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| MEDIA RELEASE | PSA disappointed with government's cost-containment measures |
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| EMBARGO | None |
| ENQUIRIES | communication@psa.co.za |

The Public Servants Association (PSA) is extremely disappointed with the government's announcement on proposed cost containment measures, issued on 31 August 2023.

The PSA, representing more than 240 000 public-sector employees, is appalled by the proposed measures, particularly the freezing of new appointments as funding was provided in the approved budget for the Departments of Education, Health, and Security Services. The country is already crippled by a shortage of staff, especially in the health sector. The PSA condemns any initiatives that will further impact on service delivery and escalate the unemployment rate and cautions government against making irrational and irresponsible decisions.

The PSA is further concerned that government is using the media as a medium of engagement, rather than the Public Service Coordinating Bargaining Council, which is the appropriate platform for engagement and where none of these matters have been tabled. Despite understanding government's plight and the current economic situation, the PSA calls on the President to move the focus from government employees' benefits to actual cost drivers. There is absolutely no "will" on behalf of government to reduce wasteful expenditure by engaging in frivolous litigation, corruption and fraud, consultants, irregular, wasteful and fruitless expenditure, and unnecessary foreign missions. There is no clear indication of the amount lost in the current financial year or the plans for the recovery of funds lost owing to irregular, wasteful and fruitless expenditure, fraud, and corruption.

The non-filling of vacancies will have an adverse effect on the most vulnerable in society who often also have to support extended families. Public servants who were previously providing a cushion effect against the worst forms of deprivation will soon be reduced to poverty, with an increasing number of citizens becoming dependent on the state for relief. The PSA warns government not to even consider cutting jobs, as this may result in plunging the economy into a crisis. The non-filling of vacancies will be disastrous and compromise service delivery to citizens. Public servants are crippled by inflation, rising fuel prices, and the cost of the food basket. Yet, they are expected to ensure that service delivery is not compromised.

This financial affairs of the country is a clear indication of a dysfunctional state. The PSA does not believe that it is the solution for taking South Africa forward. The PSA demands that government tables a plan and clear proposals on how it intends to address the inefficiencies of the state to manage its budget, rather than using public servants as a scapegoat. Public servants' benefits, remuneration, and pension fund are not up for sale to bail out and relieve the state, or to compensate for losses incurred owing to its inefficiencies and lack of urgency to deal with corruption and recover lost funds. Public servants cannot be expected to make further sacrifices.

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