

Draft Speech: Official Launch of the 2018 Public Sector Innovation Awards Programme

Dr Chana Pilane-Majake, Deputy Minister for the Public Service and Administration

The Premier of the Eastern Cape
MECs present here today
HoDs
The Acting Executive Director of the CPSI
Senior Managers in the public sector
Representatives from other provinces
Innovators
Public servants and
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my pleasure to be in the Eastern Cape during the Nelson Mandela Centenary year as the country continues to honour the memory of uTata Nelson Mandela our icon.

In this year's State of the Nation Address, President Ramaphosa pronounced 2018 as a watershed year – a defining moment in our history, a year of hope and renewal where measures will be introduced to set the country on a new path of growth, employment and transformation.

“Our task as South Africans,” he declared, is to seize this moment of hope and renewal and to work together to ensure that it makes a meaningful difference in the lives of our people.”

Our country is admittedly still burdened with many socio-economic challenges that threaten to take away the gains we have made over the years from our hard work. Importantly, it takes our eyes off the future we have to create. In the face of all of this, President Ramaphosa made a rallying call for social partners in South Africa to collaborate in building a social compact upon which drivers of economic recovery can be created and sustained.

He recommended the immediate establishment of effective partnerships which will include as key role-players, the private sector, SMMEs, civil society and the youth in particular for their visionary nature and fervent attitude. As a way of demonstrating his commitment and high regard for the youth in terms of socio-economic revival, he set up the YES (Youth Employment Services) initiative.

The YES initiative is one of the first social compacts amongst government, business and labour dedicated to give one million youth one million opportunities to succeed, while securing South Africa's economic prosperity. This initiative boasts a collaboration that boldly responds to our country's unemployment crisis.

The YES initiative is but a tip of the iceberg given the amount of reconstructive work required in terms of our social compact. We still have, looming large in our national

horizon, the worrying reality of the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality.

This roadmap guides South Africa away from the triple challenges by setting three priorities:

- Raising employment through faster economic growth,
- improving the quality of education, skills development and innovation, and
- building the capability of the state to play a developmental, transformative role.

The NDP demands of the public sector major adjustments both in policy and operations to achieve performance levels to further accelerate delivery on our developmental agenda. These include strengthening of inter-governmental relations for integrated, collaborative and seamless service delivery at all levels but importantly it demands an enabling environment where **“Innovation should start to become pervasive across state, business and social sectors”**, where **“innovation focus on improved public services** and on goods and services aimed at low-income sectors”.

As we seize the moment of hope and renewal, we have to consider the significance for and the new role the Public Service and Administration portfolio should play. The YES generation requires a public service with less Red Tape, a public service that is agile, responsive and one where innovation is prized. One institution in the Ministry of Public Service and Administration portfolio is already positioned for this role as a catalyst for collaborative innovation. The Centre for Public Service Innovation, although a very small entity, is already, through various projects and programmes, creating and supporting a culture in which innovation is encouraged, rewarded and mainstreamed in the public sector.

Working with the CPSI and guided by the NDP, government institutions need to fully leverage innovation as one of the main building-blocks for a capable state. Most departments struggle with recurring challenges where existing solutions and resources are not adequate. Innovation, creativity and openness to change can however become a catalyst for radical transformation. Although our primary role is to help government institutions embracing innovation, we have to leverage the creativity of all South Africans who are saying *Thuma Mina*.

I am excited to see more and more public servants at the coal face who are increasingly challenging outdated ways of doing things that are no longer meeting the needs of our connected, sophisticated and informed citizens. They are pushing boundaries to move beyond ordinariness to find new, extra-ordinary ways of delivering services. I see more and more coders and developers being employed by government, many of them young people who are enterprising and responding to the 4th Industrial Revolution by developing innovative solutions in-house. These innovations are literally saving their departments millions of Rands whilst redefining service standards.

This is of critical importance given the economic conditions prevailing at the moment. But more than that, these innovations demonstrate the hunger of a growing cohort of officials to be part of the change we want to see. It tells a story of a public sector that is capable of thinking progressively and is solution-driven. It is my

passionate wishes to employ more and more of young tech savvy-public servants to further enhance service delivery. Youth are by nature inquisitive, creative and innovative. Their innate curiosity would not detain them to rely on solutions from the past to deal with the legacies of the past but to challenge the status quo in pursuit for new opportunities and solutions to radically enhance access to services. What is more, they are also more willing to share skills and insights to spearhead the radical transformation of our economy and society into the future we all desire.

Today, amongst us we have such Public Sector Innovation Trailblazers, **Mr Cosmos Dube and Mr Xolani Phakathi**, and I am proud to be part of an era where public servants are taking the lead to solve a myriad of service delivery challenges.

Our government can make significant strides in dealing with poverty, unemployment and other inequality in our society if we all play our part. We all need to work together and rally around the call to transform the public sector into an innovative and creative machinery. We must continue to create and nurture an innovation friendly environment, not only within the public sector but tapping into the creative commons of our communities. This will ensure that we continue to build a solution-focused, effective and efficient Public Sector through innovation.

Today marks the official Launch of the **Call for Entries to the 2018 Public Sector Innovation Awards Programme** – this signals the first day of the receiving entries from all corners of South Africa so that we can learn from each other and improve service delivery. I further urge all of you not just learn but to replicate the innovative solutions presented here today and many others that the CPSI has unearthed over the years.

I urge all public servants to double their efforts and emulate other public servants by becoming more innovative.

I now declare the Call for Entries for the 2018 Public Sector Innovation Awards Programme officially opened. Submit as many entries as you possibly can!

I thank you