



REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

ADDRESS AT THE LAUNCH OF THE ETHICS WEEK

13 SEPTEMBER 2023

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, Ethics Officers.

I would like to warmly welcome you all and express my gratitude to you for taking two days out of your busy schedules to attend this annual National Ethics Officer Forum.

As with last year, the start of the Ethics Officer Forum signals the official launch of the Ethics week.

This year, the Ethics Week once again forms part of the Public Service Month, and commenced on Monday, with the first Lifestyle Audit Training for departmental investigators that was held. During this online training session, more than 230 departmental investigators joined Mr. Isaac Kabini, his team and the Strengthening Ethics and Integrity Program (Canadian Government sponsored program), to be trained on lifestyle investigations. As you are aware, lifestyle audits commenced in April 2021, where the initial focus was on conducting lifestyle reviews.

To support departments with implementing this policy, the PAEIDTAU combined resources with the World Bank and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, to develop a world class Lifestyle Review course for Ethics Officers. I am very proud to announce that the training paid off, as to date, only 10 national and 13 provincial departments did not start to conduct lifestyle audits. The rest did, thanks to the efforts of the Ethics Officers sitting here in front of me. This resulted in more than 11 000 lifestyle audits on Public Service employees being finalised, as the President in his weekly address of 13 September 2023 referred to. As a result, Ethics Officers detected anomalies (red flags) and referred that for investigations. A government component and national department reported the referral of five (5) SMS and two (2) non-SMS for lifestyle investigations, where the entities are looking into the non-disclosure of assets and conflicts of interest. Seven provincial departments reported the referral of 33 SMS and 1240 non-SMS for lifestyle investigations, The investigations are into conflicts of interest; incomplete disclosures; non-disclosure of assets, directorships, companies, immovable assets; the stated value of assets; allegations of conducting business with the State; performing other remunerative work without permission; and alleged unexplained wealth. These departments are currently investigating their cases and will report progress to the PAEIDTAU by the end of this month. With the training of Monday provided to departmental investigators, I am confident that the investigation part of lifestyle audits (step 2) will further improve, with significant detection of corruption and unethical conduct to follow suit.

Ladies and gentlemen,

An ethics week is nothing without the customary National Ethics Officer Forum. Over the next two days, we will focus under the guidance of Ms

Pleasure Matshego and team, on the area of work of Ethics Officers. During this time, discussion will be held on the Constitutional Values and Principles, led by the Public Service Commission, which includes a short discussion on ethics. National Treasury will also present on the use of the Central Supplier Database and procurement data to identify conflicts of interest. I wish to thank Ms Moroko Mabowa and Adv Khanyisa Mgwenyana from the PSC and Mr Tumelo Ntlaba from the National Treasury for participating in this Forum.

The agenda also includes sessions where feedback will be provided to you, the Ethics Officers, on Ethics Policies, such as the conducting of business with the State and the institutionalisation of the Ethics Officer function. Time was also allocated for discussion on the Directive on Other Remunerative Work and the Digitization of the Other Remunerative Work and Gifts registers. Feedback will also be provided on the National Ethics and Integrity Management Consultative Committee.

As head of the PAEIDTAU it is my pleasure and honour to launch the Ethics Week and with that to open the National Ethics Officer Forum. Ethics week is not only an opportunity for Ethics Officers to sharpen their skills, but it is a special week to remind us all of the importance of ethics and ethics management in our departments. Given the focus of this year's Public Service Month, it is also an opportunity to remind ourselves of what it means to be a professional public servant.

Our country is currently grappling with numerous challenges impacting on service delivery. This not only includes corrupt practices, but also where Public Service employees act unprofessionally. By reminding us of the importance of ethics and how it relates to professionalism, we are provided with an opportunity to reflect on how we can make a difference

in our respective environments and spur on other public service employees to always act with integrity and to be professional.

To be professional does not mean that one has ethics. In most of the corruption cases we find that the master minds were professional, either being lawyers, engineers, doctors or such. The lesson we can learn from this is that professional employees with the correct qualifications are needed, but more so, we need Public Service employees who always act with integrity. Ethics you will not get with a degree. It needs an employee who will always be guided by doing the right things, and making decisions that benefit the public at large. When engaging on discussions over these two days, I urge you to examine the role of Ethics Officers in professionalizing the Public Service. What example can we set to change the culture in our respective departments? How can we further the implementation of the Professionalization framework in the work that we do?

By maintaining high ethical standards and professionalism, Ethics Officers can help build and preserve public trust. When citizens believe that public servants are acting with integrity and competence, they are more likely to have confidence in government institutions. To build public trust, it would require of Public Servants to treat all citizens fairly and equitably. Ethical conduct ensures that decisions and actions are based on principles of justice and equality, regardless of personal biases. It also requires of Public Servants to be well-trained and capable of effectively carrying out their duties, thus to be professional. This competence is essential for the efficient functioning of government and the delivery of public services. It must be understood, that the behaviour of Public Servants reflects on the government as a whole. Unethical and unprofessional conduct by even a few individuals can tarnish the reputation of the entire Public Service.

Distinguished guests,

Next week Monday, as part of the Ethics week, the DPSA is co-hosting with the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) as well as the University of Pretoria, a round table on the development of anti-Corruption curricula in university courses. This initiative aims to raise awareness amongst university students on corruption and ethics and to discuss innovative ways in which to introduce anti-corruption aspects into university curricula. During this roundtable, international and South African academics will deliberate ways and means to address this issue in curricula, and the National School of Government will showcase the Ethics Course it developed for Public Service employees as best practice.

From next week Tuesday up to Wednesday the OECD and DPSA will host two roundtables, where discussions will be held on the corruption risks faced by the finance sector, infrastructure sector and State-Owned Entities. These roundtables are part of the OECD Project on Fair Market Conditions for Competitiveness in South Africa. The aim of the project is to raise awareness about the OECD standards and good practices on anti-corruption, integrity and fair competition among stakeholders through the creation of collective action community. Through this, the OECD aims to share the experience it acquired in supporting Collective Action in countries to strengthen the integrity of companies and create a better business environment.

Ethics Officers

I invite you to actively take part in the discussions over the next two days and to use the opportunity to challenge yourself to contribute to the professionalization of the Public Service.