

MEDIA RELEASE **PSA determined to protect collective bargaining for South African workers**

DATE 7 July 2021

EMBARGO None

ENQUIRIES communication@psa.co.za

The Public Servants Association of South Africa (PSA), whilst celebrating 101 years in service of public-sector employees on 7 July 2021, is determined to protect the process of collective bargaining for South African workers.

The PSA, representing more than 235 000 members, has noted recent developments about onslaught on collective bargaining with increasing concern. Some of those changes came as a direct result of the threat unions pose to capitalism and big business. Atypical employment is the order of the day with outsourcing and agentising to minimise unions' power. Permanent posts are left vacant and contract workers are appointed to fill the gaps. This leads to insecurity in employment and makes it difficult for unions to organise such workers. While there is no formal moratorium on employment in the Public Service, the employer is also utilising vacancies to balance ever-shrinking budgets and please rating agencies and international banks. This places pressure on overworked public servants, especially those who are working under extreme pressures created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

One of the PSA's main concerns is the well-planned onslaught on collective bargaining by the custodian of collective bargaining in our country, namely Government itself. This started with the non-implementation of 2020-Public Service salary increases, despite written assurance by the Minister on the commitment to comply with the terms of the agreement. After the PSA took the non-implementation to Court, the excuse was that the Minister of Finance had not approved the expenditure linked to the agreement, despite the agreement having been implemented for the first two years of the three-year period.

Government's intension is to erode collective bargaining gains made by labour over the past ten years. The PSA was instrumental in achieving these gains and will ensure that these are not removed by an unscrupulous employer. The PSA has referred the matter to the Constitutional Court where it will be heard on 24 August 2021. This case is about much more than just the honouring of collective agreements. It is about protecting the negotiated collective bargaining dispensation, based on engagement by social partners to ensure labour peace through the signing of agreements. A South Africa, where employers and labour cannot trust each another to engage in collective bargaining owing to a lack of trust in collective agreements, will be disastrous. No party can be allowed to break this system, which is enshrined in the Constitution.

In addition, Government approached the 2021-Public Service salary negotiations with a closed wallet. It is proposing to public servants to pay their own 1.5%-salary increase from their own pay progression, thereby offering no real wage increase. The PSA declared a dispute, invoked dispute resolution remedies and is ready to follow its members' mandate to ensure a fair salary increase. In utilising legal remedies to its disposal, the PSA will continue to lead labour in South Africa by being principled and strong.

END