

Dr Mmaphaka Tau

heads up NDMC



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Dr Mmaphaka Ephraim Tau was appointed as the Deputy Director-General (Head) of the National Disaster Management Centre (NDMC) on 1 January 2017. Dr Tau heads up the NDMC after leaving his position as Deputy Director-General responsible for Forestry and Natural Resources Management in the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.

As head of the NDMC, Dr Tau is entrusted with the responsibility to coordinate implementation of disaster management and fire services in the country and contributing to the global disaster risk reduction agenda.

Background

Dr Tau, who hails from Limpopo, started his career at the former Department of Land Affairs as a planner, then as a principal planner after which he was recruited by the Department of Water and Forestry to manage the forest land administration unit. He has a Bachelor of Arts majoring in Geography and English, which he obtained in 1995, a

Higher Education Diploma obtained in 1996 and an Honours Degree in Development Studies, which he obtained in 1997, all from the University of Limpopo. In 2003, Dr Tau obtained a Masters in Development Studies specialising in rural development from the University of South Africa. He then was appointed as assistant director of Land Reform and Relationship Management.

From 2005 until 2008, Dr Tau served as Deputy Director for Veld Fires Oversight and in 2006, he enrolled for his Master's Degree in Disaster Management at the University of the Free State, which he obtained in 2008.

He served as senior manager for Disaster Management Capacity Building and Research at the Department for Provincial and Local Government, now Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA), from 2008 until 2014. During 2014, Dr Tau obtained a Philosophiae Doctorate in Development and Management through the North West University on the topic: An institutional model for collaborative disaster risk management in the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

In 2014, he was appointed as chief director responsible for Natural Resource Management at the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) and in January 2016 as the deputy director general (DDG) responsible for Forestry and Natural Resources Management in DAFF where he served until 31 December 2016.

Dr Tau took over as head of the NDMC and DDG of CoGTA in January 2017.

He has already presented the outcomes of his research in two international forums i.e the Academic Network for Disaster Resilience to

Optimise Educational Development (ANDROID) held in Media City in the UK during September 2014 and the second biennial conference of the Southern African Society for Disaster reduction held in Windhoek, Namibia, during October 2014. He has also published an article in the Journal for Disaster Risk Science on his thesis.

His professional involvement includes the following forums:

- A founding member and Advisory Committee Member (ACM) of the Jamba journal for Disaster Studies
- A co-author of the Risk and Development Review (RaDAR) publication
- An Advisory Board Member (ABM) of Stenden South Africa University: Department of Disaster Management
- Founding member of the Southern African Society for Disaster Reduction (SASDiR) and
- A founding team member of the University of Venda (UNIVEN) and Department of Cooperative Governance (DCoG) collaboration on programme development on disaster risk sciences that forms part of the conference.

Vision for disaster management and fire services

FRI Media, publishers of Fire and Rescue International and Disaster Management Journal, met up with Dr Tau and he provided some insight into the way forward, his vision for the NDMC and the immediate plans.

Dr Tau said during the interview, "I am an advocate of sustainable development. It is an honour for me to be associated with this important discipline as I am a firm proponent of disaster risk reduction principles and practices and I fully support observations by the Z Zurich Foundation (1973) that every one Rand spend on risk reduction measures saves five Rands in avoided or reduced disaster losses.

I am also deeply concerned about the prevailing global converse to the disaster reduction mantra, which points out that 87 percent of all disaster-related funding is targeted at relief and recovery. This is a situation that I believe needs to be reversed through improved hazards and risk assessment, monitoring and aggressive roll out of cross sectoral risk reduction measures. I therefore believe that existing pieces of legislation such as the Disaster Management Act 2002 (Act 57 of 2002 as amended), its policy framework of 2005 (the NDMF 2005), sectoral policies and legislation, such as the National Climate Change Response White Paper 2011, should be read and executed within the framework of regional and global strategies and commitments existing in the SADC, African Union and the United Nations (UN) eg the Sendai Framework for Disaster Reduction 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals, etc). This therefore makes the case for Ecosystems-Based Disaster Reduction (Eco-DRR) critical with streamlined response capacity and systems, given the magnitude and severity of hazards," said Dr Tau.

He continued, "To this end the country needs to consider adopting a national DRR strategy responding to national, regional and global commitments outlined by the Sendai Framework for disaster risk reduction (DRR) and the sustainable development goals (SDGs)."

"The NDMC's subsidiary vision should fit in properly with the CoGTA vision: 'a functional and developmental local government system that delivers on its constitutional and legislative mandates within a system of cooperative governance'."

"A vision statement for the NDMC would be, "By 2030 service delivery and development will be on the same path with disaster risk management as complementary discourses." This speaks to the long term plans and duties for disaster management and fire services."

"However, work must start now, so

that by 2030, we should see the three tiers namely, service delivery, development and disaster risk management, in a report showing them being on the same level. To achieve this, the following five questions need to be addressed:

- What needs to be changed?
- Why should issues be addressed?
- What are the strengths and assets that we have?
- What is our dream end-state (2030 vision)?
- What will success look like?"

Dr Tau elaborated, "I believe that strategic partnerships, resourcing of disaster risk management programmes, local ownership and political buy-in and championship, remain some of the key ingredients of our desired collective success. Therefore the work of the disaster management system will be shoehorned on the Batho Pele ethos notably: 'We care, we belong, we serve,' as we marshal the disaster risk management system towards the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030 aspired eventuality decidedly: '..... now in 2030 we live in a country we have remade'."

"The NDMC and broader CoGTA family and the provincial and municipal custodians of disaster management and fire services, remain my pillars of strength in my pursuit of taking the disaster risk management function to the next higher level in the interest of the communities we serve."

Immediate duties and plans

We asked Dr Tau to detail the immediate duties and plans of the NDMC for disaster management and fire services to which he replied, "I believe that it is time for the leadership in the disaster management and fire services across the spheres of government; to 'move from the dance floor to the balcony where you can continually do corrective action and meet-cause-action', meaning that you fix as you carry on and that this is a key element of adaptive leadership. My wish is to adapt to the new environment, as well as adapting and embracing things

that I realise are positive and also be able to adapt/adjust where I deem it necessary. This is a process where one is able to mobilise people to thrive and also be able to rise to the occasion when time comes to deal with challenges. I believe this is the best way to take the best from history while moving into the future."

He added, "The founding philosophy can be stated by using a quote from John Maxwell that, 'Bad decisions come about where people are not held to account early enough' and furthermore referring to Maxwell's book, the Leadership Gold, that 'an intelligent person without passion, will be out-performed by an average person with passion'."

"As the disaster management and fire services fraternity, we are able to define our trajectory, clarify roles and espouse the professionalism principles, it will be easy that we all can hold each other accountable and not in a negative way but correctively so, so that we can remain focused and dedicated to our work to serve our communities. I strongly advocate that we must recognise each other as individual and important resources contributing towards achieving the joint and bigger picture of the work of disaster management and fire services," said Dr Tau.

Medium term plans and duties

Discussing the medium term plans and duties, Dr Tau commented that "The approach that I will devise as head of the NDMC and in consultation with the broader fraternity, will be based on a fit for purpose and situational conscience philosophy applying disaster risk management plans, sector plans, municipal IDPs, the Back-to-Basics strategy and strategic disaster risk reduction projects as key vehicles. I therefore believe that all stakeholders and role players, inclusive of the academic and other civil society formations, will also be pivotal to doing our work."

Fire and Rescue International wish Dr Tau the best with in his new position as head of the NDMC. 