

MEDIA RELEASE	Africa Day 2026: Water and sanitation failures undermine dignity and service delivery
DATE	25 May 2026
EMBARGO	None
ENQUIRIES	communication@psa.co.za

The Public Servants Association (PSA) marks Africa Day 2026 under the African Union's theme "Assuring Sustainable Water Availability and Safe Sanitation Systems to Achieve the Goals of Agenda 2063" with a continued commitment to ensure the protection of public servants' rights.

The theme highlights a basic and critical service that remains unevenly delivered across the continent. In South Africa, many public servants continue to work in environments where access to clean water and adequate sanitation is unreliable or completely absent. This unacceptable situation constitutes a direct violation of occupational health and safety (OHS) standards. The PSA consistently intervenes in such cases by formally engaging employers, lodging grievances, and, where necessary, invoking OHS protocols to ensure that unsafe workplaces are addressed without delay. Where conditions pose a risk to health and safety, the PSA has not hesitated to advise members to exercise their rights in terms of OHS legislation, including the refusal to work under hazardous conditions.

The PSA's approach is grounded in enforcement and accountability. The Union conducts workplace inspections, escalates matters to relevant authorities, and demands immediate corrective action on identified water and sanitation failures that pose operational risks, compromising employee well-being and service delivery.

The situation is equally concerning in public schools, where a lack of proper sanitation continues to undermine the dignity, health, and safety of learners and education staff. The PSA has repeatedly raised concerns about unsafe and inadequate sanitation facilities in schools, emphasising that this reflects a broader systemic failure in infrastructure planning and maintenance. No meaningful progress can be achieved under *Agenda 2063* whilst basic sanitation in learning environments remains unresolved.

The PSA's ongoing advocacy against budget cuts, understaffing, and the erosion of technical capacity is directly linked to the Africa Day theme. Sustainable water and sanitation systems require investment, skilled personnel, and consistent maintenance. Without these elements, policy commitments remain theoretical.

Africa Day 2026 should serve as a point of accountability. The PSA calls for urgent, coordinated interventions to address infrastructure backlogs, enforce OHS compliance, and prioritise water and sanitation as non-negotiable services in all public-sector workplaces. The PSA is committed to protecting the rights, safety, and dignity of public servants whilst contributing to a public service that is capable of delivering on Africa's development objectives.

END