



MINISTRY  
PUBLIC SERVICE AND ADMINISTRATION  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

## **Deputy Minister for Public Service and Administration**

**Dr Chana Pilane-Majake**

National Labour Relations Conference

**Closing Address**

**22-23 February 2024**

Chairperson, allow me to greet,

- My colleague, the Minister for the Public Service and Administration, Ms Noxolo Kiviet; who is currently doing work for the governing party in Kwa-Zulu Natal. I must express my appreciation that in her busy schedule, she managed to put time aside to address this conference. That is how important this conference is, to shape the future of labour relations in the public service.
- The Director-General of the Department of Public Service and Administration, Ms Yoliswa Makhasi, and all Directors-General present;
- The Deputy Director-General of the Department of Agriculture Land Reform and Rural Development Ms Tsetso Sehoole, who hosted and welcomed us on behalf of the Director-General to this magnificent building;
- The Executive Dean at the Faculty of Humanities, at the Tshwane University of Technology; Professor Mashupye Maserumule;
- The chairperson of the Public Service Coordinating Bargaining Council (PSCBC) Mme Ingrid Dimo;
- Dr Luvuyo Bono, the chairperson of the Essential Services Committee;

- Mr Thanduxolo Qotoyi, from the Nelson Mandela University;
- Dr Selaelo Mametja, from Government Employees Medical Scheme (GEMS);
- The leadership of organised labour, it was indeed a great pleasure to listen to your valuable inputs yesterday. I would like to assure you, on behalf of the Minister that your positive inputs and constructive criticism have been well received and shall be followed through with tangible programmes, as the DG Makhasi indicated.
- The General Secretaries of all the Bargaining Councils;
- Senior managers present here today;
- Esteemed Guests,
- Ladies and Gentlemen.

As we come to the end of this National Labour Relations Conference, I would like to express my gratitude for your participation and insightful contributions over the past two days. We have engaged in meaningful discussions on the theme of *"Building State Capacity through the Professionalisation of Labour Relations in the Public Service,"* and I believe we have made significant progress in understanding the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

Throughout our deliberations, we have recognized the complex dynamics within labour relations in the Public Service. We must admit that the rising cost of living, fiscal constraints, and the proliferation of trade unions have an undesirable impact on our relationship between us government and organised labour. This impacts not only on productivity and service delivery but also poses risks to the stability of our labour relations environment. We therefore need to use the platform such as this one to strengthen our relationship of co-existence for mutual gains.

Our Minister yesterday in her address, implored us to engage robustly and truthfully with each other, and in doing so, critically reflect amongst others on:

- a) Strengthening Collaboration with labour;
- b) Professionalisation of the Labour relations function; and
- c) The elimination of gender-based violence in the public service.

I wish to echo the Minister's views on harassment in the workplace. This is another scourge that needs to be combated through joint efforts by both government and organised labour. Let us nip it at the bud.

The Minister further challenged this conference to emerge with tangible proposals that will assist the State to formulate comprehensive labour relations strategy. What gives me comfort is that throughout the deliberations one could up a sense of a shared commitment

to finding solutions and maintaining labour peace while ensuring the capacity of the State to deliver services.

We have explored various areas of discussion, including the future of labour relations, the impact of government coalitions, and strategies to manage the escalating wage bill without compromising on service delivery.

One central theme that has emerged is the need to professionalize labour relations and build the capacity of the State. This entails equipping public service practitioners with the necessary skills and competencies to navigate the evolving landscape of labour relations. We must also prioritize the ethical conduct of public administration and uphold the constitutional values and principles that underpin our work.

Moreover, we have recognized the importance of a developmental state that meets the needs of its people through interventionist and participatory public administration. By fostering collaboration between organised labour and the government, we can strive towards a single, ethical public administration that promotes social justice and the progressive realization of socio-economic rights.

What stood out for me from all the presenters, starting with the Minister, the DG and in particular our role-players, to borrow the words of the Minister, is the quest for collaboration amongst all of us. This sentiment needs to be commended.

It is through continued dialogue and collaboration that we can address the challenges we face and create an environment conducive to the professionalization of labour relations in the Public Service.

Let me thank Professor Maserumule for reminding us that the State employees are the most valuable asset of our government. In taking forward the collaboration between government and organised labour, Prof further advised that collaboration need not come as a coincidence, but should be institutionalised.

I am glad that the spirit of collaboration continued to find expression in the presentations of the second day of our conference. However, in her presentation, Mme Dimo emphasised the importance of research by both the employer and trade unions in formulating bargaining positions. This will assist greatly in narrowing down issues to a level of consensus and meeting of minds and eliminate any possible antagonisms. One of the proposals coming through for consideration was the issue of diversity, looking at the programmes that involve women, youth and unrepresented groups.

Linked to that, an issue of saving lives during strikes cannot be underscored, as life is one of the fundamental rights to humanity. It has therefore become extremely urgent that parties in the essential services conclude the minimum service level agreements so as to ensure that lives are not lost during strikes, which are guaranteed by the law. Therefore emerging from this conference, all role-players should heed the call and safe lives.

I extend my sincere appreciation to the Department of Public Service and Administration for organizing this conference and to all the participants for their active engagement. Let us carry forward the knowledge and ideas exchanged here to drive positive change in our respective roles and contribute to the building of a stronger and more prosperous nation. I know DG Makhasi has already assured you that this will not only be a talk show. I further wish to concretise that point and that we will give the management of the department the necessary support to implement the recommendations of this conference.

Let me also extend my heartfelt gratitude to all the distinguished speakers, panellists, and moderators who shared their expertise and insights. Your contributions have been invaluable in shaping the discussions and fostering a conducive environment for knowledge exchange.

I would like to express my appreciation to the Department of Agriculture Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) for making their venue available to host this conference and to all the organizing committee members for their meticulous planning and execution. Your dedication and hard work have ensured the success of this event.

Lastly, I want to thank every one of you, the delegates, for your active engagement, thoughtful contributions, and commitment to advancing labour relations in the Public Service. It is through your collective efforts that we can drive positive change and enhance the capacity of the State to deliver effective and efficient services to the citizens of our nation.

As we depart from this conference, let us carry forward the knowledge gained, the connections made, and the spirit of collaboration and professionalism that has permeated our discussions. Together, we can continue to build a strong foundation for labour relations in the Public Service and contribute to the prosperity and well-being of our society.

Thank you once again, and I wish you all safe travels and continued success in your endeavours.

I thank you!

Delivered by:  
The Deputy Minister for the Public Service and Administration  
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