

## **Address of The President of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, at the launch of the Public Administration Leadership and Management Academy**

Trevenna Campus, Tshwane, 1 August 2008

Ministers and Deputy Ministers,  
Chairs of our Portfolio and Select Committees of Public Service and Administration,  
Members of Parliament and the National Council of Provinces,  
MECs and Members of the Provincial Legislatures,  
The Leadership of the Public Service from national, provincial and local government,  
CEO of SALGA,  
Officials from PALAMA,  
Representatives from donor organisations and development partners,  
Representatives from the public enterprises, private sector and civil society,  
Representatives from the media, academia and the research community,  
Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and gentlemen:

I am very pleased to be with you today as we participate in this important event.

Not only is this event historic in the sense of launching this critical skills Academy that must take government performance to a qualitatively higher trajectory, but equally, it is an historic event because the new buildings that house this prestigious academy are named after one of our most illustrious freedom fighters and an outstanding academic.

Chairperson,

Nearly ten years ago, in 1999, Minister Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi became Minister for the Public Service and Administration and led the establishment of the South African Management Development Institute (SAMDI), to take the place of the previous Civil Service Training College.

The need at that time was to make a decisive rupture from the approaches to management development that had been associated with apartheid public administration.

Indeed, the aim of this rupture was to reshape government's training institutions and its relationships, and adopt or develop new conceptions of public management, in order to take up the development challenges of a non-racial, non-sexist democratic society.

I need hardly stress the importance of such developments. In a democracy, one of the prime duties of government is to give realisation to the rights of its citizens, not only to ensure their freedoms through the carefully structured relations among the different institutions, but also, to advance their rights and opportunities through access to services.

In this regard, government's prime instrument for service delivery is the public service, which seeks to achieve its targets through its own programmes and in collaboration with civil society and business.

Our government looks to this management development and training institute to train the people to fulfil this mandate. For the first ten years of our new democracy, this task fell to SAMDI, together with its evolving counterparts at provincial and local level.

Now, nearly a decade later, we are marking the next decisive transition in public management development. Today I have the happy task officially to launch PALAMA, which stands for the Public Administration Leadership and Management Academy.

PALAMA is an interesting addition to the extensive dictionary of South African acronyms. As I gather you have heard, it is actually a SeSotho word, with a highly relevant meaning. It means "ascend" or "get on board".

It is indeed an invitation to a quarter of a million public service managers, across all three spheres of governments, to lift their performance and enhance the Batho Pele ethos of service delivery, by taking advantage of the opportunities for management development that PALAMA makes available directly and through its collaborators.

Happily, this time around, transition is not a rupture - indeed, PALAMA is building on the contributions and successes of SAMDI, and its counterparts at the provincial and local government level.

But the transition is dramatic nonetheless, in three respects, as you have heard - in the total restructuring of this organisation; in the improved quality, relevance and accessibility of the training to be offered; and above all, in the hugely expanded scale of the intended public management development.

Today's event marks the culmination of a process that began in one of our government-wide Makgotla, in mid-2005.

It is pleasing to see this one coming to fruition so quickly. SAMDI was challenged to reposition itself meaningfully, and work at the necessary scale, as the entity responsible for capacity-building for government as a whole.

Following investigations by her Committee during 2006, Minister Fraser-Moleketi brought some recommendations to Cabinet, which, in turn, formulated a broad approach, which was endorsed by the Provincial Premiers in mid-2007.

Now, just a year later, we have gathered to mark the next stage of the implementation of the agreed strategy in a new organisation, and new premises, which we are able to launch simultaneously.

But even as we celebrate, we must contemplate the challenges that the new organisation is intended to address with its new strategy. In this regard we must highlight certain aspects of the unfolding of our new democracy, and the corresponding advances in public administration.

Our aim is to identify the broad approach we require to respond to the next phase of enhancing the capacity of our developmental state. This has some far-reaching implications for the kind of management development and training that are required.

Let me first recall some of the important past developments in state policies within which the old SAMDI functioned, and then turn to some thinking about the future with which the new PALAMA will relate.

The Public Service Commission suggests that our democratic state has gone through three phases since 1994, these being:

- rationalisation and policy development;
- modernisation and implementation;
- and accelerated delivery.

From the outset, it is worth stressing that we have had to engage simultaneously on policy formation, elaboration of legislation and implementation.

In the first phase, we replaced the apartheid legal apparatus with policies, and the laws that, among others prescribe respect for the rights of the entire population of our country, as espoused in our

Constitution. At the same time we started immediately to respond to urgent demands for improved, non-racial service delivery.

In this first phase, key undertakings in the public service were to amalgamate previous homeland administrations and racially segregated departments and to start addressing the inherited and profound racial and gender biases and imbalances, particularly at the management level.

In the second phase, we began to reap the benefits of our early fiscal discipline. We sought to foster the conditions for sustainable economic growth, create more opportunities for employment, while competing in global markets, and intensifying the fight against poverty through improving the social security net and expanding the social wage.

Ironically, in the third phase, we have had to grapple with the consequences of our successes in the first two phases. Several years of rapid economic growth exposed serious bottlenecks.

At the same time, it became evident that the growth had not led to as much employment creation as we had hoped for. Consequently, we introduced ASGISA, targeting the half-dozen identified main "binding constraints" on economic growth and development.

A particular constraint, the skills deficit in both the public and private sectors, was targeted with the JIPSA programme. Indeed, the sequence of developments I mentioned earlier, leading to the transformation of SAMDI into the Academy, is part of the public service's response to JIPSA.

Another key public service innovation was Cabinet's introduction of the Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation, the "M and E" system, whose aims were, among others, to help departments identify and diagnose shortfall that we needed to address.

We can be greatly proud of what we have taken on and how much we have achieved. But, as ever, the better we do, the more are the next challenges and problems thrown into sharp relief.

In sum, the benefits of our years of growth and development have had an uneven impact on different parts of our society, primarily as a consequence of our historically inherited dichotomy of two economies, the first and the second.

Admittedly, some government departments have attracted negative attention, as do some of our municipalities, especially the smaller, more isolated ones in rural areas.

These circumstances set an urgent agenda for continuing public service improvement, and the corresponding and required public service training and management development.

So, as my contribution to the launch of the Academy, let me offer some brief reflections for Minister Fraser-Moleketi to bring under consideration with the Academy and its many stakeholders in universities, the private sector and beyond.

Having noticed the three phases of transformation through which we have advanced, I would suggest that the next phase of public service transformation requires that we move beyond from our present efforts to collaborate in clusters towards more effective integration.

In the current international climate we expect our economy to be affected by some negative developments. However, it is essential that we sustain our attempts to create jobs, deliver better and efficient services to more of our people and continue our war on poverty and inequality.

Accordingly, government needs to marshal all its resources towards improved efficiency and impact through improved integration of planning, implementation and monitoring.

We have made some progress in this already, especially in clustering the functioning of departments at the levels of both Cabinet and DGs; in our cross-departmental annual Programmes of Action and in our regular and publicly disseminated monitoring of progress.

Despite this progress, the challenges of implementation and delivery to which I have referred clearly indicate that we have some way to go.

We have identified two forms of innovations in the organisation of government that we shall make to accelerate the process of integration. The one move, which Minister Fraser-Moleketi has touched upon, relates to the building of a single public service.

It has become increasingly urgent that we enhance the effectiveness with which the three spheres of government interact. Among other things, this will better equip government to participate in pro-active engagements with civil society and the private sector to advance pro-poor development.

The other innovation is improved planning capacity at the centre of government. This is presently being investigated by the Presidency, drawing on the experience of other developing countries.

I am indeed confident that PALAMA will contribute to the next phase of advancement of our increasingly integrated public administration, and to the goals of our developmental state.

Chairperson,

In addition to launching this Academy I have a further pleasant responsibility to carry out today.

You will admire PALAMA's exciting new building on your way to lunch. Like the adjacent campus of the DTI, it is part of government's development corridor that is reviving the city centre of Tshwane.

We hope that the Academy, with its new strategy, partnerships and operations will reflect the features of its new premises and operate as an important development institution that is - modern, efficient, flexible, accessible, and, I would add, energy-efficient!

However, an equally important aspect of the PALAMA habitat is the proud name it bears, the Professor Z.K. Matthews building. As the Minister first announced in her recent Parliamentary Vote speech, the Academy has in this way proudly sought to associate its new directions with the origins of indigenous public administration teaching in this country.

Mr Joe Matthews, Professor ZK Matthews' son, has kindly shared some reminiscences with us. We thank the Matthews family for allowing us to honour both his memory, and the Academy, by using the eminent name of Professor Z.K. Matthews, an Esteemed Member of the Order of Luthuli.

We trust that all who will graduate from PALAMA will be inspired by the example set by Z.K. Matthews - to value knowledge, public service and devotion to principle, and at all times remain fearless in their commitment to democracy and the vision of a non-racial, non-sexist and just society.

Z.K. Matthews originated the Freedom Charter. The significance of this historic document reaches far beyond its origins, with its core principles now enshrined in our Constitution.

This is an additional linkage from Professor Matthews to our event today - from the Charter he initiated to our Constitution and the obligations it implies for public servants.

Further, to remind ourselves daily of these linkages, the Academy has commissioned a bust of Professor Matthews, placed prominently in the foyer of the new building, which we will unveil today.

I am indeed very pleased it was crafted by the famous sculptress Noria Mabasa, an Esteemed Member of the Order of the Baobab, who has honoured us by attending today's ceremony.

Ladies and gentlemen, I hereby declare the new Academy officially launched. The new name has been proclaimed and gazetted as applicable from today onwards.

Would Minister Fraser-Moleketi, Mr Matthews, Mrs Mabasa, and the Director General of PALAMA, now please join me for the unveiling?

Thank you all for joining us to mark this memorable occasion.