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GOVERNANCE

Ramaphosa promises a more professional public service

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PRESIDENT Cyril Ramaphosa has assured Parliament that the government was working to build a professional public service as part of implementing the Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (ERRP).

Yesterday Ramaphosa was giving his first oral replies for the year to questions from MPs in the National Assembly.

ANC member Judy Hermans asked Ramaphosa what were the plans of the government after the audit of the civil service to build a capable developmental state for the implementation of the ERRP. The government announced the ERRP in October 2020 in response to the severe health, social and economic effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Ramaphosa said that there were multiple plans and interventions to ensure the successful implementation of the ERRP. He reiterated the centrality of a capable and effective State in addressing the country's key challenges of poverty, inequality, unemployment, load shedding, crime and corruption.

"We are, therefore, working to build a public service staffed by men and women who are professional, skilled, selfless and honest," Ramaphosa said.

"This includes implementation of the Professionalisation of the Public Service Framework. The framework proposes fundamental reforms, including a stronger emphasis on merit-based recruitment and appointments, integrity testing before recruitment, revising the tenure of heads of departments, and curriculum development for ongoing learning of public servants."

In the State of the Nation Address, Ramaphosa announced that the National School of Government will work with other organs of State to conduct skills audits in infrastructure and front-line service departments.

The skills audits are earmarked to help to accelerate the professionalisation of the civil service and help the government determine whether critical skills do exist.

The key infrastructure and front-line service departments that will participate in the first phase of the skills audit are Transport, Human Settlements, Water and Sanitation, Co-operative Governance, Public Works and Infrastructure, Home Affairs, Social Development, and Employment and Labour.

Amendments have been drafted to the Public Service Act and the Public Administration Management Act to enable departments to deliver services more effectively and efficiently, and to establish a single public administration.

Meanwhile, the private sector launched the Resource Mobilisation Fund (RMF) yesterday, in response to Ramaphosa's request for business to help capacitate the National Energy Crisis Committee (Necom).

Necom aims to reduce the severity and frequency of load shedding in the short term and achieve a secure and sustainable supply of energy for South Africa in the long term.

Business for South Africa and RMF chairperson Martin Kingston said various individuals and private sector organisations came together to establish the RMF following the announcement of the president's Energy Action Plan in July 2022.

"The RMF was set up to source private sector funding to procure and donate expertise to the government, and specifically Necom, on an expedited basis," Kingston said.

"It is envisaged that this will happen over a period of one to two years depending on the pace of progress that Necom makes in its mission."

The RMF is a public benefit organisation and autonomous legal entity formed to support Necom.