

<b>MEDIA RELEASE</b>	<b>SONA: PSA disappointed at missed opportunities to restore confidence in Public Service</b>
<b>DATE</b>	12 February 2021
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The Public Servants Association (PSA), despite welcoming some of the issues raised by President Cyril Ramaphosa in his State of the Nation Address (SONA) on 11 February 2021, is disappointed that the President failed to address various crucial matters.

The PSA, as a major Union representing close on 240 000 public-sector employees, supports efforts by Government to ensure a speedy and effective roll-out of COVID-19 vaccines and appreciates the focus on front-line workers. The President in his address, however, missed an opportunity to address universal healthcare in the country by speeding up the implementation of the National Health Insurance (NHI). The vaccine roll-out and the management of the epidemic presented Government with an opportunity to integrate its plans with the implementation of the NHI. The PSA therefore advises the Minister of Health to prioritise the NHI and fix the healthcare system and facilities. The economic recovery plan is commendable but, as discovered during the pandemic, if National Health infrastructures are not improved, the initiative will be meaningless.

It was further disappointing that the President made no mention of restoring confidence in the public service delivery. Apart from a lack of capacity in government departments to meet growing service delivery demands, labour unrest is looming in the Public Service owing to the State's failure to honour collective agreements. This situation is impacting on investor confidence and the economy. It is therefore concerning to hear that more Government Agencies will be created and thereby fueling outsourcing and impacting on Government's responsibility to maintain direct control over the delivering of key resources. The PSA has previously demanded that all agencies be absorbed into the core Government structures to prevent further corruption as currently experienced in such agencies. This will further assist in curbing wasteful expenditure by Government Departments.

The PSA further does not regard the reporting to Parliament by the task team established to fight corruption as a resolution or progressive means to address the rampant corruption that is laming the country. A number of these processes have been established over the years and revelations of the extent of corruption was brought to light. What remains missing is clear implementation measures of outcomes and processes to hold those responsible accountable for their actions. Instead of more units and committees, prosecutions are needed as is the need to capacitate current law enforcement agencies, assisted with expertise from the private sector.

It seems that Government is not intent on taking a firm stance on dealing with perpetrators, especially those from its own ranks. It rather appears that attempts are being made to keep the public occupied by focusing attention on processes instead of accountability, thereby protecting corrupt counterparts. The PSA will not be fooled by such tactics and will continue to pursue accountability and prosecutions.

Eskom unfortunately remains a challenge and the PSA expected an update on progress made with existing initiatives, including splitting Eskom into three entities. The provision of electricity is core to economic recovery and

investor confidence. Eskom has, however, become a burden on taxpayers whilst being plagued by corruption. All efforts to restore the utility can be made, but if the bleeding of resources through corruption is not addressed, it will be a further waste of resources. Again, prosecutions of corrupt individuals are needed as part of the turn-around.

Whilst there were glaring missed opportunities in the 2021 SONA, the PSA is hopeful that Government will still address these concerns and priorities when the Budget Vote is delivered and that resources are directed to address the looming crisis areas.

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