CONCEPT PAPER
DEVELOPMENTAL STATE CONFERENCE

Theme:
BUILDING A CAPABLE, CAREER AND PROFESSIONAL PUBLIC SERVICE TO UNDERPIN
A DEVELOPMENTAL STATE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Host Organisation: Public Service Commission, South Africa

Dates: 11-13 November 2014

Venue: St George Hotel and Conference Centre (Centurion, South Africa)
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1. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

In 2013, the South African government adopted its first National Development Plan. The plan demonstrates government’s commitment to build a Developmental State (DS), central to which is a capable, effective and efficient Public Service. As noted in the National Development Plan (NDP), which is South Africa’s strategic national development framework for 2013-2030, “we need to move towards a state that is more capable, more professional and more responsive to the needs of its citizens”. It is against this backdrop that the Public Service Commission (PSC) is hosting a three-day high level conference on Developmental State on November 11 – 13, 2014 in Pretoria, South Africa. The theme for the conference is “Building a Public Service to Underpin a Developmental State in South Africa”.

A key feature of a developmental state is strong institutions, especially an efficient and effective bureaucracy. Its institutions (organisational structures and rules) enable a developmental state to act authoritatively and in a binding fashion to achieve its goals and objectives. One of the main institutional attributes of a DS is its ‘autonomy’. Indicators of autonomy include meritocratic recruitment, career paths for public servants, insulation of bureaucratic elites from direct political pressure (which also speaks to the administrative political interface), and the existence of a ‘super-ministry/coordinating ministry’ managed by professional and competent public servants.

A professional, prestige-laden and competent public service is one of the main determinants of the capacity of a DS, and it is its key driver of success. These institutional characteristics underline the technical and organisational capacities of developmental states, such as those in Asia and they account for their superior development performance that has been celebrated across the globe. That East Asian Developmental States, including Japan, South Korea and Singapore, have become developed economies is largely due to the quality of these states’ institutions in general and their Public Services in particular. Similarly, that Brazil, China and Malaysia are among the fastest developing economies and have removed millions of people from poverty within a generation is primarily due to their capable public services. The fact that China is the factory of the world and will soon become its largest economy is primarily because of the quality of the Chinese Public Service. The above explains these states technical and organisational capacities. Coupled with ideological capacity, that is, political leaders that are driven by a developmentalist nationalist ideology, public service in developmental states have been key architects of social and economic transformation. In contrast, the absence of these
in institutional attributes account for the inability of most developing countries to promote the structural transformation of their economies and to provide public goods like health, education and security to citizens. High levels of unemployment in these countries are positively correlated with the poor quality of their public services.

Cognizant of the above, as the constitutional body entrusted with responsibilities to investigate, monitor, evaluate, propose measures, give directives, report and advise on the organisation and administration, the personnel practices, and the effective and efficient performance of the public service, coupled with the significant role the NDP envisioned for it, the PSC is hosting this important conference with the ultimate aim of contributing to transforming the South African Public Service into a more capable, efficient, effective and professional state machinery that will contribute to addressing the developmental challenges facing South Africa. The ability of government in particular and the state in general to co-produce public goods to citizens will be largely dependent on a professional, career-based and prestige-laden Public Service and administration.

The PSC is producing a discussion document: **Strategic framework on the Public Service to underpin a Developmental State in South Africa.** This Strategic Framework is informed by almost two years of research that reviewed the nature, characteristics and leadership of the Public Service. It draws on comparative experiences of developmental states, some of which the PSC visited in the course of the research.

The Strategic Framework document will constitute a major part of the discussion at the conference to enable participants to make inputs. Once the Strategic Framework is finalized, the PSC will be in better position to provide evidence-based advice to government and parliament on the nature, characteristics and leadership of the public service that should constitute the basis of our developmental state. The conference will be a veritable place for reflection and sharing of ideas by political leaders (members of the executive and parliament), public servants and scholars.
2. **OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of the conference are as follows, to:

- Develop a shared understanding on what a capable, career and professional Public Service and its leadership attributes would entail in South Africa.
- Present and solicit inputs on the PSC’s **Strategic Framework** discussion document on Public Service and its leadership underpinnings for South Africa’s developmental state.
- Explore mechanisms to enhance the capacity of the public service to deliver on its constitutional mandate and the National Development Plan (NDP).

3. **EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

- A shared common vision on the nature and characteristics of a developmental Public Service.
- A finalised Strategic Framework on the public service underpinnings and its leadership fundamentals for a DS in South Africa.
- Provision of strategic advice by the PSC to the executive and legislative arms at provincial and national levels on the required developmental public service for South Africa.

Ultimately, the strategic framework document will be tabled by the PSC to parliament and cabinet. It will also be a basis for the Commission to engage with stakeholders across the spheres of government.

4. **PARTICIPANTS**

This high level conference will bring together about 250 participants. The conference will therefore draw participation from the following categories:

4.1 **The Executive**

The President/Deputy President of the Republic (who will declare it opened), Ministers (including Minister for Public Service and Administration, Minister in the Presidency, Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Minister of Higher Education and Training and Minister of Finance). These ministers have direct role in transforming...
the Public Service. Premiers, as the executive political leaders of provinces, will also attend.

4.2 **Parliament**

Given that the outcome of the conference might require legislative changes, the leadership of the national parliament (Speaker of National Assembly, Chairperson of NCOP, Chairperson and few members of both the Portfolio Committee of Public Service and Administration, and its counterpart in the NCOP) will be invited as participants to the conference.

4.3 **Senior government officials**

These will include Director-Generals of national and provincial departments, selected Heads of provincial departments, and the leadership of the School of Government. Some former Director-Generals of National and provincial Departments, especially those that served for a long period to enable them share their invaluable experience and wealth of knowledge at the conference. These will be useful inputs into the strategic framework document.

4.4 **Institutions supporting democracy**

Leadership of all the institutions supporting democracy will be invited.

4.5 **Development finance institutions**

Representatives of institutions such as the Development Bank of Southern Africa will also be invited to the conference.

4.6 **Research Institution**

The conference will also draw participants from research institutions such as the Human Sciences Research Council and Council for Science and Industrial Research.

4.7 **Political parties**

Invitation will be extended to political parties that are represented in parliament.
4.8 Local and international academics
Furthermore, participants at the conference will include local and international academics. Specifically, academics from Schools of Governance will be invited; in addition to selected Vice Chancellors as leaders of Higher Education Institutions.

4.9 Civil Society
Representatives of civil society, organised labour and business will be invited.

4.10 Local government
The leadership of the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) and mayors of the major metropolitan councils will also be invited. This is with the hope that the strategic framework would influence them to develop a similar framework for municipalities.

4.11 International participants
These will include both world leading scholars on Developmental State and the Public Service in a Developmental State as well as senior government officials/public servants from Developmental States such as Brazil, China, Ghana, India, Malaysia, Botswana, Nigeria, Mauritius, Kenya, South Korea and Singapore, who will be invited to share their experiences.

5. STRUCTURE OF THE CONFERENCE AND THEMATIC AREAS

The conference will be highly interactive allowing exchange of experiences and views among participants. Spread over 3 consecutive days, it will consist of plenary and parallel sessions.

5.1 Plenary Session
i. Draft discussion document on a Strategic Framework on the nature, characteristics and leadership for South Africa’s Public Service to underpin a Developmental State. The above will set the context for the PSC to present the discussion document at a plenary session.

ii. Conceptual issues and experiences: A conceptual paper by international scholars will be presented in plenary.
iii. **Comparative experiences of Public Services that underpinned Developmental States:** These will include some of the African countries, Brazil, China, India, Malaysia, South Korea and Singapore, and they will enable participants to draw the relevant experiences to inform a Strategic Framework (discussion document) on the nature, characteristics and leadership of a Public Service that should underpin a developmental state in South Africa.

This is with the aim of drawing lessons on building a capable, professional and career public service and its leadership attributes would entail in South Africa. In the immediate post-independent period, a number of African countries had relatively capable Public Services and administrations. Over time, this has been eroded, resulting in the developmental deficits on the African continent. It is therefore important that we learn from such experiences in order to avoid similar mistakes.

### 5.2 Parallel Sessions

Following the above-mentioned presentations, the conference will break into parallel sessions to enable participants to have detailed discussions and make inputs to the Strategic Framework discussion document. This will also provide participants to review and reflect on the post-1994 South African Public Service.

### 6. MANAGEMENT OF THE CONFERENCE

For the effective management of the conference, the PSC has established two committees, namely a reference committee and an organising committee. The former will be responsible for providing strategic direction, including outreach to the political leadership and administrative leadership of the Public Service, as well as deciding on speakers and participants. The latter, will be responsible for the logistical arrangements of the conference.

The committees will be composed as follows:

(i) **Reference Committee**

Commissioner Nzimande (Convenor): 082 492 4102

- Commissioner RK Sizani: 082 904 9907
- Prof. Richard Levin
- Dr. Omano Edigheji
- Mr Kobus van der Merwe
- Ms Kholofelo Sedibe
- Ms Irene Mathenjwa
- Ms Bontle Lerumo
- Humphrey Ramafoko

(ii) Organising Committee
Prof. Richard Levin (Convenor)

All queries in relation to this proposal and its particular focal areas can be directed to the following responsible persons:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Contact Person</th>
<th>Phone Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content coordinator</td>
<td>Dr. Omano Edigheji</td>
<td>082 450 6853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference Coordinator</td>
<td>Ms Irene Mathenjwa</td>
<td>012 352 1002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>082 880 1982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference Administration</td>
<td>Mr Sifiso Ngema and Ms Malebo Mahlako</td>
<td>012 352 1210/ 082829 2830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference Report</td>
<td>Ms Kholofelo Sedibe</td>
<td>012 352 1206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>071 856 3416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guest speakers, facilitators and key note coordinators</td>
<td>Ms Nobi Dube and Ms Mpume Madonda</td>
<td>012 352 1028/ 082 330 0871 and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>012 352 1164/ 081 459 6940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venue and accommodation</td>
<td>Ms Dorcas Lesenyeho</td>
<td>012 352 1165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>084 260 4531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media and Communication</td>
<td>Mr Humphrey Ramafoko</td>
<td>012 352 1197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>082 782 1730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Mr Mpho Basitere</td>
<td>012 352 1036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>071 382 2352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference Evaluation</td>
<td>Mr Kobus van der Merwe</td>
<td>012 352 1018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>082 787 3646</td>
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