

MEDIA RELEASE

PSA slams DA proposal for public service salary cuts

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) that represents more than 240 000 public-sector employees has slammed proposals by the Democratic Alliance (DA) to cut public servants' salaries. The Union also recently issued a stern warning to government following a proposal by the Deputy Minister of Finance, David Masedo, for a wage-freeze at all levels of the state.

The DA's statement is irresponsible and disturbing to the PSA. The PSA expressed severe irritation with ongoing pronouncements, hinting that public servants will ultimately have to pay the price as saviours of an economy lamed by wide-spread maladministration and corruption. Apart from the latest shocking proposal to freeze public servants' salaries, there are ongoing attempts to loot their pension fund to bail out dismally failing SOEs. This, despite their pension fund already having suffered severe losses owing to questionable investments.

The PSA pointed out that there cannot be talk about economic growth and improving service delivery amidst blatant attacks on public servants who are already overburdened by Treasury's unilateral measures to stop the filling of vacancies. Public servants are being stretched to perform additional functions without compensation at the expense of their health and safety. Government fails to understand that the country's more than 1.2 million public servants are also breadwinners with families. They cannot be expected to serve with pride and dignity, when they are unable to afford basics in the face of escalating prices for food, petrol, electricity, school fees, etc. In addition, public servants' incentives are under constant attack and their working conditions often leave much to be desired.

Continued reckless statements by government and other parties to gain political mileage are instilling fear, panic and insecurity amongst public servants with a negative impact on stability and economic growth. The PSA has continuously called on the state as employer for proper engagement to assist the process and avoid labour unrest. Such calls remain unanswered. The PSA warned that the time is unfortunately drawing nearer where there will no longer be encouragement for constructive engagement should government and political parties such as the DA continue making public statements to gain sympathy and support for ill-conceived, desperate plans to save their political profiles rather than engaging labour to deal with these matters jointly and strategically in the interest of the country's economy and workers.

The PSA will not accept any desperate proposals that will further erode public servants' morale and income. The Union will also not allow any discussions on wage freezes to ensue at the Public Service Coordinating Bargaining Council at the expense of its members. The DA should understand that there are laws that govern the relationship between the employer and employees in this country and is warned to refrain from using public servants as pawns in its political battles.

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