

MEDIA RELEASE PSA calls for intergovernmental engagement to prevent the separation of the Department of Home Affairs from the State Information Technology Agency

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) strongly objects to the recent application by the Department of Home Affairs for a separation from the State Information Technology Agency (SITA). This move threatens to undermine the collaborative efforts and progress made in enhancing public service delivery through integrated technological solutions.

While the PSA is aware of the challenges faced by the entity including the lack of leadership and poor governance, cutting ties with the entity is not the right move and should not be encouraged. The action by the Department of Home Affairs is a vote of no confidence in the state's capacity to respond to technological needs which can have dire consequences. It is illogical that the Department can consider separation from an entity that belongs to the state instead of pursuing an existing intergovernmental relations framework, which allows for robust engagement. Dumping SITA is not a solution as the agency will lose money which will adversely affect revenue threatening job security for employees. The partnership between Home Affairs and SITA has been instrumental in modernising and streamlining services, ensuring efficient and effective operations that benefit all citizens.

The PSA has noted a disturbing pattern where departments as clients of state entities express frustrations and push towards utilising private sector companies for procurement citing inefficiencies and incapacity. Many of these entities are crippled by governments decision to appoint incompetent board members who become the source of the lacklustre performance. Government Printing Works is suffering the same fate where even the printing of Grade 12 questions papers has been outsourced thus losing millions of rands on potential income. SITA is on the verge of collapse because this very government does not want to lift a finger, the PSA has even raised issues with the Portfolio Committee to no avail. The PSA is aware that several departments including the South African Police Service and the Department of Justice have sought exemptions from using SITA procurement services owing to its inefficiencies. Shockingly, the Minister of Communications and Digital Technologies, instead of fixing the house at SITA issued regulations to allow government departments to procure IT services without SITA's involvement.

The Minister of Communications and Digital Technologies had recently requested the Public Service Commission (PSC) to launch a probe into SITA's affairs, after numerous departments have sought exemptions from using SITA. It must be noted that some of these departments that are claiming that SITA is inefficient, reportedly incur irregular and wasteful expenditures amounting to millions. The PSA is aware that the tender system is a way of enrichment for many unscrupulous and corrupt businesses, which is facilitated by decision makers in many departments. The probe outcome by the PSC is unknown hence the PSA calls for transparency and accountability by Department to release the same. Furthermore, the PSA calls on the departments that are unhappy with the SITA's service to engage the Department of Communications and Technologies to find solutions. Ministers cannot lead a project to incapacitate the state in favour of the private sector, that is

scandalous to say the least. The PSA urges all relevant stakeholders to engage in constructive dialogue and collaboration to find a solution that preserves the integrity and effectiveness of public service delivery.

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