

**MEDIA RELEASE**                      **SONA: PSA concerned about more promises and unaddressed issues**

DATE                                      10 February 2023

EMBARGO                                None

ENQUIRIES                              [communication@psa.co.za](mailto:communication@psa.co.za)

---

The Public Servants Association (PSA) acknowledges the attempt by President Cyril Ramaphosa to move away from rhetoric to tangible and decisive actions in his State of the Nation address but is concerned about various critical issues that were left unattended.

The President was clear that he would address four burning issues, namely, load shedding, unemployment, poverty and the rising cost of living, as well as crime and corruption. He, unfortunately, did not do justice even to these four issues. The PSA warns that the declaration of the National State of Disaster must not be used to once again loot state coffers, as was evident during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, public servants' pension money should not be seen as an easy funding solution for government's big promises to the country and enrichment of politicians who have direct access to the Public Investment Corporation.

The expansion of employment tax incentives to encourage businesses to hire young people is commendable, although there must be adequate monitoring to ensure compliance with the minimum wage, unlike EPWP workers, community health workers and educator assistants who are on a slavery wage. The removal of experience requirements for lower-level employment will assist young people to access employment.

Although the President has correctly indicated that the country's greatest weaknesses are in state-owned enterprises and local government, he failed to acknowledge that cadre deployment of corrupt, unskilled, and unqualified officials contributed to this problem. The drafting of the *Public Procurement Bill* is long overdue.

The impact of crime and lawlessness is undermined by the President who is misled in thinking that by employing a mere 10 000 more police officers will result in protected communities. The Deputy Minister of Police recently indicated that at least 80 000 police officers were needed to service the current population. The acting head of the Metro Police recently confirmed that 1 300 police officers had applied for metro police positions as the entry-level salary was way higher than that of the SA Police Service. The dysfunctionality of the 10111-call centre also requires the appointment of employees. It currently has less than 1 400 employees whilst more than 3 000 employees are required.

The President's silence on public service challenges is extremely disappointing. He is clearly not very concerned about the state of public institutions such as hospitals, schools, and government departments suffering from chronic staff shortages and operating with less than 60% of the required human resources. The PSA is also concerned that the President failed to mention border management control, which is central to the country's safety and security. South Africa is experiencing increased criminal activities, including hijackings, movement of illegal guns and drugs, as well as poached rhino horn, which can be attributed to the unmonitored and uncontrolled movement of people across borders. The increasing number of undocumented non-citizens poses a further threat to the country's security.



Despite the President's repeated pledges to "leave nobody behind", public servants were forgotten as the President failed to address the status of community health workers, police reservists, and educator assistants for them to receive a living wage, rather than a meagre R3 500. The PSA further hopes the mooted Comprehensive Student Funding Model for higher education will also address the problem of government employees who are deemed "too rich" by government and "too poor" by financial institutions.

The PSA cautions that legislative amendments to address whistle-blowers' protection are not enough. The President has not demonstrated seriousness or provided details other than saying that work is underway to improve access to the witness protection programme for public servants. Attacks on whistle-blowers have claimed lives. It is therefore disappointing that the President did not even comment on the South African Tourism Board's intention to hunt down whistle-blowers in the controversial R1 billion soccer-club sponsorship. There is an urgent need for decisiveness by government on this matter to prevent more fatalities and threats to good citizens who want to blow the whistle on crime and corruption.

The President announced the unbundling of Eskom three years ago. There was disappointingly no clarity on progress with this process. Instead, he talked about renewable energy, which is known to be costly and out of reach for most citizens. There is no clarity on whether the poor will be subsidised to obtain solar systems. There is further no rationale for appointing a Minister of Electricity as not every function needs the appointment of a minister. There is no clarity on how the portfolio will coordinate with other ministries without a costly duplication of services.

The PSA is further concerned that the President made no mention of the improvement in safety and security at public buildings, including schools and hospitals. The President agreed that schools must be safe and allow for effective learning and teaching, without providing solutions on how this can be achieved whilst armed attackers are entering schools and hospitals.

The President and his administration are clearly refusing to stop the tender system, which is the genesis of fraud and corruption and have paralysed the country's economy. Failure to address this critical issue continues to fuel criminality. Cleaners, security staff, and catering must be absorbed into the public service as government is paying a high price for these services through a tender system that enriches the corrupt and politically connected. In addition, departments must appoint artisans to maintain and renovate buildings rather than paying service providers exorbitant amounts.

END