



MINISTRY
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ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT (SAAPAM)

23rd GALA DINNER

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

by

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MINISTER FOR THE PUBLIC SERVICE AND ADMINISTRATION

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Program Director

What an honour **it is** to be addressing professionals dedicated to shaping the future of our country while also celebrating and reflecting on the legacies of those who have dedicated themselves to the **noble cause** of public service in our country.

Before I get to the formalities - allow me programme director, to apologise that I could not join you yesterday - it was my wish that could not be granted due to many pressing engagements.

May I also render an apology of behalf of our Director-General, Ms Yoliswa Makhasi – who could also not be here due to a bereavement back home. We send our sincere condolences to her and family.

Today colleagues, I wish to applaud each and every one who has played and continue playing a vital role in transforming our public service – which is a responsibility that **most bear** with utmost seriousness.

Today, is no ordinary day but a day we stand on the shoulders of giant men and women, including the ones we will be honouring today - who committed their lives to the principles of **servant** leadership and **excellence** in the public administration.

As we mark 30 years of our democracy – we reflect on the giants who laid the foundation of our service, such as the father of our democracy President Nelson Mandela and the Statesman Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi.

It is unarguable that their legacy **challenges** us to build a capable, ethical and professional public service. It does not matter the many difficult and different challenges we face; it remains our duty to restore trust and uphold their values of integrity.

The history of our public service has been shaped by the very people who dared to envision a future where public administration serves as a **catalyst** for positive change and a **beacon** of hope for every citizen.

It is this vision that has inspired countless leaders to go above and beyond the call of duty to ensure that service delivery is not just a function but a manifestation of the principles of fairness, justice and inclusivity.

Today, as we honour and recognise the trailblazers who have made significant contributions to the public administration, we also need to acknowledge that the likes of Dr Selemela, Dr Mjwara, Dr Naledi Pandor and the late Mr Ronnie Mamoepa and many others, are not just leaders but architects of our present democracy.

These leaders faced challenges, pushed boundaries and remained steadfast in their commitment to the ideals of our Constitution. Their legacies remind us that the true measure of leadership is NOT just in what **we achieve** but it is **in the impact** we leave behind for the future generations.

As we come together, let us take a moment to appreciate not only their individual achievements but also the collective impact they have had in building a democratic South Africa.

While we continue cutting a cloth woven in the fabric of such a rich and great legacies and trying to navigate the landscape of the 7th Administration, we also find ourselves at a crossroads - where values and legacies of the past must guide us in crafting a future that reflects our **highest aspirations**.

The leaders we honour today have no doubt - taught us that public service is not a mere job BUT **a calling** and a **relentless commitment** to a better society.

The 7th Administration which is the Government of National Unity (GNU) has placed at its core the principles of accountability, transparency and inclusive governance. These are the very ideals that our predecessors embodied - and it is upon this very same foundation that we must build.

That foundation is the one where we need to be guided by the humility and a dedicated mindset of our predecessors. A mindset that challenges us to be innovative, adaptive and responsive to the needs of our citizens.

Colleagues, the demands of the 21st century call for a public service that is **agile**, skilled and grounded in the principles of Batho Pele - which is putting people first.

We must be unwavering in our commitment to ensuring that **every decision** we make and every action we take - **reflects** the values that our predecessors **strongly** championed.

It is upon each of us - especially the current generation of public servants - to draw inspiration from their courage and wisdom as we strive to create a government that truly works for its people.

The above statement entrenches the position of South Africa as a leader in democratic manifestations within the continent and the world.

This also raises two challenges - one directed at public servants and the other directed at public administration scholars as represented by the South African Association of Public Administration and Management (SAAPAM).

It challenges public servants to rise above their narrow confines of their daily operations. For them to be conscious and understand how their daily functions impact on the lives of South Africans, and **the stature** of our country on the continent and the world.

Similarly, it means public administration scholars led by SAAPAM, should rise above mere critic of government into generating new knowledges, that advance the work of government to assume leadership on the continent and beyond.

The relationship between the public service, public servants and SAAPAM, in addition to being concerned with how things are and work right now, must also be about innovation and creating **new and better** forms of delivery of public goods and basic services.

For this to work, we also must explore the idea of an expanded peer review mechanisms for academia, to include the intended beneficiary of the knowledge produced by SAAPAM academics. This means that as scholars, it is important to make the knowledge you produce to be accessible, relevant and responsive to the needs of South Africans.

In a session facilitated by Professors Zondi and DG Nkuna of the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, I am informed that measures needed to improve research outputs and publications were discussed. It is therefore such research that we must hunger for, to guide and inform our policies.

Ngoba enhliziweni yakho konke esikwenzayo, kunabantu bakithi nabayisizathu salokho esikwenzayo kanye nesihlose ukukwenza (because at the heart of everything we do, there are our people whom we serve - who are the reason for what we do and intend to do).

As we are all reminded to please join the annual Batho Pele Walkie Talkie to Mperebere primary school as we promote a healthy lifestyle and combining academic discussions with service delivery.

There are several activities that have been arranged for that programme.

We will also create food gardens, and the Department of Home Affairs will provide Civic Services to yourselves and the community. The Director General has informed me that the Batho Pele Walkie Talkie will now become part of the programme of the SAAPAM conference as we bridge theory and service delivery.

As we celebrate the achievements of our distinguished awardees today, I wish to congratulate the South African Association of Public Administration and Management for a successful 23rd Annual conference.

I **assure you** of our continued support and partnership as you have a major role to play in the professionalisation and building of the capacity of government and state - as you are also in pursuit of being accredited by the South African Qualification Authority (SAQA).

We believe that with this accreditation, SAAPAM will be **placed at the centre** of realising the Professionalisation Framework's recommendation for public servants to belong to professional bodies as we improve professional ethics, discipline and accountability in government.

And now shifting my focus back to the public servants, I urge each one of you seated here to ask yourself: "What legacy will you leave behind and how will **your actions today** contribute to the South Africa we wish to see tomorrow - or even when we are no longer here to witness it"

I know you have been listening attentively throughout - but I humbly urge that you hear me well - especially now that I am about to conclude.

I want to remind all of us here that we are entrusted with **a sacred** duty to be the custodians of a democratic society that is inclusive and fair.

We have the privilege of learning from the experiences, successes and even failures of those who have walked this path before us.

So, let us use their stories as a guide and a source of strength and as a reminder that greatness in the public service is achieved **NOT** by seeking recognition but by **staying true** to the ideals of service integrity and dedication to our people.

As we are entrusted with a sacred responsibility, we owe it not to ourselves, not even to our fellow citizens and our country **BUT** to our continent. As I often say that South Africa is strategically located at the bottom of our

continent - that means we are carrying the rest of Africa on our shoulders and we dare not fail.

As we step into the next chapter, let us be resolute in our commitment to building a public service that embodies our **shared values**.

May we leave this gathering with a renewed sense of purpose and being ready to face the challenges ahead. Determined to leave a legacy that will inspire generations to come. May we continue to build a South Africa that works for all of us.

And that - is our collective responsibility!

We cannot fail on this one.

Thank You.