

**MEDIA RELEASE                      Public Service wage dispute: PSA increases pressure on government**

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In the wake of government's failure to respond to public servants' call for a decent salary increase, the Public Servants Association (PSA) led the labour movement and commenced with lunch-hour picketing in October 2022. This was followed by a nationwide strike on 10 November 2022 where the PSA issued government with an ultimatum to respond to the Union's demands within seven days or face intensified actions.

As expected, government responded negatively to the PSA memorandum, and indicating that it regards the 2022/23 salary negotiations as concluded and encourages Unions to table new demands to commence with negotiations for 2023/24. Government is also not filling more than 48 000 public-service vacancies, despite the high rate of unemployment and a growing population, leaving its employees over-burdened. In addition, it wants to retrench more employees, confirming the PSA's conclusion that government is uncaring and irresponsible.

In intensifying industrial action, the PSA joined federations marches on 22 November 2022 where, once again, a memorandum of demands was handed to government. No response to this memorandum was received within the stipulated seven-day timeframe. Public servants are bleeding as they are subjected to poor working conditions, diminishing benefits, dysfunctional working tools, inadequate human resources, and poor security. They are also increasingly suffering financially owing to the rising cost of living and stagnant salaries.

The PSA will thus continue intensifying pressure on government to highlight these workers' plight. Lunch-hour picketing at various institutions across the country continues, especially targeting service departments. The PSA will further not proceed with negotiations for 2023/24 until the 2022/23 impasse is resolved. Meetings are being convened to mobilise members for various actions. These include protest action in Cape Town, as the seat of parliament, on 9 December 2022. Plans are further underway for protest action at the upcoming ANC congress in December 2022 in view of the attack on collective bargaining by certain Ministers. Protest actions at major government events are also being planned. In addition, PSA members will refuse to perform unpaid overtime work to force government to fill vacancies.

Public servants' anger has reached an uncontrollable level and they are prepared for indefinite strike action. Workers are prepared to fight fire with fire and bring the country to a standstill. The PSA is determined to continue with actions to protect public servants' rights that are under attack by an arrogant government that can shamelessly renege from a signed collective agreement. The PSA cautions government to heed this warning as public servants have reached the end of their patience with government.

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