

MEDIA RELEASE **Public Service 2021/22-wage negotiations: PSA warns on State's delays**

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) together with other unions has commenced with salary negotiations for public servants with the State as employer for the 2021/22-financial year amidst rising frustration with delays.

The PSA, which represents more than 235 000 members, presented its demands for a salary increase and other conditions of service on 1 March 2021. The demands were based on the rising costs of food, fuel and electricity.

Unions met with the employer on 29 and 30 March 2021 in anticipation that the employer would provide a tangible offer in response to the demands. Instead, the employer frustrated the process by posing more clarity questions on the demands. The Public Service Coordinating Bargaining Council (PSCBC) constitution makes provision for the manner in which negotiations take place and the PSA intends following this process meticulously to avoid technical problems in the event of a deadlock being reached.

The PSA was extremely disappointed and frustrated with the process and delays, which seem intentional, as public servants are due to receive their increase by 1 April 2021. This is the second consecutive year where 1 April as due date for implementation will be met with no increase in public servants' wages. At the same time, there are announcements of record-high fuel increases with a knock-on effect on all other commodities.

Labour has informed the employer that Public Service employees are not responsible for the multiple reasons of the State's financial woes. These include theft, corruption, waste-full expenditure, mismanagement of public funds, frivolous litigation by the State as employer against its own employees, and bailouts for corrupt state-owned entities. In addition, Government's ongoing inability to recover these funds and ensure consequence management is compounding the crisis.

Public servants kept the country afloat during the COVID-19 pandemic and are still committed to continue doing so, yet their employer lacks urgency to address their legitimate wage demands to ensure a decent living. The PSA will not rest until the Constitutional Court matter is finalised and current negotiations result in a fair salary agreement for the 2021/22 period. The employer's lack of urgency to finalise negotiations holds the danger of an ultimate shutdown of the Public Service and further delays with the COVID-19 vaccination process, which is already behind schedule for impacting on reaching mass immunity.

Labour in the PSCBC gave the employer until 9 April 2021, to respond to the demand in the form of a written offer. Negotiations will continue thereafter on a date set by the PSCBC Secretariat.

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