

<b>MEDIA RELEASE</b>	<b>Public Service wage dispute: PSA disappointed by employer's disregard for employees' wellbeing</b>
<b>DATE</b>	28 August 2020
<b>EMBARGO</b>	None
<b>ENQUIRIES</b>	Reuben Maleka 082 903 6808

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) as one of the largest parties at the Public Service Coordinating Bargaining Council (PSCBC) and representing more than 240 000 public servants, has been informed by its legal team that the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) has filed a notice of a counter application in the drawn-out Public Service wage dispute.

The counter application intends to declare clause 3.3 of the PSCBC wage agreement as unlawful as the DPSA is of the view that it is in contravention of sections 213 and 215 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and the Public Service Regulations' section 78 and 79.

The PSA's position in this matter remains unchanged in that the DPSA is bound by an agreement regulating salary adjustments and improvements on conditions of service in the Public Service for the period 2018/19, 2019/20 and 2020/21 as incorporated in PSCBC Resolution 1/ 2018. The PSA is disappointed that the DPSA at this late stage filed a counter application as pleadings in the matter were closed and the indexing and paginating of the court file is in process to obtain a set-down date.

This action by the employer is indicative of its lack of regard for the welfare of public servants. Rather than paying the agreed salary increases, taxpayers' money is wasted on frivolous litigation processes. In a nutshell and apart from issues arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, the DPSA and Treasury are indicating that government should be permitted to renege on an agreement as honouring the agreement will have "catastrophic" consequences. This despite that fact that such consequences were foreseen prior to the conclusion of the agreement. Cabinet authorized the agreement and payments were effected for the first two terms of the agreement. The agreement was seemingly only concluded as Cabinet did not want to deal with potentially negative public perception.

The PSA believes that should such an argument be permitted to succeed, it will destroy collective bargaining in the public sector and, quite possibly, in the private sector also. It is unfortunate that government wants to use any excuse possible to warrant its actions rather than looking at the interest of public servants who remain of the coalface of combatting the COVID-19 pandemic despite huge personal sacrifices.

The PSA remains resolute that public servants deserve salary increases and should not pay for the consequences of unabated looting of fiscus for the past 26 years. Denying public servants an increase will not resolve the looting, corruption, fraud and financial mismanagement that are going unpunished. If President Ramaphosa is serious about rooting out corruption, he should disband the ministerial task team and leave investigations to the Special Investigation Unit and the Hawks and recoup money back into fiscus.

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