



LAUNCH OF THE ASSOCIATION OF FORMER DIRECTORS-GENERAL (AfDG)

28 SEPTEMBER 2021

“Building a Capable Developmental State”

The Director-General in the Presidency, Ms. Phindile Baleni;
The Chair of the Public Service Commission, Adv. RK Sizani;
The Director-General for the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA);
My Fellow Former Directors-General;
The Auditor-General, Ms. Tsakane Maluleke
Members of the Media, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am pleased to be part of the launch of this historical Association of Former Directors-General (AfDG) to support and help build the capacity of the public service in line with the values outlined in Section 195 of the Constitution and the government’s National Development Plan (NDP).

The genesis of this Association started with the concerns a number of former Directors-General expressed in 2016 at the height of the state capture exposé, including the gouging and corrupting of the public service and hollowing of its capacity. This was treacherous as all this was done to make room for commercial scale looting of state resources, not only within government departments but in many state-owned entities (SOEs).

The 27 former Directors-General addressed themselves to the Ministers of Finance and Public Service and Administration (DPSA), and, copied it to the President of the Republic and the Deputy President. Dated the 22 April 2021, the title of the letter was A Voice of Reason: “Save the Soul of the Public Service from State Capture.” This note was followed by a media statement dated the 15 May 2016 entitled “A call for the establishment of a Public Enquiry into ‘state capture’”.

It just occurred to me that should the government have taken heed of the concerns and appeals of the former Directors-General then, the damage caused to the country would not have been as dire as it is now.

What is worse is that evidence from various commissions and criminal cases bring to reality the saying that “a fish rots from the head down”. The rot spread like a virulent cancer and weakened not only the capacity of the State, but it critically linked up the rot among politicians and the rest of the public service with criminal syndicates and the underground corrupt world.

The assassinations of leaders, councilors, and local election candidates which criminality is moving into Gauteng is an indication of where the country has been led to.

Once this happens it leads to the empowering or legitimizing of the criminal world and the collapse of the capability of the State to defend itself and its people. The July 'failed insurrection' showed how close we came to that stage.

It is no wonder that billions of rands have been siphoned from South Africa to foreign lands through known criminal syndicates without any consequences. We have seen train stations and rail infrastructure being stolen, making travel to work for poor workers many times more expensive.

Izinyoka criminal gangs have taken over the supply of electricity in many townships leading to a collapse of the electricity distribution system leaving residents in the townships reverting back to the use of imbawula and primus stoves. We are now beginning to have "red security zones" in the country where the police cannot guarantee one's security.

All this raises the question of the capacity of the State to govern or to assert its sovereign authority.

I am sure that you will agree with me that all this must be reversed – and must be reversed at the speed of light – to crowd out the criminals from the top to the bottom and create safer and pleasant working spaces for honest public servants with a determination to serve the people as they should do.

That is why we are here, to support this revolutionary turn-around strategy to make South Africa what we expected it to be when we engaged in the struggle for liberation, for which many made the ultimate sacrifice for.

Most of those of us who became part of the first generation of Directors-General of the new democratic South Africa came first as Special Advisors to the elected political principals. And we had one single objective, to transform the racist apartheid state and its public service which was designed to regulate and control movements of the Black majority, to a democratic developmental state geared to offer services to all South Africans, especially the most disadvantaged.

By 1998, we formed the Forum of South African Director-General (FOSAD) to manage the State and government in a coordinated and integrated manner to produce the best outcomes for the people of this land and beyond.¹ The Ten-Year Review Report relating to performance of government was informative in this regard.²

One cannot say though that there was no corruption during that time. Once declassified, my letter to President Mandela, copied to the Deputy President Mbeki will show that we were confronted by some levels of corruption even then. The challenge then, was that the old order

¹ This included the promotion of the vision of the African Renaissance, the New Programme for Africa's Development (NEPAD), and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM).

² Entitled, "Towards a Ten-Year Review: Synthesis report on implementation of government programmes: Discussion Document, updated and published in the South African Yearbook 2004/05, Chapter 3 – Overview.

civil servants were corrupting the new, to compromise them to an extent that they would collaborate with the old to defend the acts of corrupt. It was the best defense for them to ensure they never go to jail.

The difference, though, is that during the first two administrations when most of us were Directors-General, corrupt officials feared honest officials who served with integrity. Now, the corrupt politicians and corrupt public servants have taken the upper hand and those who are clean are on the run. Whistleblowers are, for instance, being brutally murdered. The latest example is that of Babita Deokaran, a senior official of the Gauteng Department of Health.

The VBS case for me was more shocking than I would have expected. Accounting officer breached the law knowing they are doing so, on the promise that the law will be changed. This introduced the reality of the lawlessness of some in the public service. Unfortunately, the accounting officers become the ultimate targets for such lawless activities as the political principals never put their instructions in writing notwithstanding the PFMA provision to do so.

I am pleased that the current Directors-General in the Presidency and the Public Service and Administration, including the Chair of the Public Service Commission are present with us.

We are constituting ourselves to support you and the rest of government as well as assist in building a capable developmental state with capacity to transform the country into an equitable society.

Our stated objective in our Constitution is to “contribute to the professionalization of the public service and assist in building the capacity of the South African state”. We make this offer with humility to learn from each other and take the country to where its citizens want it to be.

We have briefed the President and the Minister of Public Service and Administration as we worked towards this launch.

Our Code of Ethics are very clear. No one can be part of this association if they do not meet the high standards of ethical behaviour and conduct we have set ourselves.

I would like to conclude by dedicating this launch to the late **Professor Stanislaus Skumbuzo Mzilankatha Sangweni** who was like a light to us as we developed the public service regime and codes of ethics and conduct. May his soul rest in peace.

I THANK YOU

FRANK CHIKANE

(Former Director-Director General in the Presidency; Former Secretary of Cabinet; and former Chair of the Forum of Directors-General in South Africa (FOSAD))

28 September 2021