

THE LAUNCH OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE MONTH

SPEECH FOR MINISTER NOXOLO KIVIET

**Ladies and gentlemen,
esteemed colleagues, and
valued members of our community,**

Today marks the convergence of myriad voices, histories, and visions as we inaugurate the Public Service Month. To echo Helen Keller, "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." This month represents our shared resolve to enhance the synergy between the government and its people.

Right at the outset, it is important to appreciate and acknowledge the roots of the PSM. The Public Service Month is an offshoot of the Africa Public Service Day, a testament to the vision and dedication of the African Union towards fostering public service excellence in Africa. Our continent has always been at the forefront in recognizing the power of service, unity, and collaboration.

It is heartening to see that what began as an African legacy event has now been adopted and celebrated at a global level by the United Nations. This adoption by the world's premier international body underscores the universality of the principles we champion and amplifies the message that the ideals of service, commitment, and public welfare are truly borderless.

**Esteemed colleagues, and
valued members of our community,**

This month is not merely a regional celebration, but a global acknowledgment of the dedication and perseverance of public servants everywhere. Moreover, it is worth noting that this Public Service Month holds an even deeper significance for South Africa this year. We have the privilege of celebrating the PSM following a period of heightened activity, as our nation recently hosted a significant delegation of global leaders who were here for the just concluded BRICS Summit. This gathering is not just an ordinary meeting, but a testament to South Africa's pivotal role and leverage in global affairs. Our nation's ability to simultaneously celebrate dedication to public service and host a summit of this magnitude signifies our commitment to both domestic excellence and international leadership. It serves as a reminder of South Africa's evolving stature on the global stage, and how our local endeavours and global ambitions are intertwined.

Sir Isaac Newton once stated, "If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants." We, too, stand on the foundations laid by those before us and endeavour to expand upon their legacy. The PSM platform is not just another government initiative; it is, rather, a testament to our belief in the collective wisdom of our people.

Stephen R. Covey once insightfully remarked, "Synergy is better than my way or your way. It is our way." This quote encapsulates the very essence of why an integrated approach to the PSM is of paramount importance. Instead of fragmented strategies and isolated efforts, synergy emphasizes the power of collective action, unified direction, and shared vision.

By adopting an integrated methodology for the PSM, we are not merely implementing policies or initiatives; we are fostering a collaborative spirit where solutions and strategies emerge from collective wisdom. It is this principle of 'our way' that ensures more comprehensive, inclusive, and effective outcomes for public service delivery.

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valued members of our community,

This month, we aim to galvanize the collective power, illuminating the path forward with the brilliance of shared insights. John F. Kennedy once emphasized, "Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other." This statement underlines the core reason why the PSM theme places such a high premium on state capability.

Leadership, in the context of public service, is not just about guiding or governing; it is more profoundly about continuously evolving, understanding, and adapting to the changing needs of the people. Just as learning informs leadership decisions, the capability of a state reflects its commitment to continuous growth and its ability to serve its citizens effectively.

When the state emphasizes capability-building, it showcases its dedication to both leadership and learning, understanding that the two are intrinsically linked. This ensures that the public service remains responsive, resilient, and relevant in an ever-evolving landscape and that is why the National School of Government has a central role to play in this state capability enterprise. The Place of the NSG reflects the seminal words of William Butler Yeats who beautifully articulated, "Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire." Learning is therefore lifelong and an imperative of state capability.

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In our pursuit of excellence in service delivery, we must recognize that it is a collective endeavour that transcends individual roles or statuses. As Malcolm X astutely observed when we replace the 'I' with 'we', even "illness becomes wellness." This shift from individualism to collectivism underscores the notion that the responsibility of service delivery does not rest on one entity's shoulders but is a shared responsibility of all.

Furthermore, Martin Luther King Jr.'s poignant remark that we "may have all come on different ships, but we're in the same boat now," emphasizes that despite our varied backgrounds, roles, or positions – be it the public servant, service users, or those in leadership – we all have a stake in ensuring the boat sails smoothly. Excellence in service is indeed everybody's business, and together, in unison, we can navigate the challenges and steer towards success.

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As I conclude, it bears reminder that the 2023 IPSM arrives at a pivotal juncture as the government is charting its course towards recovery from the myriad challenges of the past, including the ramifications of the Covid-19 pandemic and global economic stagnation. The IPSM initiative serves as a reflection on the crucial role the public service holds in the broader framework of economic growth and development.

Way beyond this functional aspect, there is an equally significant focus on the ethos and spirit of our public servants. While the resilience of our institutions in tackling challenges is undeniably crucial, we must not overlook the value of the resilience inherent within our public servants. Their character, ethos, and spirit play a fundamental role in driving our institutions forward. As the African proverb reminds us, "Smooth seas do not make skilful sailors." This underscores the idea that the strength and adaptability of our public servants, especially in turbulent times, are paramount. The resilience they display not only aids in navigating through challenges but also in building a more robust, inclusive, and compassionate public service system.

Let us remember that through unity, collaboration, and the celebration of diversity, we not only envision a brighter future but actively construct it. As we embark on this transformative journey marked by the IPSM activities, let these endeavours serve as a catalyst for a reinvigorated and regenerated cadre of public servants, not only well-equipped but also deeply committed to taking on the challenges of service delivery.

My gratitude goes out to all those involved in the planning and execution of the IPSM activities. Your exemplary work serves as an inspiration to us all and showcases the boundless potential within our organization.

May we all move forward with renewed vigour, dedication, and purpose, striving towards a brighter future for our nation and its people.

Thank you for being a part of this transformative journey.

MINISTER NOXOLO KIVIET

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