



Monday, 06 September 2021

Dear Fellow South African,

Over the course of time, public servants in our country have come to be in the spotlight for the wrong reasons.

We have become too used to stories of civil servants involved in maladministration, embezzlement, corruption and other forms of conduct that betray the values of the public service.

While much is made of those that are errant and unprincipled, the vast majority of public servants understand the weight of responsibility their positions entail, and discharge their duties faithfully.

We have set ourselves the challenge of building a capable, ethical state. We remain firmly on course towards professionalising the public service and transforming it into a group of men and women who are able and committed to serving our people and their interests.

During this Public Service Month, we pay tribute to the many public servants who continue to make a positive difference in our country every day, and whose actions and performance embodies the principle of Batho Pele, of 'putting people first'.

Our fight against the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that we do have capable and committed public servants who diligently serve the people of South Africa.

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, civil servants have displayed courage and resilience in discharging their duties, often under the most difficult of circumstances. Despite the disruptions caused by the pandemic, they have kept the wheels of our country turning and have ensured that service delivery continued.

Frontline health personnel have made sure that the ill are attended to. Members of the SAPS have continued to serve and protect our communities. Teachers have continued to care for and educate our learners. Officials in government offices have ensured that our people continue to receive services.

We have learned many lessons from the pandemic. COVID-19 has exposed the chasms between the planning and execution of public service delivery; and the reality of government departments still working in silos when they should be working together in a seamless, development-orientated manner. At the same time, COVID-19 has shown us what is possible if we work in a coordinated manner and manage resources effectively and efficiently.

At the launch of last year's Public Service Month, I made specific reference to the need for a new integrated model for service delivery that is responsive, adaptive and brings development to where it is needed most.

This adaptive service delivery model, or District Development Model, is exactly what the Batho Pele White Paper compels us to do: establish a citizen centred Public Service that is seamless, adaptive and responsive.

We call on public servants to be part of this process by identifying ways in which we can realise a public service focused on meeting the needs and advancing the interests of citizens.

Our commitment to building a state that is ethical, capable and above all developmental necessitates that civil servants see themselves not merely as state functionaries but as development workers.

Though we must continue in earnest with our task of rooting out those whose conduct makes them ill-suited for public service, we must at the same time acknowledge the vast majority are exemplary civil servants. They have kept us going.

One speaks here of the grandmother who is assisted when she receives her grant every month; the critically-ill patient in the public hospital who is nursed back to health by caring staff; the social worker who helps to keep families together; the vulnerable woman who is treated with dignity by a member of the South African Police Service; and the businessperson who receives their documentation at the Home Affairs office on time to travel to expand their business.

The professionalism of these hardworking, ethical and principled public servants keeps our country afloat, and their good work brings hope to our people.

At a time when shortcomings in the public service are amplified and bad news falls like an avalanche, we acknowledge our public servants of South Africa and their service.

It may be said that they are just doing what they are paid to do. But public service is a calling – one to which they have ably responded in order that the rights of all people in this country are fulfilled.

We are grateful to all our public servants and for all that they do.

With best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Cyril Ramaphosa". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.