I believe it is appropriate to start this conference with the words of the President from a letter to Ministers, Premiers and Deputy Ministers dated 8 March 2007.

In this letter he referred to a meeting with The Forum of SA Directors-general where the Presidency "directed our Directors-General to produce in a month’s time, a realistic, specific and time bound Programme of Action that will help our country to advance the project of creating a better life for all, at a faster pace than we have managed to achieve in our previous twelve-and-a-half years of freedom.

"In reality, we demanded of our Directors-General the audacity of (the French revolutionary) Danton staring with an identification of the most critical interventions we must make to ensure the realization of our already agreed objectives. I sincerely hope that in this regard, we, the Presidency, Ministers, Deputy Ministers and Premier, will position ourselves as supporters of the DGs, and not act as opponents of the determined efforts they will propose to help us break new ground relatively quickly and though concerted and coordinated action as revolutionaries.

"This means that all of us, including the DGs, should turn our backs on routine. It means that we must repudiate the comfort zones at have encouraged us, literally to rest on our laurels, arising from the fact that we have seen and can quantify the positive results of our work during the short years of our liberation.

He goes on to say that "... this means ... that we must, once again, reposition ourselves as innovators, who dare to challenge the proven truths that our successful practice, to date, has established as proven truths.

"To achieve this outcome, we must everyday remind ourselves that we serve in Government because we are revolutionaries. As revolutionaries, and therefore agents of
revolutionary change, we have no choice but to cultivate a frame of mind that celebrates and does not fear change – a frame of mind that repudiates timidity, that constantly criticises many of the routines that we have established, that questions the established order that is our much admired offspring, that has the daring and courage fully to open itself to the exiting ability to embark on the new and original – that has the courage to reconstruct itself according to the insurrectionary principle and practice of audacity, and audacity and once more, audacity!!

Our democracy and constitutional and rights based dispensation derives its character from a long-nurtured vision, a vision that found expression in the freedom charter and flows through to the Bill of Rights and our Constitution.

Not only is this vision articulated through the broader principles embraced in the Constitution, but finds direct expression in the Chapter 10, which deals with the public service.

As the letter clearly urged that we act audaciously let us reflect on the word “audacious”. It reflects the need to be innovative, pioneering, daring, creative, imaginative, visionary, extra-ordinary we exercise our management and leadership roles. One cannot lead anyone further than one is able or prepared to go oneself.

There is a need to shift the envelope from where we came in 1994, to where we are moving in 2010. It is with this audacious spirit that we must sound our leadership trumpet as we embrace the vision enshrined in our Constitution, directed and inspired by the leadership of the senior managers, following the mandate of the electorate to the public representatives appointed as our executing authorities -

- to make a reality of the requirements of our Constitution that our public administration must be governed by the democratic values and principles which include – in précis -

- A high standard of professional ethics
- The efficient, economic and effective use of resources
• Development orientation of the Public Service
• Transparency and accountability
• Good governance
• Ensuring non-sexism, non-racism, inclusively and representivity and
• Maximizing human potential.

It is these basics to which we must constantly return and by which we must constantly assess our progress.

As managerial leaders it is your responsibility to direct and lead the operational and programmatic aspects of implementing the political mandate. In our historical context and with the huge challenges we face, this is a demanding role and one which will take your best efforts and energy. We must always respect the distinction or we face the danger of undermining our democracy. I believe that Professor Agyriades will reflect more on this subject and speak of the responsibility that rests with this leadership to give policy advice, based on the factual context that enables political leadership to take policy decisions and identify the appropriate outcomes in order that stateless and programmes can be developed and implemented to produce these required outcomes.

Of importance is the political administrative interface. We must avoid what Jacques Bourgault (IIAS 2007, Vol 73(2) 257-274) referred to as “the practice of working in silos is one of the most common flaws described by those working within the civil service … after all, political-administrative cannibalism can gnaw away at the cohesion of the team and coherent implementation of the agenda….” The president referred to the need to act and work together as “in all instances where these two officers fail to understand their roles and therefore (fail to) cooperate accordingly the insurrection will fail. It will fail because instead of facing the defined and real enemy, these two commanding officers of ‘our forces’ would have opened another front of struggle…” We must work together understanding our different roles.

In April this year, during the International Human Resource Management conference held in Cape Town, I stated that “the developmental state needs more than sound
management, but requires leadership at all levels of the service delivery chain. What we need is to build leadership, to produce critical thinkers at every level of the chain, who dare to be different, to look at problems with new eyes, to recognize problems where others see the situation as an indisputable way we do things”.

The Senior Management Service Conference held in 2006, assessed the challenges associated with building the capacity of the state to improve service delivery. Some of the key issues emanating from this conference were identified as the need to:

- Continuously support and build capacity of senior managers through information and learning networks in order to improve service delivery
- Accelerate leadership and management development in order to develop a culture of accurate reporting, accountability and responsibility of senior managers
- Ensure that senior managers have a complete understanding of Government priorities and are able to translate Government policy into sustainable programmes that positively impact on the lives of citizens
- Identify best practices for leadership and management in the public service.

Taking stock of the state of the public service leadership cadre in 2006, this has informed the golden thread this year, which is “Performance and Leadership Development Management in the 21st Century: Best Practice and Implications for Service Delivery Improvement”, in order to address the nub of our leadership challenges. This Conference will therefore focus on the strategic development and growth for leadership development in a more organized and formal manner, and seeks to address issues such as:

- the impact of globalization on leadership shared with us from the UN perspective by Professor Argyriades
- examples of evolving best practice on leadership from a country from the Southern Hemisphere, like Chile
the local Single Public Service initiative and its implications for the role of Senior Management leadership in speeding up service delivery using a new model of service delivery which removes the artificial barriers that have impeded delivery

- the importance of strengthening leadership capability in the public service;
- the total commitment to implementing the Heads of Department’s 8-Principle Action Plan for Promoting Gender Equality in the Public Service Workplace
- Institutionalizing in future a Public Service Women Management Week and a Women Manager’s Forum in the workplace; and
- the launch of the discussion document for the SMS, the Leadership Development Management Strategic Framework which is intended to institutionalize the leadership development and training agenda.

The focus of the 2007 SMS Conference shifts from generic management issues, to becoming a consultative and interactive platform, for the pavilion of ideas emanating from the robust engagement and knowledge sharing, which should ultimately influence the policy direction on leadership and organisational performance management within the public service.

Since the inception of the SMS in 2001, the number of SMS members has registered more than 7000, who are highly qualified, but has this rich knowledge base translated into results driven action and audaciousness?

The evolution of this dispensation has led to numerous interventions; in an attempt to transform the accountability of leadership in our organisations. A frequently asked question is “What impact has the SMS initiative had on the Public Service since its inception and what challenges still remain?”

I contend that SMS is indeed a profound intervention in transforming the way the public service is managed and how managers are accountable for service delivery. An overview of the SMS Review Reports during the period 2000 to 2006, which will be distributed at this conference today, depicts the history of the SMS initiative, its establishment and
institutionalization, and the impact it has had in transforming the public service. While this initiative is moving in the right direction, there remain a number of challenges.

Too frequently one hears of how certain things cannot be done, how problems prevent service delivery, how - and this is highlighted by the Public Service Commission reports - non-compliance in specific departments is still tolerated, especially with respect to the signing of performance contracts and the issuing of bonuses, financial disclosures and recruitment practices -

- and yet the legislative framework clearly articulates the parameters.

The Constitution in s197 (4) reminds us that provincial governments are responsible for employment practices within a framework of uniform norms and standards across the public service. Let us today honestly evaluate our value-add and accountability as managers at the coalface.

The Leadership Development Management Strategic Framework which I will be launching tonight is intended to address a balance between organic and organized measures to drive the capacity development of SMS members. It will introduce strategic interventions to respond to the recommendations of the SMS Review Reports. The fundamental goal of this framework is to address the development of Senior Managers in totality, which should - intrinsically - guarantee the development of other employees at all levels within the Public Service.

Currently women comprise 32% of all SMS positions, while there are very few women with disabilities in key decision making positions. The Public Service Commission recent Audit Report on Gender Mainstreaming indicates that 7 out of the 9 provinces reflect no women with disabilities in their Senior Management Services. Let us reflect on this - could that be your province?

While several progressive policies have been put in place to address employment equity - including the advancement of women in the workplace - implementation of such policies
remains a challenge. Senior managers have to be held accountable for achieving women’s empowerment, gender equality and equity as well as the eradication of workplace discrimination.

In this regard, I launched the Head of Departments’ 8-Principle Action Plan for Promoting Gender Equality during the month of August, to fast track real transformation for women in the workplace.

These 8-Principles are:

- Transformation for non sexism in the Workplace,
- Establishing a policy environment
- Meeting equity targets
- Creating an enabling environment
- Mainstreaming gender
- Empowerment
- Providing adequate human, physical and financial resources, and
- Accountability, reporting, monitoring and evaluation.

The 8-Principles have particular significance for advancing women into and within management. We are further recommending that one week a year be declared a Public Service Women Management Week during National Women’s Month.

All SMS women in departments will - with the Director-General or Head of Department - convene women management meetings to track the implementation of the action plan.

In addition, I spoke of establishing a Women Manager’s Forum for the Public Service, which will be further deliberated upon during this Conference from one of the Commissions. This forum will create the space for monitoring departmental progress towards meeting gender equity targets and the empowerment of all women in the workplace as well as providing women managers’ opportunities for supporting each other in executing their responsibilities.
This conference offers an important platform to re-confirm our commitment to meeting national priorities, by discussing evolving key initiatives undertaken by the Public Service. In this regard the Single Public Service project is an attempt to remove artificial barriers between spheres of government, removing duplication of services, creating a seamless delivery chain for the citizen through a single window, one stop shop experience where there is ‘no wrong door”. This will facilitate an integrated service delivery model across the three spheres of government.

The imperatives for increasing the rate and quality of service and infrastructure delivery at local level since 1994, have highlighted concerns about the capacity of the state to rise to the challenge. Several measures have been adopted to increase the resources available to both the public service and local government, and to improve its overall human resource capacity to deliver.

The critical challenge remains ensuring that Human Resources Principles and Practices support the development of the necessary capacity throughout the spheres of government. The development of leadership skills within the local sphere is as vital and crucial as within the provincial and national spheres.

While this conference deliberates on enhancing leadership towards meeting these challenges, we need to be mindful of our current responsibilities and how we execute these roles in a professional, efficient and effective manner for immediate service delivery improvement.

The key attributes about being a leader are encompassed in the understanding of the tenets of constitutional democracy:

- collaborate with people for whom you must plan by listening
- connect with them by participative governance
co-ordinate them in a learning network to gain comparative experiences and apply new methodologies and transferring skills

by inspiring and motivating in a spirit of humility, compliance will be the result

The annual SMS Conference has become a key milestone event on the Public Service calendar. It acts primarily as a vehicle to focus on pertinent issues which drive the engine room of Government and takes a snapshot view of whether we have the right machinery to deliver on our agenda.

In conclusion, I exhort all of you here today to see yourselves as pioneers who wear the cloak of audacity, not only to transform the Public Service, but to turn it into a powerful agent for development so that the people are able to access what is rightfully theirs and which for too long they were unjustly denied.

Thank you.

(Ends)

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