

NPC STATEMENT ON THE FRAMEWORK TOWARDS PROFESSIONALISATION OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE

The National Planning Commission (NPC) welcomes Cabinet's approval of the *National Implementation Framework Towards the Professionalisation of the Public Sector*. The Framework is an important milestone towards realising the National Development Plan's (NDP) goals for a capable and developmental state. The NDP is the blueprint for socioeconomic transformation of the country.

The focus should now be on implementation. While some aspects of the framework will need legislative amendments, ministerial directives, and regulations, others can be implemented immediately. The NPC calls for a sense of urgency in the implementation of the Framework on the basis that a capable, ethical, and developmental state is a priority as it provides the enabling conditions for the achievement of all other priorities and goals, set out in the NDP.

The NPC further welcomes the initiative to amend the existing legislative framework so that the NDP recommendations related to building the capacity of the state are written into law, specifically through amendments to the Public Service Act (103 of 1994), the Public Administration Management Act (11 of 2014) and Public Service Commission Act (46 of 1997). The NPC urges the finalisation of these as they are at the core of institutionalising a professional state across all spheres. The amendments to the Municipal Systems Act (32 of 2000), which the President recently signed into law, sets the trend by, among others, barring municipal officials from holding party political office.

The amendments to the Public Service Act are of particular importance as they aim to devolve administrative powers to Heads of Departments thereby aligning them to their financial responsibility as prescribed in the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) (1 of 1999). This will free Ministers to focus on strategic policy issues. The Act, as it currently stands, assigns final accountability and authority on human resources and organisational establishment to Ministers while the PFMA assigns the powers to manage public resources to Heads of Departments. MISTRA's 2013 study on the evolution of the post-apartheid state indicates that this inconsistency exacerbated conflicts between the political and administrative heads of departments across government, including at state-owned enterprises and may

be the cause of the high turnover of the Heads of Departments. Expediting these amendments will contribute to the implementation of the NDP's recommendation to stabilise the political-administrative interface.

The NPC also welcomes the decision to designate the Director-General in the Presidency as the Head of Public Administration, nationally, and Directors-General in the offices of the Premiers, provincially, and the extension of tenures to ten years, subject to performance, as a step in the right direction towards establishing stability.

The proposed amendments to the Public Administration Management and the Public Service Commission Acts are equally important measures for the implementation of the Framework and the proposals in the NDP. The amendments aim to create a single public service and repurpose the Public Service Commission as the custodian of norms and standards for the administration of the state including of local government and of national and provincial public entities covered by the Public Finance Management Act.

Ultimately, the Framework institutionalises meritocracy in the state's human resources practices by giving effect to the NDP's recommendations about the type of public sector required to drive a developmental state agenda in a democratic system of government. Countries which have institutionalised professionalism in their public service system, especially those which are part of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) such as Australia and Estonia, and in Asia such as China and Singapore, are making significant progress in their development commitments. The NPC urges South Africa to follow suit.

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