

120425

PC SERVICE

Response by the Minister for Public Service and Administration to the Draft Report of the Portfolio Committee for Public Service and Administration on the Strategic Plan and Budget Vote 12: Department of Public Service and Administration

25 April 2012

Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee for Public Service and Administration,

Honourable Members, and

Senior Departmental Officials

Let me, before responding to the specific recommendations made in the Report, reiterate our broad strategic perspective of transforming the public service into an effective, efficient, responsive, accountable and development oriented public service. This will provide the context within which we will address the matters that the Committee has raised.

We have adopted, as the Ministry for Public Service and Administration, **Five Strategic Focus Areas**, that are drawn from the Delivery Agreement for Outcome 12 and the plans of all the portfolio institutions reporting to the Ministry. These Focus Areas are:

- Strengthening Access to Service Delivery to our People
- Improving Internal Efficiency of the Public Service
- Implementation of SITA Turn-around Strategy
- Accelerated Training and Development of a Public Service Cadre and the Repositioning of PALAMA into a School of Government, and
- Corruption Tackled Effectively in the Public Service

We have adopted these Five Strategic Focus Areas so that we could realize an effective, efficient and development oriented public service whose success would be measured by the following attributes:

- Services are rendered with speed
- Services are easily accessible to citizens
- Services are provided at lower cost
- Public servants are appropriately skilled to render services
- Competitive conditions of services for public servants and the achievement of labour peace
- Corruption is minimised; and
- Positive impact on the lives of people and the economy

In addition to the Five Strategic Focus Areas are the following four Campaign programmes:

- Instilling Ethos of Public Service:** This campaign is about reinvigorating Batho Pele by instilling a new culture of responsiveness, dedication and patriotic commitment in the minds of public servants as part of a strategy of building a public service cadre.
- Anti-Corruption Campaign:** The Campaign will profile Government's efforts in dealing with corruption and improve communication on steps taken to deal with the scourge.
- Efficient Service Delivery and Modernization of the Public Service:** This Campaign will focus on ensuring improvement on basic service delivery issues that are at the centre of public concern. This will include modernization of the public service through introduction or replication of innovative products and processes; and lastly
- Public Participation:** This Campaign seeks to mobilise civil society to participate in government

Chairperson, let me now turn to recommendations made by the Committee.

1. Accelerating Persal Clean-up and the implementation of the Integrated Financial Management System

We cannot agree more that there is need to fast-track the cleaning up of Persal and the implementation of the IFMS. The instruments to do the work are already in place, in particular the Strategy and Guide on the cleaning up of Persal as well as implementation support that is being provided to departments. The implementation of the IFMS will also go beyond the pilot sites to other departments including expansion of the modules that are being offered. We will prioritise the resuscitation of the oversight structure between the DPSA, SITA and National Treasury so that there is strategic direction in the implementation of the project.

2. Putting in place proper measures to achieve the 2% target for people with disability within the public service

Although the DPSA is relatively compliant on the 2% disability target with a score of 1.97%, there is need to devise a clear implementation plan on how the public service as a whole will move towards realizing the target of 2% representation of people with disabilities within the public service, in particular at the Senior Management Service level. We will in the coming two months work in collaboration with the Department of Women, Children and People with Disability, to devise a workable plan that will help us achieve the set target.

3. Fostering the independence of the Public Service Commission

The Public Service Commission derives its mandate from the Constitution to play an oversight role on the performance of the public service. Its independence is clearly enshrined in the Constitution. As the Ministry, we work to strengthen the powers of the Public Service Commission as an independent institution. Currently we only have budget transferring relationship and there has been no interference on our part with the work of the Commission. The allocation of their budget through our Vote is a Treasury directive. The Committee may wish to raise the concern with National Treasury.

4. Limited budget of the Public Service Commission

We cannot agree more, Chairperson, that there is need for the Public Service Commission to be adequately funded so that it could discharge its Constitutional functions. However, as you know, budgetary allocation is a Treasury function, and we would gladly welcome the Committee's intervention in raising this matter with National Treasury.

5. Expediting connectivity of Thusong Services Centres

We also agree that we need to speed up the connectivity of Thusong Services Centres. To date the DPSA together with SITA have connected 96 of the 123 Thusong Services Centres. As part of bringing government services closer to the people, we will be focusing on connectivity to schools to provide a platform for educators to be able to deliver lessons to other learners especially where there is shortage of qualified teachers. We are exploring bringing Thusong Service Centres to train stations and discussions are going on with PRASA in this regard. A management Framework for Thusong Services Centres and ICT connectivity will also be formulated.

6. Collaborative approach to skills planning in the public service

Chairperson, a number of recent service delivery failures has been attributed to amongst others the lack of adequately skilled public servants. Consequently, we have embarked on a capacity building programme that locates skills planning and development within the broader context of human development strategy which links with the other institutional, operational and performance interventions we have embarked upon. To date there is significant progress on training initiatives. We have through PALAMA trained amongst others, a total of 1192 unemployed youth graduates on Breaking Barriers to Entry into the Public Service in partnership with the National Youth Development Agency, and a total of 18 846 new public servants have gone through PALAMA induction programme. Our plan is to put PALAMA at the centre of training in the public service and transform it into a school of Government. We will strengthen collaboration between PALAMA, PSETA especially on the issue of Workplace Skills Plan that should inform PALAMA's planning, the DPSA and the Department of Higher Education. Lastly, we intend to revive the inter-departmental Task Team that was charged with facilitating the collaborative effort of driving the skills agenda in the public service.

I THANK YOU