

Govt explores ways to unlock rural wealth

JOHANNESBURG: Government says it will use the two-day Communal Property Association (CPA) workshop to explore ways in which communal land located in rural areas can benefit those who live on it by unlocking the underlying mineral wealth.

Rural Development and Land Reform Minister Gugile Nkwinti told SAnews at the two-day gathering, which kicked off in Boksburg today, that communal land in rural areas, which were formerly known as homelands, had a lot of untapped resources.

"In some areas there are mines, while in others there is forestry. Through this two-day gathering, we want to discuss with CPA representatives, within the context of the Communal Land Tenure Act we are introducing to the country, that there will be benefits for people who own the land.

"We don't want to see people going to destroy resources in their respective communal areas [if they do not] benefit from the mineral wealth in their ancestral land. We will explore how people in communal areas can benefit directly from the mineral wealth in their respective areas," said Nkwinti.

The workshop forms part of the department's on-going consultation process with all its stakeholders as it seeks to create a deeper understanding of one of government's key priority areas - that of rural development.

Nkwinti said government wanted to get a feel of how South Africans living in rural areas saw the future and their role in it as government pushed harder to reach its goal of economic emancipation for its people.

"... Government alone cannot execute change in a sustainable way... we believe essentially that people are their own emancipators. Ours is not just a representative democracy, it is also a participatory democracy, and people elect us into Parliament and still continue to participate in policy decision making processes," he said.

The minister said through the gathering, they would also seek to find lasting solutions to resolve conflict amongst CPA members, the strained working relationship between CPAs, municipalities and traditional leaders.

"We want to use this platform to thoroughly explain to our people the processes and responsibilities of CPAs and their committees as another way of mitigating the conflicts."

Nkwinti said they would use the platform to establish various National Reference Groups (NRG), with the first meeting to be held early in January next year.

The Communal Property Associations Act 28 of 1996 will also be discussed at the meeting.

The CPA Act 28 of 1996 is meant "to enable communities to form juristic persons, to be known as communal property associations, in order to acquire, hold and manage property on a basis agreed to by members of a community in terms of a written constitution; and to provide for matters connected therewith".

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