

Sowetan Public Dialogues
SAPS National Commissioner Riah Phiyega
2 October 2013

This document presents notes taken of SAPS National Commissioner Riah Phiyega's address to around 170 participants of the Sowetan newspaper public dialogue at the Tshwane University of Technology.

Introduction

After thanking the sponsors and greeting the students, she started out by saying that as the Sowetan newspaper had raised the issue of suspended Lt-General Richard Mdluli, she would deal with this matter from the outset. She said that when she was appointed as National Commissioner, Mdluli was already suspended following the court application by Freedom Under Law. However, the media had resulted in this matter taking on a life of its own. She was studying the most recent judgement by Judge Murphy on 23 September 2013 in relation to Mdluli and will take legal advice on how to proceed.

To the question **"Does the SAPS need rebuilding"** she answered "Yes". However, that does not mean that the entire police organisation needs to be rebuilt. She argued that there are strong foundations and that the strengths need to be built upon.

She acknowledge that the SAPS face a credibility gap that is the result of ill discipline, inadequate service delivery, insufficient integrity and the lack of a common police culture. She said that she would not talk about police brutality as this was such a large topic that she would need a entire separate discussion to address it.

Discipline: Phiyega said that ill discipline in the police exist because of a lack of command and control and leadership at station level. She said that leadership is the "game changer" when it came to discipline. To address this problem she had issued an instruction that inspections are held at the start and end of each shift so that commanders can oversee their members. This was a practice that had occurred in the past and needed to be re-established. She would also establish a Disciplinary Management Unit to ensure that police discipline was uniformly implemented. Moreover she was going to issue 'mandatory sanction guidelines' for specific offences. This was to ensure reliability and fairness in the disciplinary sanctions imposed. Currently there was a situation whereby in some hearings, convictions for serious charges resulted in light sanctions while less serious convictions resulted in severe sanctions.

Service delivery: Phiyega had been drawing lessons on organisational reform from departments such as the South African Revenue Service (SARS) and the department of Home Affairs as they had achieved successful turn around strategies. Police stations would be properly resourced and steps would be taken to ensure that they were managed effectively and efficiently. Customer Service commanders would be appointed to oversee the service provided in the Client Service Centres. Each police station would also be equipped with a victim friendly room where sensitive cases could be reported in privacy.

Police Integrity: Phiyega was going to appoint an “Integrity Manager” to run the soon to be established SAPS Anti-Corruption Unit. All members would also be expected to declare their interests.

Phiyega also recognised the importance of using the ‘carrot’ and not only the ‘stick’ when attempting to instil integrity. She was therefore going to ensure that there was proper career management and planning in the SAPS. They were in the process of reviewing their reward and recognition policies to assist good performers to receive both monetary and non-monetary rewards.

Phiyega was adamant that integrity was a virtue that she was going to instil in the SAPS. Integrity was the strongest currency that she possessed. She had “drawn a line in the sand” and expected all police officials to measure up. The recent audit had revealed that 1 448 police officials had criminal records. Each of these members would appear before a ‘fitness board’ to determine whether they should be able to stay in the SAPS or not. All members would now be required to regularly declare if they were facing any criminal investigations or had received convictions. This would be compulsory. She appeared serious about cleaning up the SAPS and ensuring that members adhered to the code of conduct. She warned that the public should not be surprised to hear from time to time that police officers had been criminally charged or dismissed from the SAPS.

Police culture: Phiyega was of the opinion that the transformation and integration of the SAPS had fallen off the agenda in recent years. She reminded the audience that the SAPS had been created from 11 different homeland police forces and various military groups of the liberation struggle. There was a need to refocus on building a common organisational culture. This would be done through improving communication on what was good policing and where good work had been achieved.

She ended by saying that she was committed to partnerships and that nothing would prevent her from succeeding in improving the SAPS.