



MINISTRY
PUBLIC SERVICE AND ADMINISTRATION
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**MINISTER N. KIVIET ADDRESS AT SOUTH
AFRICAN ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC
ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT
22ND ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON THE 25TH
SEPTEMBER 2023 AT BIRCHWOOD
HOTEL, EKURHULENI IN GAUTENG**

Programme Director, Professor Nokukhanya Jili, SAAPAM Vice President

His Excellency, President Thabo Mbeki, Former President of the Republic of South Africa

Premier of Gauteng Province, Mr Panyaza Lesufi

Professor Puleng Lenka-Bula, Vice Chancellor and Principal of University of South Africa

Professor Tinyiko-Maluleka, Vice chancellor and Principal of Tshwane University of Technology

Professor G. Scott, Secretary General of African Association of Public Administration and Management

President of SAAPAM, Professor Kgothatso Shai

Bill Shields, Director of American Society for Public Administration

Dr Rukayya Mohammed, Vice Chairperson Association of Public Administrators Tanzania

Representatives of Asia Association for Public Administration

Director-Generals present

Distinguished Guests

Delegates

I am honored to join you in this 22nd Conference of SAAPAM hosted by the Gauteng Province and City of Ekurhuleni. It is important from the onset to extend my sincere and profound gratitude to SAAPAM for inviting me to this conference. My sincere appreciation also to the strategic partners from the government led by the Department of Public Service and Administration.

Public service is the heart of the strategic and operational compass of any country. It is also the heartbreak of monitoring strategy against present realities. The hosting of this event within the Public Service Month reaffirms that working together we can do more. We successfully launched the Public Service Month in Buffalo City, and it was a resounding success. For the month of September public servants have been hard at work and have dedicated all their efforts in the context of Batho Pele principles.

In three days' time will be officially closing the Public Service Month in Mpumalanga Province with a series of planned activities. This is one of the important months in the government calendar as we celebrate both Public Service and Heritage months. The Public Service Month is meant to celebrate and acknowledge the work done by Public Servants. It serves as a reminder to public servants to re-energize their efforts in changing the outlook of public service and communities for the better.

It further entrenches the governance systems and practices that guide public servants` conscience and consciousness for better performance and their responsibilities. Public Service month also brings the expectations from the communities of bringing services closer to the people particularly in areas where they are not easily accessible.

It further reminds public servants about the core values of the Batho Pele principles which are consultation, service standards, access, courtesy, information, openness, and transparency, redress and value for money.

The number of legislative imperatives in Africa recognises public service and administration as the cornerstone of any government. This is demonstrated in varying degrees through constitutions of African countries which contains a list of the basic values and principles governing the public service and administration. The Constitutions of many countries including amongst others South Africa (Chapter 10), Zimbabwe (Chapter 9) , Uganda (Chapter 10) , Namibia (Part 2 , Chapter 1) , Botswana (Chapter 7) , Lesotho (Chapter 13) , Mozambique (Tittle 2 , Chapter 1) , Ghana (Chapter 14) and many more provides such basic values for public services and administration.

At Continental Level the African Union on the 31st January 2011 adopted the African Charter on Values and Principles of Public Service and Administration. The Charter entered into force on the 23rd of July 2016. It has been noted that not all African countries have acceded to the call of the Charter.

The Charter is the first legally binding continental legal framework that serves as catalyst for the public service and administration reform agenda on the continent. The Charter gives hope on addressing the imperatives of the African public service and administration. The Charter further deals with the equal use of public service and administration, impartiality, fairness, and due process in the delivery of public services, continuity of public services under all circumstances, adaptability of public services to the needs of users, professionalism and ethics in public service and administration, and effective, efficient and responsible use of resources.

In other words, public services must be delivered in accordance with the existing national laws and regulations of various countries. The public servants, public service and administration must respect the human rights dignity and integrity of all users of public service. The importance of the linkage of public service within the rule of law enables the system users to become rights holders, capable of legally claiming services of a certain quality and holding the state accountable.

Article 23 (1) of the Charter stipulates that, while implementing the objectives, applying the principles, and respecting the commitments enshrined in the Charter, individual state parties have to adopt legislative, executive, and administrative measures to align their national laws and regulations with the Charter.

Countries are further required to integrate the commitments, values and principles of the Charter in the national policies and strategies. Many countries have adopted various strategies for the realisation of the dream of the Charter.

The theme of this 22nd Annual Conference Repositioning ***African Governments in the Changing Global Order and Disorder*** tends to reemphasise our role as Africa in the global space in the context of public service and administration. National societies and economies are increasingly interconnected, regional and global developments heavily impact on any nation's development. This trend has been facilitated and accelerated by the rise of transport and communication technologies as well as by policies of deregulation and market liberalisation. However, economic globalisation has not brought the promised and desired results for most countries and people yet, particularly in Africa.

Kenya's Assistant Foreign Minister Hon Moses Wetang'ula during his opening speech at the conference on globalisation emphasised that globalisation is generally welcome development. He noted, however that Africa is underrepresented in global governance, not fully integrated in the global economic order and not fully benefitting from globalisation even though the major global powers recognise Africa as a major source of raw materials, Thus globalisation from an African point of view, is managed unfavourably “

International organisations like United Nations, World Bank, and World Trade Organisations are expected to provide platforms for global governance. However almost all these institutions are being criticised for inefficiencies, ineffectiveness, and democratic deficit. The current international organisations are looking for their identities and roles and are struggling with necessary structural reforms, particularly to allow countries in Africa a greater say.

With these institutions still providing the best global governance framework available, African governments need to actively shape the reform processes. Priorities are the reorganisation of the WTO and its development agenda, as well as strengthening the UN in its efforts to attain the Millenium Development Goals. In general, the role of regional bodies within the global arena needs to be debated in greater detail. It seems that if Africa wants to become more influential and proactive in the global arena, regional bodies ought to play an increasingly important role, they will have to form strategic alliances between national and global governance.

African governments repositioning should be guided by the African Union as it has already opened platforms for strategic engagements. African governments have not yet fully reaped the promised benefits of globalisation. They have not been fully integrated in the World Economy. I have no doubt in my mind that President Mbeki will dwell much on this important aspect.

It is clear without any hesitation that a reasonable number of public servants have professional qualifications but the state of professionalism within the public sector remains an area of concern. The National Framework Towards Professionalisation of the Public Sector concludes that “Qualifications in isolation from other essential elements of professions such as academic and social values, are the worst predictors of professionalism. It is also important to note that unprofessional conduct and behaviours in the public sector erodes investor confidence, diminishes morale and portrays the public sector in a negative way within the society.

The National Framework Towards Professionalisation of the Public Sector aimed to ensure that government is responsive and professional in the service of the people. Chapter 10 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996 indicates that “one of the basic values underpinning public administration is that a high standard of professional ethics must be promoted and maintained “ A highly skilled public service should also be representative of, and connected to the communities it serves.

President Cyril Ramaphosa had this to say “When I was elected to the position of President of South Africa, I said that building an efficient, capable and ethical state free from corruption was among the foremost priorities. Only a capable, efficient, ethical and development-oriented state can deliver on the commitment to improve the lives of the people of the country. This means that the Public Service must be staffed by men and women who are professional, skilled, selfless and honest “

Public Service must be staffed by men and women who are professional, skilled, selfless and honest, they must be committed to upholding the values of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996. The National Framework Towards Professionalisation of Public Sector aims to build a state that better serves our people, that is insulated from undue political interference and where appointments are made based on merit. The National Framework was approved by the Cabinet in 2022.

This National Framework applies to all spheres of government. It lays down, among other things, clear requirements for recruitment and selection processes, mandatory induction for new public servants and performance management. It prioritises continuous learning so that the skills and capabilities of public servants are always improving.

The National Framework further puts emphasis on the need to hold public servants accountable for irregularities, to do away with culture of impunity in the mismanagement and misappropriation of state resources. It involves training for accounting officers across all spheres of government on the applicable legislative provisions.

Despite all these efforts poor service delivery, lack of professionalism and public service ethics and rampant bureaucratic corruption are deeply entrenched within the African public services and administration.

The major concerns are the fact that all these values and principles of public services and administration are denied by the lack of the rule of law and the implementation of the Constitutions. There are still many challenges in government departments with regard to skills, professionalism and expertise, despite these challenges there are several pockets of excellence.

The lack of the rule of law disconnects the public from the public services and administration. It is important for this August meeting to note that South African government through Section 196 (1) of the Constitution provides for the basic values and principles as enshrined in the Charter.

In addition, South Africa enacted the Public Administration Management Act II of 2014 to give effect to the values and principles referred to in Section 196(1) of the Constitution. Most of the country's Constitutions in particular Zimbabwe Section 194 of 2013 talks to Section 196(1) of the South African Constitution.

Regarding these critical areas not much transformation of the public service and administration has been done despite the constitutional imperatives of the African countries. The inability to implement the Charter does not give an indication of whether the public services and administration of the African countries is moving in the right direction.

As the Mission of the South African Association of Public Administration and Management is to encourage and promote good governance and effective service delivery through the advancement of professionalism, scholarship and practice in public administration and management.

Professionalising public administration is one of the key imperatives for building state capacity. Globally the public grapples with issues of professionalism and professionalisation of state employees and its operations. South Africa is no exception. Various initiatives are undertaken to assert the public sector as the agency of democracy and the developmental state.

As we gather in platforms of this nature, we must grapple with that reality moving from talk-shows to doing what needs to be done as we all know what should be done.

As I conclude, the National School of Government is making significant contribution in building state capacity. It has strategically position itself as a premier public sector training institution gearing towards the achievement of this priority 1 of our sixth administration – to build a capable, ethical and developmental state. Through the initiatives of the National School of Government, our elected public representatives and appointed public servants continue to gain significant insights in improving public service delivery and responding to the needs of our people.

We dare not fail.

Thank You