



Welcome Address - Public Protector Adv. Kholeka Gcaleka
Launch of Public Service Month – Ethics Management Week –
Leadership Workshop

Date: Monday, 8 September 2025

Time: 09:15 – 09:30

- Programme Director - **Ms Pleasure Matshego**
- Minister of Public Service and Administration - **Hon. Minister Inkosi Mzamo Buthelezi**
- Premier of Gauteng, - **Mr Panyaza Lesufi**
- **The statistician general , Mr Risenga Maluleke**
- **Acting DG DPSA , Mr Willie Vukela**
- Heads of Departments,
- Distinguished Guests,
- Colleagues in the Public Service,

Good morning.

It is my privilege to welcome you all to this pivotal moment in our nation's journey toward ethical governance during your *Ethics Management Week* and to set the stage for the official launch of the 2025–2026 edition of this engaging initiative.

Today marks the official launch of the 2025 Integrated Public Service Month under the theme "*Professionalizing the Public Service to Build Trust and Restore Confidence in Government*" – a theme that resonates deeply with the constitutional mandate of my office and the daily realities we encounter in our investigations.

Today, you are gathered, not just as administrators, but as custodians of a profound trust—the trust of the South African people. The data from our office tells a sobering story that demands urgent attention and decisive action.

This event is a call to introspection and action. The Integrated Public Service Month (IPSM) Framework before us—approved by Cabinet and aligned with the Medium-Term Development Plan—challenges you to shift from rhetoric to results. Its theme, "*Professionalising the Public Service to Build Trust and Restore Confidence in Government*," speaks directly to the heart of our nation's crisis:

- Ethical leadership** is not optional; it is the foundation of service delivery.
- Accountability** cannot be delegated; it must be owned at every level.
- Citizen trust** is not inherited; it is earned through consistent action.

In achieving this we have to move faster on the already tabled public service reforms such as the Human capital strategy for the public service this should shift the public service from

a compliance approach to a strategic approach and focus on supporting service delivery, with a strengthened governance system thus minimizing corruption in the HR environment.

The directive issued by the MPSA on professionalisation of HR, providing mechanism for implementation of the first four pillars of the professionalisation framework, the ethics and integrity assessment tool to be deployed as a ethics and part of pre employment screening, this is urgent;

Finalisation of volume 2 of the professionalisation directive which focuses on matters related to heads of departments, incl transparency in their recruitment is still outstanding.

I hope we will also start thinking of the implementation plan of the Bills on the professionalisation which are now before the NCOP, we spend time developing legislation, then another 3 years on regulations and another 5 years on training and then review, no time to assess. Let's be proactive in this instance for efficiency.

Our Strategic Plan 2025-2030 identifies alarming systemic issues that this gathering must confront. According to South Africa's third country report on the Sustainable Development Goals, no advancements have been made regarding SDG 16 – which focuses on reducing corruption and bribery – from 2019 to 2023. This stagnation, corroborated by our own investigation trends, reflects deeper institutional challenges that require strengthened collaboration and enforcement mechanisms.

When ethics fail, what becomes the state of affairs... Enoch Mgijima matter...remedials

Irregular appointments, service delivery, RDP houses that remain incomplete, poliferous boarders, illegal connection of electricity, let's dissect how all these acts with many others impact on our economy

The volume of cases requiring our intervention – over 7,700 matters finalised in 2024/25 alone – reveal a public administration system under severe strain. Our experience shows that behind every complaint lies a broader systemic failure that affects multiple citizens who may never reach our office.

The reports that will be unveiled today—on ethics, integrity, and public sector performance—are not just documents; they are a testament to your commitment as the Public Service to transparency and accountability. These outcomes are mirrors. They reflect where we have stumbled, where we have succeeded, and most importantly, *where we must urgently improve* as a public service.

The IPSM is a structured response. It moves beyond September as a ceremonial month, embedding professionalism into *daily practice* through:

a) Executive Accountability

- Mandatory executive site visits to frontline services
- Direct engagement with citizens at service delivery points
- Personal accountability for service delivery improvements

b) Responsive Complaint Systems

- Functional complaint mechanisms that resolve issues within 14 days
- Alternative dispute resolution mechanisms for faster resolution
- Real-time feedback systems for continuous improvement

c) Ethical Foundation Building

- Batho Pele training that reignites our moral compass
- Integrity testing and continuous professional development
- Merit-based appointments and promotions

Ethical leadership is not optional – it is the foundation upon which service delivery rests. Our investigations consistently reveal that where there is ethical leadership and stable management, audit outcomes improve, and public funds can be accounted for. Conversely, where there is high turnover and weak leadership, administrative turmoil follows.

The National Framework towards the Professionalization of the Public Service, approved in 2022, recognises that professionalising public administration is key to building state capacity. Countries making progress in their development commitments have managed to

institutionalize merit-based public sector systems staffed by qualified and competent officials.

The time for diagnosis is over. Today is about prescription and implementation. As we launch this month of introspection and action. Action which direct the DPSA as the convenor of the governance cluster and anti- corruption to lead on developing a consolidated government implementation plan on professionalization.

The data we present today, the commitments we make here, and the actions we take over the coming month and beyond will determine whether we restore the trust of our people or continue to erode it.

Let this be the month where we moved from rhetoric to results, from policies to practice, from serving ourselves to serving the people who elected us and pay our salaries.

The South African people deserve nothing less than a professional, ethical, and responsive public service. Our performance data shows we have the institutional capacity to deliver – now we need the collective will to transform.

Let me remind you that what you are implementing is a constitutional imperative, it's what is expected of us by the supreme law of our country, section 195 of the constitution states that:

Public administration must be governed by the democratic values and principles enshrined in the constitution, incl the following:

High standard of professional ethics must be promoted and maintained;

Efficient, economic and effective use of resources must be promoted;

Public service must be development- oriented;

Must be transparent;

In closing Martin Luther king jr wrote “ you don't have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve, you only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love...no work is

insignificant, all labour that uplifts humanity has dignity and importance and should be undertaken with painstaking excellence.”

Thank you.