



**Keynote address by Premier Maqueen Letsoha-Mathae on the  
occasion of the launch of Integrated Public Service Month**

**8<sup>th</sup> Floor, OR Tambo Building, Bloemfontein**

**12 September 2024**

Members of the Executive Council

Heads of Departments

Batho Pele Coordinators

Senior Managers in All Departments

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is with great pleasure that I address you today on the occasion of the launch of Integrated Public Service Month, themed “**A GOVERNMENT AT WORK FOR YOU.**”

Public representatives are entrusted with the important role of leading and shaping our public service. This calling goes beyond mere profit-making; it is a dedication to serving the public with integrity and commitment.

Public service stands at the heart of community development, encompassing essential services such as provision of water and sanitation, healthcare provision, infrastructure development, education, housing, policing, and social services.

These services are crucial for uplifting the lives of our people, particularly those who have been historically marginalized.

September marks the beginning of Public Service Month, an annual event spearheaded by the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA).

This year's celebration is especially significant as it aligns with the 30th anniversary of our democracy. It is fitting to reflect on the evolution and transformation of our public service over these three decades.

In 1994, our democratic government inherited a public service landscape that was racially skewed, dominated by white civil servants, particularly in senior management roles.

This necessitated the introduction of inclusive reforms to better reflect and serve the diverse needs of our citizens. The Batho Pele Principles were introduced as a cornerstone of our approach to public service, emphasizing a commitment to service excellence.

Subsequently, the Senior Management Service (SMS) was established, along with a Handbook outlining a competency framework for senior managers in the Public Service.

This framework, introduced in 2002, identified ten core managerial competencies, with 'honesty and integrity' as a central pillar.

The launch of the Expanded Public Works Programme in 2003 has been a key driver of job creation within the public sector, providing income relief and creating opportunities for the unemployed and unskilled through socially beneficial community revitalization initiatives.

To further enhance the capabilities of our public servants, PALAMA, now known as the National School of Government was established.

This institution has played a crucial role in upskilling officials who previously lacked access to higher education. Collaborations with FSTDI has ensured that the programmes offered are accredited and contribute significantly to the professional development of our officials.

Through this initiative, over one hundred (100) public servants in the employment of the Free State Provincial Government graduated with certificates and National Diplomas in Public Administration, during the 2022/23 financial year.

Despite these advancements, challenges remain. The National Planning Commission has identified issues such as understaffing, skills shortages, lack of accountability, and unclear roles and responsibilities that need addressing.

The introduction of the Public Administration Management Bill has facilitated the establishment of a unified public service, aimed at professionalizing and improving our public sector.

All of us whether present here or participating virtually, share the responsibility of ensuring that our public service operates effectively.

For many of our communities, public service represents their only hope. We dare not fail them.

My recent visits to various public service sites, particularly health facilities, have revealed that some public servants still fall short in their duties.

Instances of tardiness, social visits during working hours, lack of empathy and inadequate client assistance undermine the quality of our services.

Reports of ill-treatment, lack of compassion and further victimization of victims of Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF) at our healthcare facilities and police stations remain a serious concern.

It is for the fear of further trauma that victims of (GBVF) end-up not reporting violations they have suffered. This, then results in perpetrators of these senseless and barbaric acts walking free, until they spot their next victim.

Correcting these issues is not solely the responsibility of political leaders; it is a collective duty. We must hold ourselves and our colleagues accountable for maintaining high standards of conduct and service.

We have also recognized the commendable work and positive attitude of the majority of our public servants. These are the individuals we must continuously support and encourage.

To honour their dedication, I am pleased to introduce the Premier's Service Excellence Awards. These awards will recognize and celebrate public servants who have demonstrated exceptional commitment to serving our people.

It is crucial that we enhance our communication with communities, especially regarding government programs designed to make a meaningful impact on their lives.

For example, I recently highlighted a social development grant-in-aid program that many in the province were unaware of, resulting in lower utilization of the grant. Improved communication will help ensure that such programs reach those who need them.

In addition to celebrating Public Service Month, we will also observe Heritage Day, Tourism Month, and Police Commemoration Day, to honour our fallen heroes and heroines.

This year, the National Government has chosen Ficksburg as the venue for Heritage Day, and I encourage everyone to participate in this significant event. Heritage Day is a reminder of our roots and history, enriching our collective identity.

The 7th administration must be a period of renewal. It should inspire hope among the people of the Free State through outstanding service. We must adopt a culture of due diligence to ensure best practices are consistently applied and that decisions do not exacerbate any crises.

Our goal should be to set a new standard of excellence in governance and embody the principles of a dedicated new public service cadre.

Programme Director, I extend my sincere gratitude to my colleagues in the Executive and to the senior managers across departments. Let us remember that our foremost duty is to serve the people with integrity and excellence.

Therefore, let us commit to upholding the principles of excellence and integrity in our public service. Together, we can build a government that truly works for the people.

We must always remember that our appointment is with the people, therefore our efforts and actions must be in such a way on daily basis contribute towards development of our communities.

I Thank you.