

MEDIA RELEASE **PSA comments on President's weekly newsletter**

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The Public Servants Association (PSA), representing over 235 000 public servants and as the majority Union representing employees of the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA), has noted with grave concern matters raised by President Cyril Ramaphosa in his recent weekly newsletter.

The newsletter raised several issues of concern, including reports that thousands of public servants are unlawfully receiving social grants. This is a matter of serious concern that cannot be allowed.

The President also referred to the launch of the new Public Administration Ethics, Integrity and Disciplinary Technical Assistance Unit, which is intended to “*build capacity within public bodies to institute disciplinary proceedings*”. The PSA, while condemning all acts of corruption, maladministration, and ill-discipline, cautions against the appointment of a unit that would superimpose itself against employees appointed in various units in departments, such as the Fraud and Compliance unit in SASSA and labour relations units in all other government departments. Competent and skilled employees have been appointed in these units, although capacity is still lacking. The PSA views this as a consequence of government's habit not to fill vacancies that arise. Moratoriums are constantly placed on the filling of positions and funds are moved around between positions, creating gaps in the system. The additional capacity brought in by government through the establishment of the Public Administration Ethics, Integrity and Disciplinary Technical Assistance Unit would not have been needed if vacant positions were being filled promptly.

In addition, the Technical Assistance Unit and the Anti-Corruption Task Team should not be driven by public opinions but must ensure that cases are investigated properly, and that justice prevails. Initiatives of this nature can lead to having those entrusted to implement the initiative chasing numbers for statistical purposes and the need to appease public views and opinions at the expense of honest employees.

The PSA further calls on SASSA to upgrade its systems and verification processes to eliminate the processing and approval of grants to fraudulent beneficiaries. The PSA has supported SASSA's automation agenda and will continue to support progressive initiatives that seek to enhance the security of systems and processes in SASSA and government in general.

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