability is bound to affect both the construction process as well as the built asset itself. The

construction sector produces an enormous amount of waste and therefore more efficient use and recycling of raw materials will offer huge potential benefits, even on a small scale.

Pienaar says this problem is specific to Africa because the cut-throat competition in the construction industry has forced construction companies on the continent to quickly evolve in a bid to match current demands and changing times. "Existing and emerging trends are changing the construction industry in Africa more so than elsewhere, because we believe the nonsense from the rest of the world that they know better than us. We are the only long-term solution to Africa's problems. Let's step forward with courage and determine our future by implementing and not procrastinating."

Technology has made impossible projects possible and therefore the construction industry must adapt to the latest technology that will see them increase productivity and profitability at the same time, while cutting cost.

"Construction is using more technology, but unfortunately, the bulk of construction companies are exporting their wealth to the rest of the world. We bow to the pressure of funding agencies and do not do enough to protect ourselves against being raided by external entities. Africa will be the World Growth Centre for the next few decades, but we are exporting jobs and business to the rest of the world, because we think we cannot do it ourselves," Pienaar warns.

For news editors:

Inyatsi Construction Ltd was first registered in Swaziland in 1982 and Inyatsi Construction Group Holdings (Pty) Ltd (ICGH) was formed in 2007 as the holding company of Inyatsi and its regional subsidiaries. The company has operations in Swaziland, South Africa, Zambia and Mozambique, as well as registered companies in Botswana and Namibia. Inyatsi and all its subsidiaries are ISO 9001:2008 certified and completed the NOSA 5 Star Audit and has been awarded four Platinum Stars.

The company's growth accelerated after re-strategising and diversifying four years ago. After focusing mainly on roads and earthworks, Inyatsi Construction widened its focus to include civil work, bridge construction, buildings and township infrastructure and high quality, fast-track houses at new mines for example.

The company is named after the Swazi word for buffalo to capture the indigenous and hard-working heart of the company.