

MEDIA RELEASE **MTBPS: Finance Minister's undermining of Public Service collective bargaining regarded as a declaration of war**

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EMBARGO None

ENQUIRIES communication@psa.co.za

The Public Servants Association (PSA) is disappointed that the Minister of Finance, Tito Mboweni, missed the opportunity to explicitly address the pressing issue of overdue Public Service salary increases in his medium-term budget policy statement (MTBPS) today and chose to make more unfounded statements in this regard.

Rather than the Minister addressing government's honouring of its commitment towards its employees' overdue salary increases, money was found to yet again bail out the South African Airways. It is becoming increasingly evident that there is an attack on collective bargaining in the Public Service and laws and processes governing this hard-gained right for workers are being disregarded. The responses from the employer to demands from labour in Public Service collective bargaining structures over the past two years are indicative of such disrespect. This is further underlined by the recent renegeing by government of the final leg of the Public Service wage agreement.

Public servants are, despite this disregard for their rights and attacks on their integrity, ensuring that services are maintained. This while many buildings where they work are falling apart and severe staff shortages in critical departments are resulting in excessive work hours. There is clearly no appreciation for public servants' work coupled with a constant attack on their negotiated conditions of service. This is exacerbated by new pension fund penalties that are to be imposed on public servants who opt to leave government. Government employees will, in effect, be kept hostage to slave under deteriorating conditions. Statements regarding making the Public Service an employer of choice are thus a slap in the face for public servants.

The Minister also stated that the Minister of Public Service and Administration is engaging with unions on Public Service wages and the wage bill. This statement is untrue as no such engagement is taking place. Labour is yet to table a new wage demand in the Public Service Coordinating Bargaining Council (PSCBC) on future negotiations and the Labour Appeal Court is set to rule on government's failure to implement the last leg of the collective agreement. Had the employer opted to approach labour through the PSCBC first, the Minister's statement that there will be no increases for the next four years, would not have been regarded as a clear undermining of collective bargaining in the Public Service and a blatant disrespect for unions.

Government, as custodian of rights and guardian of institutions that were created to protect democracy, is unfortunately demonstrating a total disregard for such processes. The PSA can under these circumstances only regard the Minister's statements as an outright declaration of war against labour in the Public Service.

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