

ASOCSA and the CBE, convene national and international industry players at the 3rd Built Environment Conference.

The construction sector is faced with immense challenges that need practical solutions. Speaking at the conference held on the 6th – 8th of July in Cape Town, Glen Havemann from the Development Bank of Southern Africa mentioned that he hoped the event would transform research into best practice. Concurring with this view was Prof. John Smallwood President of the Association of Schools of Construction (ASOCSA) who officially opened the proceedings and encouraged delegates to work towards finding solutions to the challenges facing the built environment. Some of the issues and topics addressed by various speakers included: contractor competency, green building and the role of construction companies in education.

Another challenge that was discussed during the conference is the fact that there are too many unscrupulous contractors in practice resulting in the industry developing a negative reputation. Rob Johnson executive director of MBA Western Cape attributed the blame to contractors that are not licensed and mentioned that the CIDB as the custodian of this industry, should focus on technical competencies of practitioners. The CIDB CEO Ronnie Khoza, later announced in his talk, that the CIDB has introduced a program (Contractor Development Program), with the specific aim of providing learnerships and workshops to emerging contractors which will hopefully curb malpractice. However, Tibor Szana from the Department of Labour, in his talk focused on the industry's negligence with regards to workers health and safety.

The conference delegates deliberated on environmental issues and it became clear that the construction industry is responsible for being an “intense material user” with 50% of material in this world landing up in construction said Mr. Llewellyn van Wyk from the CSIR. Ehrhard Visser from CBE warned that if the construction industry perpetuates to show tendencies of neglecting

environmental concerns, this could have serious implications for South Africa's health, biodiversity, water resources and agriculture.

The last day of the conference focused on education. The CEO of Grinaker-LTA Construction Neil Cloete painted a bleak picture about the future of construction in South Africa when he made reference to the low number of students that are studying higher grade maths and/or science. This, he said will heavily impact on the economy as the country will have to import skills. He lamented that construction companies are not investing in education to ensure "a legacy in which the future generation will be proud off."

The delegates who came from different countries as well as sectors of the industry proposed that for solutions to come speedily, there needs to be continuous engagement and follow up amongst the various sectors within industry continuously during the course of the year, this in the hope that in the following year's conference there will be more solutions to report.

For more info visit the CBE website: www.cbe.org.za

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