

- The professional association may function on the same principle as the cluster system of Government in the integration of related functions.

A viewpoint was also put forward that it may be premature to look at the establishment of a professional association at this point in time, the reason being that the current Public Service environment within which senior managers function may be inadequate. The following reasons were presented in support of this viewpoint:

- The Ministerial discretion to create a professional association may limit the sharing of ideas by senior managers in a professional association;
- A professional association may be an interest based association that serve as a union to senior managers which may be negative and not conducive to the aim of developing and professionalising the senior management cadre;
- The establishment of a professional association must be done with great caution to prevent misguided efforts and to ensure that its existence is justified and that it serves the right purpose; and
- It must still be determined if the professional association will be a forum of specialist groups of managers or a group of senior managers beyond the Public Service or only a selection of an elite portion of the senior management service members.

The following proposals were subsequently formulated with a view to taking this matter forward:

- An exploratory forum must be created to set a process of debate regarding the professional association in motion;
- A task team should be established (the number of people or composition was not discussed and indicated) consisting of senior managers representing all national and provincial departments);
- The findings, research and proposals of the task team as well as information and proposals from the forum should be posted on the DPSA web-site; and
- Research on this matter should be managed and driven by the DPSA and should also be posted on the DPSA web-site.

With the above in mind, SMS members and other interested parties are invited to share thoughts with the DPSA on this matter. Comments and suggestions can be forwarded for the attention of:

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 0001.

- APEX has regional and/or specialist chapters, each with its own organisational and administrative requirements.
- Of further importance is the issue of financing. The membership fees of professional associations are quite low and therefore not enough to sustain themselves. These fees would therefore have to be supplemented through grants from other sources.

### **The way forward**

From the above it is clear that members of the SMS can benefit a great deal from membership of an association catering for their specific needs. However, considerable thought needs to be given to the longer-term viability of such an association and the institutional as well as funding challenges that will be posed by the creation thereof.

Should one opt for the possibility of establishing a totally new association for the SMS, such association would probably need to be established “outside” the public service. This would require the active support and involvement of SMS members themselves. The question is whether there is sufficient interest in such an association and whether sustainable proposals can be developed to take this idea forward. Another question is whether existing associations might not already adequately cater for this need.

The issue of the possible establishment a professional association was debated at the SMS conference that took place in Durban from 14 to 15 March 2002.

The following suggestions transpired from the discussions:

- The objectives of the professional association need to reflect the common experiences of senior managers in the Public Service;
- A collective identity for the senior managers needs to be enhanced by the professional association;
- The professional association must establish a forum for senior managers to come together for idea sharing e.g. on best practices;
- A professional association will facilitate the intellectual debate that needs to take place from time to time to explore senior managers’ role in the Public Service;
- The professional association will serve as a centre of learning for senior managers;
- The professional association will be able to standardise the values of the senior management service;
- It may serve as a centre that accredits individual senior managers’ learning/qualification/experience levels as well as accrediting organisations/institutions; and

of the SMS through determinations by the Minister for the Public Service and Administration on advice of a Salary Review Panel. Moreover, members of the SMS remain free to associate with unions of their choice, should they have such a need.

### **Organisational and administrative matters pertaining to the establishment of an association**

Although there appears to be a strong case for establishing a professional association for the SMS, the operational side of it may pose challenges. The following are some of the considerations that have to be taken into account:

- Although the Minister has the authority to initiate the establishment of an association, it might be necessary for the association itself to be established in terms of section 21 of the *Companies Act, 1973* (Act 61 of 1973). Such association will then be a company not for gain and thus a legal person with the capacity to sue and to be sued in its own name. The association will further be able to acquire assets in its own name and, as such, will be a legal person distinct from its members. The association will also be able to obtain its own income through e.g. prescribing membership fees; selling of publications; providing advisory services; and imposing attendance fees for symposia and other events.
- A constitution will have to be adopted as soon as possible as this will contain the ground rules for the functioning of the association.
- Once an association has been established and a constitution adopted, governance structures such as a Board of Directors will have to be put in place. In the case of the Association of Professional Executives of the Public Service of Canada (APEX) they have a volunteer 18 person board of Directors, representative of various functional communities (operational, human resources etc) which reflect the country's diversity (cultural and linguistic). Due to the fact that the SMS consists of managers spread out over nine provinces, it might be necessary to establish provincial chapters of the association. Each such chapter will then have its own Board of Directors.
- An Executive Director is normally responsible for the day-to-day running of an association, for implementing the policies and resolutions of the National Board of Directors, compiling agendas for meetings, keeping of minutes, keeping a register of members etc. In the case of APEX, the Executive Director heads a secretariat of five permanent staff, including the Executive Director, Deputy Executive Director (both on assignment from the public service) and three support staff hired directly by APEX.

## **A PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE SENIOR MANAGEMENT SERVICE (SMS) : EXPLORING THE POSSIBILITIES**

The need for establishing a professional association for managers in the public domain was initially raised in the Public Service Review Report of 1999/2000. This was done in the context of developing an ethos of service delivery and promoting the professional interests of this unique layer of the Public Service. Against the background of the establishment of the Senior Management Service on 1 January last year, there needs to be a proper debate on the role and functions of such an association and the pros and cons of its establishment.

Key questions that need to be addressed are:

- What do we hope to achieve by establishing an association for the SMS?
- What institutional mechanisms and financial/administrative arrangements will have to be put in place to ensure the sustainability of such an association?
- How do we take the process of establishing the association forward?

### **Objectives to be achieved through the establishment of an association**

By their very nature, professional associations tend to focus on -

- promoting high standards of personal integrity, ethical conduct, and accountability within the profession;
- promoting and protecting the profession and career interests of its members;
- co-operating with other associations and institutions to promote the objectives of the association;
- providing a variety of services such as serving as an information centre; hosting meetings, conferences and discussions for the enrichment of its members; publishing journals and other publications; and
- creating opportunities for members to network and collaborate, to share knowledge, best practices and experience.

Professional associations sometimes also assume the role of a trade union in the sense that they may lobby for improved benefits of their members. This clearly is not the intention in the SA Public Service situation since mechanisms have already been created for the orderly review of conditions of service of members