

**ADDRESS DELIVERED BY THE DEPUTY PRESIDENT, JACOB ZUMA, AT THE GALA DINNER ON THE OCCASION OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE SENIOR MANAGERS CONFERENCE, CAPE TOWN
21 September 2004**

The Minister of Public Service and Administration,
Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi and all Ministers and
Deputy Ministers present,
Premiers, MECs
Mayor of the Cape Town Unicity,
Directors General and all senior managers,
Members of the Business Community,
Distinguished Guests,

It is an honour and privilege for me to interact with our country's senior managers from various government departments this evening.

Only a few months ago, President Mbeki outlined a Programme of Action with very tight delivery deadlines, which gave many public service senior managers sleepless nights. The programme outlines very clearly that the main focus of government in this second decade of freedom, is to accelerate the pace of service delivery, eradicate poverty and create jobs through interventions in the second economy.

For government to meet these strategic objectives, there is a need for the public service to function more smoothly.

Your conference is therefore crucial, as it provides an opportunity for our senior managers to review progress and chart the way forward with regards to executing their responsibility of implementing the Programme of Action

There are a number of issues that are important to members of the Senior Management Service. Key among these is the issue of the transformation of the public sector, not only in terms of race, gender or disability, but also regarding the manner in which services are delivered to the public.

Through the Batho Pele programme,

Government began an important process of changing focus and attitudes, to make public servants to regard members of the public as key customers who deserve excellent, efficient and courteous service.

You are aware that one of the weaknesses identified in the Ten Year Review was a poor involvement of senior managers in the monitoring and implementation of the Batho Pele principles. We trust that you have already worked out plans of correcting this oversight, as we rely on you as senior managers to ensure that the entire public service incorporates Batho Pele in daily work.

We also rely on you to ensure that members of the public are aware of these principles, so that they know what type of service they are entitled to, and how to demand redress if they have been treated unfairly.

Therefore, constant internal monitoring and evaluation is important, as we need to know how well or how badly we are doing, proactively from our own assessment, and not only through the media or public complaints.

There are a number of easy yardsticks we could use in assessing ourselves. For example, in clinics and hospitals, are all South Africans treated with respect and courtesy by medical professionals and administrative staff who are wearing nametags that make them easily identifiable?

At other service departments such as police services, home affairs, schools, social development and welfare offices, municipal offices, are citizens received politely, their enquiries dealt with respectfully and with great speed?

We would know we have a transformed civil service if members of the public no longer feel humiliated or degraded when dealing with public servants, and when they look forward to visiting a government office instead of resenting this necessity.

Previous Senior Management Service conferences have dealt with the crucial issues of ensuring that government moves beyond policy formulations to effective implementation. Last year's conference also dealt with the issue of integrating government services in the form of Multi Purpose Community Centres (MPCC's).

These centres are among the most innovative programmes this government has introduced, and makes practical, our vision of bringing government to the people

The challenge in this aspect is to ensure that all our MPCC's are fully functional, and that all the key government departments, which are supposed to constitute them, are actually participating in them.

In addition, we are all aware of the need to streamline government operations, to ensure that there is no duplication, in view of the scarcity of resources and the need to be comprehensive and cohesive in what we do. It is within this context that we encourage the utilisation of cluster system as the correct way of implementing and monitoring government programmes.

The cooperation that exists between government departments at this level is important, and must be strengthened and permeate all government departments.

We are also closely monitoring the transformation that is taking place in order to ensure that electronic government processes are in place. Coupled with this is the issue of Community Development Workers. We are heartened by the progress that has been made so far to ensure that we utilise these officials in delivering services to the people. We appreciate the role that senior managers are playing to realise this goal.

Ladies and gentlemen, as government we have realised that government alone cannot meet all the objectives we have around service delivery, job creation and poverty eradication, hence we encourage Public Private Partnerships. We welcome the participation of big business in helping us to meet our objectives.

We urge senior managers to play their role in exploring new partnerships between government and business, for the betterment of the lives of the people we serve.

Ladies and gentlemen, this conference takes place in the midst of the dispute around wages in the public service, which is in the process of being resolved. As government we regard public servants as a vital component of government and our most valuable resource.

That is why we have always been keen to find a solution, and we hope for a speedy resolution of this matter so that we can all return to performing our tasks of serving the public without distraction.

Ministers, Directors General, senior managers, I cannot finish this address without acknowledging the dedication and hard work of many public service senior managers.

Many of you work long hours daily, seven days a week if needs be, in order to meet the deadlines to improve access to a better life for all.

We congratulate you on this commitment, especially as we are aware of the strain it puts on your family lives. We also thank your families for putting up with such demanding schedules. We hope that sooner than later, we will pass this difficult phase of seeking to urgently improve the lives of our people who have suffered for so long.

We will then be able to leave our desks at 16:30 each day, and go home to relax, not to continue working until the early hours of the morning!

Ladies and gentlemen, I wish you all a successful conference, as you deliberate around the crucial issues that face our country

I thank you.

Issued by: The Presidency
21 September 2004