



Address by Adv Thulisile Madonsela delivered on the occasion of an outreach clinic in Alexandra, Johannesburg on Wednesday.

Wednesday, 10 February 2010

**Programme Director;
Deputy Public Protector Adv Mamiki Shai;
CEO Themba Mthethwa;
Councillors;
Members of the media
Traditional leaders;
Ladies and gentlemen.**

Let me start by extending my sincere greetings to all the people of Alexandra and neighbouring areas. I would also like to express my appreciation to you for having left whatever you had planned to do today to be with us.

I deeply cherish the opportunity to interact face-to-face interaction with one of our biggest stakeholders, the public.

Before I get into the issues that have brought us here let me, for the benefit of those who may not know, shed some light into what a Public Protector is and why such an institution is important in a constitutional democracy such as ours.

A Public Protector is established by the constitution to receive and resolve complaints about conduct and services by public authorities. By public authorities I mean any entity that is funded by state funds. This includes municipalities and State Owned Enterprises.

While in the past the Public Protector focused on its investigative powers we have decided to shift our focus to resolving public complaints and promoting good governance in the public sector by harnessing all powers given by the Constitution and legislation to the Public Protector.

These powers include investigating, mediating, and conciliating and taking corrective action to ensure that our people get redress and not only reports.

The Public Protector is independent of government and political parties. At the same time, the Public Protector is not an attorney for the public, but rather more like a referee who thoroughly looks at both sides of the problem before making findings and taking remedial action that is fair

and just.

Many of you cannot afford the services of private attorneys to take government to task in instances where it walks over your constitutional rights. The Public Protector therefore offers free services to ensure that government is held accountable when it violates your rights. The Public Protector is also there to deal with your complaints regarding corruption or graft and failure on the part of state actors to obey the law and any applicable prescripts.

As the Public Protector we have, on many occasions, stepped-in in instances where government discontinued senior citizen's old age grants without providing valid and lawful reasons and as we stand here today, those who were at the receiving end of such conduct by the state are now beneficiaries of such grants again.

We have done the same for those whose applications for social grants, pensions, houses, identity documents and passports, among other things, have been unduly delayed thanks to poor government systems. We have also dealt with grants or pensions that have been stopped arbitrarily in violation of administrative justice.

All that the above applicants had to do was visit our offices, attend events such as this one, call our toll free line 0800 11 20 40 or write to us. Within the shortest time possible the smiles were back on most of their faces again.

Even today, you have an opportunity to bring your complaint against government or report any wrong doing at one of our stalls at the back of this hall. Our investigators are ready and waiting to take your complaints.

We are aware that this area of Gauteng has in the recent past been plagued by violent protests, which in the main, related to the delivery of housing. We would prefer that affected communities approach the Public Protector with their service delivery complaints rather than embarking on violent protests that result in the destruction of the very infrastructure we need for the development of our communities.

While it is understandable that communities get unhappy when government takes long to deliver on its promises, violent protests are not necessarily the answer.

Please entrust us with any complaint you have about services or wrongdoing by public authorities. I will work tirelessly to ensure that your complaints are addressed without undue delay.

We also call on you to report any kind of suspected maladministration and corruption in state affairs. As the Public Protector we are committed to ensuring that public authorities are accountable, operate with integrity and are responsive to the needs of all.

We cannot do so alone. If you see something, do something and say something. In this regard I am particularly grateful for the positive role the media plays in exposing issues that need attention to promote good governance.

This brings me back to the reason we are gathered here today. We are here to invite you to work with us, to assure you that we value stakeholder participation in the discharge of our constitutional mandate.

One of the matters I'd appreciate your feedback on is the Public Protector Vision 2020, our proposed vision for the next 10 years. Already we have received valuable feedback on the draft we have circulated to organised stakeholders since December 2009. Our proposed vision statement is as follows:

Vision

A trusted, effective and accessible Public Protector that rights wrongs and consistently acts with integrity to ensure fair, accountable and responsive decision-making, service and good governance in all state affairs and public administration in any sphere of government.

Mission

We serve the public in accordance with our constitutional mandate by rectifying and redressing any improper or prejudicial conduct in state affairs and resolving related disputes through mediation, conciliation, negotiation and other measures to ensure fair, responsive and accountable public sector decision-making and service delivery.

Values

- Independence and impartiality;
- Human Dignity;
- Equality;
- Ubuntu and Empathy;
- Redress;
- Accountability;
- Integrity;
- Responsiveness;
- Transparency; and
- Justice and Fairness.

Our core principles are: Accountability, Integrity and Responsiveness. We have also proposed strategic objectives for the next three years as the mechanism for ensuring, among others, that there is prompt remedial action for all wrongs committed by public authorities and that good governance generally is achieved in the conduct of all state affairs.

Accessibility of the Public Protector's services, which is specifically stipulated by the Constitution remains our priority and is part of both our vision and strategy.

I will sincerely appreciate your views on how we can approach our work in order to help you optimally.

As indicated earlier, we have already shifted our emphasis to focus on prompt resolution of complaints against public authorities. Of course investigation remains a key mechanism but we will give equal attention to conciliation, mediation, negotiation and any other mechanisms that will ensure that we right the wrongs of public authorities while promoting good governance.

I trust that we will have healthy yet robust discussions as we prepare to turn the tide against improper and prejudicial conduct by state institutions and expand the reach of good governance and responsive service delivery.

Thank you.

Public Protector SA, Adv Thuli Madonsela.