

MEDIA RELEASE

Finance Ministers budget does not give much confidence to a sustainable public service

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) is concerned that government continues to ignore the human resource capacity of Departments to render a public service to South Africans while gradually crippling the Public Service. Government is not very concerned regarding the Public Service's capability to execute its constitutional mandate with government departments suffering from chronic staff shortages and operating with less than 60% of the required human resources.

South Africa is experiencing increased criminal activities, including hijackings, kidnappings, and assassinations. The inadequate budget allocated to the security cluster, education, and health will not assist with filling urgent critical positions. For example, SAPS immediately needs more than 80 000 police officers, and the budget provides for only 15 000 new recruits over three years while the population is growing, and the number of employees SAPS is decreasing due to natural attrition at a faster rate than is being recruited into SAPS. The PSA expected the speech to give confidence and address issues including insufficient police vehicles, shortages of fuel, bullet-proof vests, and staff shortages at the 10111-call centre, where many emergency calls go unanswered. The high rate of crime and corruption is the main source in hampering economic growth, disrupting the quality of life for many citizens, this due to the crime riddled collapsed Eskom, corrupt water boards, unsafe buildings, and potholed roads with poor maintenance.

There is insufficient support staff and professionals that make it impossible for Departments to achieve their constitutional mandate of providing affordable and quality public service to South Africans. On the other hand, the Minister said nothing regarding Community Health Care Workers that are the backbone of the health care service, but workers are paid stipends. Failure to absorb this category is an injustice as they are continuing to suffer owing to the increase in living costs.

The genesis of crime and corruption is the tender system that has paralysed the infrastructure of the country. The increment of the infrastructure budget without putting measures to ensure a capable Police, National Prosecuting Authority, Special Investigating Unit, and ID service that will deal with syndicates and corrupt officials, that demand fees from appointed contractors compromising the delivery of quality infrastructure. Government must preferably employ highly skilled Engineers and Artisans to ensure that there is value for money.

There are no clear details as to how government will take over the Eskom debt and the PSA cautions against any move to target the Public Investment Corporation (PIC) as a cash cow to fund Eskom, while public servants have endured prolonged periods of stagnant pension growth due to no salary increases. Furthermore, government failed to give details on the mooted "two pot system" that will allow public servants to withdraw cash from their accumulated pension monies.

Bailouts and taking over debts of the state-owned companies seems to be the permanent feature of the treasury budget. It is regrettable that government could not offer a reasonable salary increase for public servants over the past three years, but they do not hesitate to offer bailouts to struggling corrupted state-owned entities. The PSA regards this as directly undermining public servants and will not relent until government addresses and compensates workers after failing to honour the last leg of Resolution 1 of 2018 during 2020.

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