

MEDIA RELEASE **PSA welcomes suspension of Department of Military Veterans
Director-General**

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) welcomes much-awaited suspension of the Director-General of the Department of Military Veterans to allow for proper investigation of issues at the Department, including abuse of power, irregular appointments, and intimidation of employees for advancing proper governance.

Employees were appointed to act in positions outside the structure as the restructuring process has been dragging on for more than five years. This created instability and opportunity for irregular appointments. The Department was run with an iron fist with employees being suppressed and the legislative framework governing operations being ignored. Employees were employed without verification of qualifications and persons were shortlisted for positions whilst clearly not meeting the advertised requirements. Employees were harshly dealt with when raising issues, including four senior managers being suspended for almost two years without conclusion of disciplinary processes.

In addition, the Department failed to fill vacancies and instead has uniformed personnel working at the Department at high salaries whilst performing basic duties. This amounts to wasteful expenditure and an injustice as citizens are not fully benefiting from their technical skills in the protection of the country.

It was not surprising that the Auditor-General found that the Department lacked internal control measures and failed to comply with the Public Service Regulations. Non-compliance with the *Public Finance Management Act* and procurement processes was also highlighted, which borders on corruption, wasteful, and irregular expenditure.

The PSA believes in the rule of law of presumption of innocence until proven guilty and respects the rights of suspended Director-General but regards the suspension as a step in the right direction. The PSA calls upon the Minister of Defence and Military Veterans and acting Director-General to immediately reconsider the memorandum of understanding with the Department of Defence, which is the source of many soldiers, including retired soldiers, who are employed at the Department. The Department's organogram should be finalised to allow for employing skilled, qualified employees. The Minister must prioritise restoring order and governance at the Department and should not allow corruption to thrive under her watch.

END

