

MEDIA RELEASE	International Day of Decent Work: Public servants deserve fair treatment, safe workplaces, and respect for collective bargaining
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The Public Servants Association (PSA), representing more than 250 000 public-sector employees, joins workers across South Africa and the world in observing the International Day of Decent Work on 7 October 2026.

The Day highlights the importance of ensuring that all workers have access to productive employment under conditions of freedom, equity, security, and human dignity. Decent work is a fundamental right that should be enjoyed by every worker.

South Africa continues to grapple with economic challenges, high unemployment, and increasing pressure on public services. The PSA remains concerned about the conditions under which many public servants are expected to perform duties. Across the public service, employees are required to do more with less as vacancy rates remain high, workloads increase, and critical skills are lost because of inadequate recruitment and retention strategies. Public servants are at the core of service delivery. They provide healthcare, educate future generations, ensure public safety, administer social-assistance programmes, protect the Country's borders, and deliver a wide range of essential services to citizens. Yet, many continue to face workplace challenges that undermine the principles of decent work.

The PSA maintains that decent work cannot exist where employees face unsafe working conditions, excessive workloads, inadequate resources, workplace violence, or uncertainty about the future. Workers cannot be expected to deliver quality services when departments are understaffed, infrastructure is deteriorating, and support systems are insufficient. Decent work is further intrinsically linked to fair remuneration and meaningful collective bargaining. Respect for collective-bargaining processes is essential in fostering stable labour relations and ensuring that workers have a voice in matters affecting their livelihoods and working conditions. Sustainable service delivery depends on constructive engagement between employers and organised labour, underpinned by mutual respect and good faith.

The PSA therefore calls on government to prioritise filling funded vacancies, strengthen occupational health and safety measures, invest in skills development, improve workplace wellness programmes, and ensure that public servants are resourced to perform their duties effectively.



Government must also uphold and protect collective-bargaining structures as important platforms for addressing workplace challenges and advancing fair labour practices.

Rapid workplace transformation through technological advancement and digitalisation presents risks and opportunities. Whilst innovation can improve efficiency and service delivery, workers must receive training, skills development, backed by fair workplace policies to ensure that technological progress contributes to decent work rather than job insecurity.

For more than 106 years, the PSA has championed the rights and interests of public servants. The Union is committed to promoting fair labour practices, defending workers' rights, and advancing conditions that allow employees to serve the public with dignity. On International Day of Decent Work, the PSA calls on all stakeholders to renew their commitment to creating workplaces that are safe, equitable, inclusive, and conducive to service excellence. Decent work is vital for workers, their families, for building a capable state, strengthening public institutions, and achieving sustainable socio-economic development for South Africa.

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