



MINISTRY
PUBLIC SERVICE AND ADMINISTRATION
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Media Statement

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For Immediate Release

Minister Kiviet outlines the goals of professionalisation of the public service

Public Service and Administration Minister, Ms Noxolo Kiviet, addressed the Government Retreat for the National Framework towards the implementation of Professionalisation of the Public Sector. The retreat is being held over two days (13-14 July 2023) in Muldersdrift, west of Johannesburg.

Building a Capable, Professional, and Ethical Public Service

In addressing the delegates at the retreat, Minister Kiviet said the South African government has made significant progress in extending basic services to the disadvantaged, but significant challenges remain, including high levels of poverty, inequality, and unemployment. In response, the government has prioritized building a capable, ethical, and developmental state, and one of the key initiatives supporting this goal is the National Framework towards the Implementation of Professionalisation of the Public Sector.

The Importance of Professionalization in the South African Government

Professionalization is critical to ensuring that the South African government is capable of delivering essential services to its citizens. The Professionalisation Framework applies to the National, Provincial, Local Government, and SOEs, with a focus on accelerating service delivery, addressing poor performance and skills among some senior staff, and improving retention levels.

She said Professionalization should result in the development of a shared set of values, culture, and ethos among public servants. This includes a focus on meritocracy, competency, impartiality, and accountability, all of which are essential for building a capable, professional, and ethical government.

The Goals of Professionalization in the South African Government

Minister Kiviet said Professionalization has several key goals, including setting norms and standards to improve the nature of the workforce, regulating workers whose occupation can influence the wellbeing, safety, or property of others, and upgrading public trust and confidence.

“It also aims to empower compliance with administrative or legal necessities, elevate the status of occupation, guide the conduct of public servants, and establish and standardize roles and pathways to facilitate recruitment and maintenance by departments.” She said.

The Role of the Professionalisation Framework

She said the Professionalisation Framework seeks to address persistent problems in the South African government, including a lack of commitment, inadequate service delivery, poor levels of performance and skills among some senior staff, and underdeveloped performance assessment systems. The framework aims to improve the capacity of government institutions and good managers, reposition under-utilized performance management and development assessment systems, and ensure sufficient attention is given to training and development.

The Importance of Clarifying the Mission

To achieve the mission of professionalization, Minister Kiviet said there is a need to clarify and understand the role of the drivers of professionalization, including the Department of Public Service and Administration, the Public Service Commission, the National School of Government, and the DCOG, the DPME, the Presidency, and the National Treasury. The United Nations Development Programme has

been a willing partner in this journey, and there is an undeniable urgency to build a capable, ethical, and developmental state.”

The Need for a Comprehensive Action Plan

Minister Kiviet said a comprehensive action plan for the implementation of the Professionalisation Framework is essential for ensuring its success. This includes a focus on selecting effective and appropriate managers, improving retention levels, and addressing the high turnover rates in scarce occupations. It also involves repositioning the under-utilized performance management and development assessment systems, ensuring sufficient attention is given to training and development, and addressing the rigidities in the employment framework.

The Importance of Strengthening Management Capacity

Referring to the COVID-19 pandemic, Minister Kiviet said COVID-19 has exposed growing concerns about the ability of government departments to convert policy into practice and to utilize resources effectively.

“To address these concerns, there is a need to strengthen management capacity, including the introduction of workplace orientation and induction programs, improving effective planning and performance management and appraisal systems, and managing the career progression and career incidents of public servants effectively through the institutionalization of the Head of Public Administration,” she said.

The Role of the Public Service Commission

She said the Public Service Commission has an invaluable role to play in any revised governance framework, including the professionalization of the public sector. It is critical to ensure the maintenance of effective and efficient public administration and high standards of professional ethics in public service. The PSC is also central to the introduction of meritocratic recruitment systems, embedding a constitutional-based value system in the public service, and holding the public administration accountable.

The Importance of Continuing Learning and Professional Development

Minister Kiviet stressed on continuing learning and professional development to become a norm in the South African government. She

said the National School of Government must work with the PSETA and the DPSA to determine appropriate training and learning pathways to assist in the professionalization of employees, including the launch of the executive education portfolio of programs to support the professionalization of the executives within departments.

The Importance of Integrity Assessments and Competency Assessments

She said Integrity assessments are becoming mandatory in the South African government, and there is a need to tighten specific occupation-based competency assessments. This includes a focus on aligning performance management with membership of professional associations, returning public servants to the simulator by undertaking continuous learning and professional development, and professionalizing certain categories of occupations in the public sector.

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