

**Ms Koko Mokgalong**

**Public Service Commission**

I am very grateful for the opportunity to participate at today's Africa Public Service Day (APSD) to "celebrate the virtue of service to the community". As public servants throughout Africa join hands to commemorate the "value and virtue of service delivery improvement", it is befitting that we pause and take time to reflect on our own achievements in South Africa. This reflection will be located within today's theme "The role of the State in the Reconstruction of Africa". Six sub themes were selected for this purpose:

- Strengthening Africa public service competency for effective service delivery to citizens.
- African development for good governance – peer review mechanism, combating corruption, accountability and democracy, conflict resolution.
- Fostering enhanced public service delivery through participatory governance.
- Towards participatory and transparent governance
- Building human resource skills in the public service – continental solidarity and capacity building (issues of South-South co-operation, knowledge exchange and regional blocks)
- Impact of African Public Service on the reconstruction and development of the continent

In trying to reflect on our own achievements, allow me to take you through the "state of the public service report", which is an overview of the work done by the Public Service Commission in its attempt to respond to its mandate of being custodians of good governance by promoting the nine constitutional values and principles underpinning public administration.

### **1. Promotion and maintenance of high standard of professional ethics:**

Whilst a coherent basic infrastructure for ethics has been established in most departments, the report notes that more still needs to be done in order to fully entrench and internalise within the organisational culture of the public service which advocates the ethical conduct of public servants with the view of preventing corruption in their public and private lives.

### **2. Promotion of effective and efficient utilization of resources:**

Improvement in spending patterns is notable, this notwithstanding, there are departments which still lag behind in achieving some of their strategic objectives, there is notably a continuing difficulty by departments in relating their annual reports to their budgets. The study further reflects a need to improve and strengthen information management systems. A performance management system for managers from director level is in place; however the performance indicators need to be better defined to enable them to be measured against set objectives. In this regard, the PSC calls for practical, user-friendly and accessible guidelines that are aligned to strategic tools such as governmental priorities, departmental strategic objectives; programme plans; and individual job descriptions. Human Resource Development Strategies need to be prioritised in order to focus on the ongoing development and support for officials to enable them to achieve efficiency, economy and effectiveness in the execution of their daily tasks.

### **3. Public administration must be development oriented:**

In its attempt to respond to the challenges of a developmental state, the public service is still grappling to put effective and efficient management of the poverty alleviation programmes in place. In most instances, the challenge is to allocate significant funds to these programmes. It is in this regard that a proposal was made that an integrated approach be utilised by departments and that poverty alleviation programmes and intervention strategies form part of their core business.

An observation was made that there is very little involvement and participation by the beneficiaries of these programmes. This results in community-owned projects that are not sustainable, especially when government still performs related functions. It is in light of this that it is proposed that communities be empowered with skills to manage these programmes and turn them into viable community owned enterprises.

#### **4. Impartial, fair and equitable services without bias:**

In order to address the past inequities in terms of service delivery, there is an obligation on public officials to provide services impartially, fairly, equitably and without bias. The key finding here was that both national and provincial departments have not demonstrated significant efforts to ensure that this principle is observed. There is very little evidence that departments understand the legislation and therefore are effectively implementing the *Promotion of Administrative Justice Act*, 2002 (PAJA).

It is proposed that the public service fully integrate the principles of Batho Pele in its work ethic and culture. Public participation and consultation on service standards in order to define the levels of services and standards to be expected are imperatives for a responsive citizenry, and therefore the implementation of PAJA in its entirety is a right for citizens.

#### **5. Response to people's needs and participation in policy making:**

The report notes that very few departments have clearly defined policies addressing public participation. This results in very informal and *ad hoc* public participation. However, there is a need to single out provinces or departments with excellent track record(s) in this regard. For example, the Gauteng Department of Health makes efforts to consult citizens in an innovative and systematic manner.

## **6. Accountable public administration:**

With the advent of democracy, the Auditor-General, Parliament and the provincial legislatures through the various committees are key institutions charged with the responsibility of promoting accountability in the public service.

There is still notable under-spending by some departments. Departments continue to set over-ambitious targets, with too many objectives, and subsequently often fail to achieve their set objectives. In this regard, there is a need for departments to develop clear, concise and measurable evaluation criteria that will enable them to assess performance in terms of the quality of their service delivery and financial management. There is a need also for regular and accurate progress reports outlining achievements of set targets and objectives which are accessible to the public, this way, the public, as citizens and beneficiaries of government services are able to hold them accountable for performance and the use of public funds.

## **7. Fostering transparency through timely, accessible and accurate information:**

The departmental annual report detailing actual performance against set objectives has created a transparent approach to governance in the public service. The quality of annual reports has notably improved however there is still room for further improvement in particular with regard to systematically reporting on strategic objective achievements. However, some departments often neglect to use the expenditure statements as the basis for their reporting.

In this regard, there is a need for departments to improve their annual reports to reflect accurately achievements in terms of their performance; these reports should also be timely, accessible and user-friendly to enable the public to understand contents thereof.

## **8. Good human resource management and career development practices aimed at maximizing human potential:**

Undoubtedly, people are the most valuable asset in any organisation, and the public service is no exception. The development and advancement of human capital should therefore be a top priority. The challenge facing the public service is attracting and

retaining professionals such as doctors, engineers and nurses in the public service due to the not so attractive salaries as compared to those paid in the private sector. In this regard it is proposed that departments create an environment where skilled personnel will enjoy long and prosperous careers in the public service, with full benefits of career paths that retain and develop professional officials. Performance management should be geared at rewarding excellent performance and corrective programmes to address poor performance.

Another challenge facing the public service is the prevalence of HIV/AIDS infections estimated at 10%. The report proposes an alignment of human resource management practices to government's vision for a developmental state that is up to the challenge of dealing with HIV/AIDS in the workplace.

**9. Public administration must be broadly representative and based on ability, objectivity, fairness and redress of imbalances:**

The Employment Equity Act of 1998 outlaws discrimination and promotes affirmative action in the workplace. The implementation of these policy frameworks was a move towards ensuring that the public service reflects the demographics of the South African populace. Whilst significant progress has been registered in achieving numeric targets, much still needs to be done in terms of women in senior management positions and persons with disability in particular. Coupled with this is a need to put in place diversity management and development programmes to support affirmative action appointees.

**Conclusion**

The State of the Public Service Report gives expression to the extent to which the state participates in the reconstruction in particular here to the South African Public Service. The public service is on the right track. There is however a need to continue to instil in the minds of the public servants that they need to maintain a high standard of professional ethics that depicts a zero tolerance to any form of corruption. The public service is in need of officials that are professional and responsive to the needs of its citizens, promotes public participation and is accountable to its citizens and transparent in the manner in which it spends public funds.

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