

NPA unveils new strategy

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The criminal justice system must revolve around the victims of crime, said National Director of Public Prosecutions Vusi Pikoli on Wednesday.

"We want to change our criminal justice system. We want to ensure justice for the victims of crime by prosecuting without fear, favour or prejudice and by working with our partners and the public to solve and prevent crime," Pikoli said.

Launching the NPA's Strategy 2020 at a conference held in Midrand, Pikoli said there needed to be a "marked improvement" in the work of the NPA by 2020, which in turn would ensure greater public confidence in government's justice, crime prevention and security cluster (JCPS).

The strategy is based on 23 projects to be undertaken by the NPA.

The programmes include reducing the number of awaiting-trial detainees by developing guidelines for prosecution, prosecution-guided investigation where the NPA works with police and community prosecutions where "alternative and varied law enforcement mechanisms" will be developed.

"We want to make sure that we create a society where people obey the laws of the republic voluntarily not because of fear of sanctions. We want to encourage that culture," Pikoli said.

Opening the three-day conference on the NPA's Strategy 2020, Justice Minister Brigitte Mabandla earlier said the JCPS needed to work more closely together to improve efficiency.

"I would want to see greater efficiency. I don't know how we could entrench that systematically," she said.

"I would want to see a time when we even have budgets for joint ventures within the JCPS cluster. We have to move in that direction."

She cited the NPA's sexual offences and community affairs unit as an example of what she meant of greater synergy.

The unit, in conjunction with the police and the departments of social development and health, has established several Thuthuzela care centres for victims of sexual offences.

The Thuthuzela care centres are 24-hour one-stop service centres where victims have access to all services, including police, counselling, doctors, court preparation and prosecutors.

It has reduced the time for sexual offence cases to be finalised in court and also increased convictions.

Mabandla said "smart linkages" such as the joint Thuthuzela centres seemed to improve the efficiency within the cluster. - Sapa