



Dear Fellow South African,

A few weeks ago we celebrated the start of a new year and a new decade. This gave us an opportunity to reflect on our plans for the year ahead but also to think deeply about the challenges that confront us. Of these challenges, and perhaps the most pressing, is the need to build a capable state. This is a task that does not capture the imagination of most people, yet it is essential to everything we want to achieve.

Walking through the streets of Kimberley and other towns in the Northern Cape a fortnight ago drove home the point that if we are to better the lives of South Africans, especially the poor, we need to significantly improve the capacity of the government that is meant to as improve their lives.

It was disheartening to see that, despite progress in many areas, there were several glaring instances of service delivery failures. Many of the places we visited struggle to provide social infrastructure and services simply because they have such a small revenue base. But, in some cases, elected officials and public servants have neglected their responsibilities. A common feature in most of these towns, which is evident throughout all spheres of government, is that the state often lacks the necessary capacity to adequately meet people's needs.

As public representatives and civil servants we derive our legitimacy from our ability to act professionally as we serve the public and manage state resources to the benefit of the public. We also need to ensure that we embody the Batho Pele principles. Putting people first. It is through such an approach that we can have a state that places people and their needs at the centre.

Yet, the achievement of such a state is undermined by weak implementation. Poor coordination and alignment between departments and lack of effective oversight has meant that policies and programmes have not had the necessary impact on people's lives.

That is why this administration has prioritised the task of building a capable state.

Much of this work happens behind the scenes, ensuring that policies are aligned, processes are streamlined, technology is effectively deployed, budgets are adhered to and programmes are properly monitored and evaluated.

A capable state starts with the people who work in it. Officials and managers must possess the right financial and technical skills and other expertise. We are committed to end the practice of poorly qualified individuals being parachuted into positions of authority through political patronage. There should be consequences for all those in the public service who do not do their work.

Through the ongoing and focused training of civil servants, the National School of Government will be playing a greater role in providing guidance for career development.

A capable state also means that state owned enterprises need to fulfil their mandates effectively and add value to the economy. State companies that cannot deliver services – such as Eskom during load-shedding – or that require continual bailouts – such as SAA – diminish the capacity of the state. That is why a major focus of our work this year is to restore our SOEs to health. We will do this by appointing experienced and qualified boards and managers. We will be clarifying their mandates, and give them scope to execute those mandates.

One of the most important innovations of this administration is the introduction of the district-based delivery model. This way of working is a departure from the top-down approach to the provision of services and will ensure that no district in our country is left behind. It is a break from the 'silo' approach, where different parts of government operate separately from each other.

This aims to produce a single, integrated district plan in line with the vision of: 'One District, One Plan, One Budget, One Approach'. It will give us a clearer line of sight

of what needs to be done, where, how and with what resources. By pooling resources, by focusing on projects that directly respond to community needs, and by setting delivery targets on a district-by-district basis, we will be able to better meet our people's needs.

Through the proper execution of the district development model, we will be able to know which police station needs vehicles, which rural clinic has run out of medicine, which businesses are struggling to obtain water use licenses, and respond in a targeted manner. District-based development is the basis for growing and sustaining a competitive economy.

Although we face great challenges, we do not have a dysfunctional state.

None of this will happen overnight. Much of the work will not be immediately apparent. But as we make progress, people will notice that government does things faster. Already, for example, we have drastically reduced the time it takes to get a passport or receive a water licence. As we continue to improve, people will notice less interruption of services, more roads are being built, infrastructure is better maintained, more businesses are opening up and more jobs are being created. Those who follow such things, will notice that government audit outcomes are improving, money is being better used and properly accounted for.

For this work to be successful, citizens need to get involved. We must all participate in school governing bodies, ward committees and community policing forums. It is on citizens that government will rely to advise us on the standards of public services in communities. It is on you that we depend to hold those who are failing you to account.

Where government needs help, we should be prepared to draw on the skills, expertise and resources of the private sector and civil society. If we all work together to build a more capable and developmental state, we will be that much closer to realising the South Africa that we all want.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Cyril Ramaphosa". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line under the name.