

MEDIA RELEASE	PSA rejects government's last-minute request to review Public Service wage agreement
DATE	25 February 2020
EMBARGO	None
ENQUIRIES	communication@psa.co.za

The Public Servants Association (PSA), which represents more than 230 000 public servants, rejects the proposal from the State as the employer on 25 February 2020 to review the Public Service wage agreement for 2020, citing that it cannot afford the last leg of the agreement.

On the eve of the budget vote, government approached labour in the Public Service Coordinating Bargaining Council (PSCBC) with a request to review clause 3.3. of PSCBC Resolution 1/2018, thereby denying public servants already meagre cost-of- living adjustments. Considering the current economic situation that is aggravated by rising electricity costs, petrol price increases, and a rise in the cost of most commodities, public servants simply cannot afford to sacrifice on a salary increase.

Government's presentation on its request failed to address the challenges that contributed to increased expenses, including its frivolous litigation, corruption and fraud, the widespread use of consultants, irregular and wasteful expenditure and unnecessary foreign missions. There is furthermore no clear indication of the amount lost in the current financial year or plans on recovering such losses. To merely state that these matters are being dealt with at Cabinet level will not provide employees with confidence to even consider government's review proposal.

The PSA in March 2019 already called for the re-opening of public service wage negotiations as it was clear that the adjustments were not keeping pace with living expenses. It is also evident that unions that signed the 2018 salary agreement took a risk by entering into a three-year agreement with an employer who cannot even adhere to the unfavourable terms of the agreement at a time when its employees are increasingly struggling to make ends meet.

The timing of the proposal, a few days before the adjustments were due to be implemented, speaks of a government that regards public servants as an easy target to resolve its financial woes. It is clear that proposals to government on how it could curb wasteful expenditure fell on deaf ears and instead of tabling clear proposals on how it intends to address its financial inefficiencies, public servants are made the scape goat.

On the eve of the Budget Speech, the PSA wishes to remind government and the Minister of Finance that public servants' remuneration, benefits and pension fund are not for sale to address a deepening crisis that was brought about by widespread inefficiencies and a lack of urgency to deal with corruption and recover such funds. The PSA therefore warns government to refrain from considering any unilateral action outside the formal structures regarding public servants' salaries and pension benefits as the consequences will have a severely detrimental effect on the country.

END