

**MEDIA RELEASE**                      **PSA condemns lenient sentencing of former Steinhoff CFO and former CEO associate**

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The Public Servants Association (PSA) has noted with disgust the lenient sentencing of Ben la Grange, former CFO of Steinhoff, and Gerhardus Burger, an associate of the former Steinhoff CEO, who will serve only five years in prison.

This punishment does not reflect the magnitude of crimes that devastated the financial security of many investors and employees. Whilst the conviction is the step in the right direction, many corrupt individuals do not set foot in prison for their deeds. These convictions, however, mark a pivotal moment in ongoing efforts to hold accountable those responsible for the near collapse of the global giant.

The PSA has been at the forefront of efforts to bring to book those responsible for Steinhoff's near collapse to ensure that corruption does not continue without consequence. Although the company did not manage to recoup close to a R1 billion lost through the systemic and organised series of fraudulent activities, these convictions are a consolation and deterrent for professionals to engage in corrupt activities. The greed of these individuals left the company with debt of R185 billion and massive job losses, leaving families vulnerable with no income.

The PSA noted the commitment of these individuals to cooperate with the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) and the Hawks. No one is above the law and corruption is unacceptable in any sector. Corruption must be rooted out of if the economy is to grow and attract foreign investments. Whilst the conviction of Mr La Grange represents progress, it highlights the challenges in addressing white-collar crime. The Steinhoff scandal is as a stark reminder of the need for stringent regulatory oversight and robust legal frameworks to prevent such corporate crime. The PSA commends the work of the NPA and the Hawks for ensuring that those responsible for corrupt and criminal activities are brought to book.

The PSA further calls for accountability for all individuals indicated during the state-capture enquiry. The PSA fought for the former CEO to be brought to book and used lawyers to access documents proving the corrupt activities. The PSA thus also welcomes the maximum fines that were imposed in terms of legislative framework. The fines were for releasing misleading and incorrect financial statements not complying with listing requirements and producing fictitious invoices.

The PSA will continue to combat corruption in the public and private sector in the interest of the country and citizens. The country must rid itself of corruption and the President is urged to act decisively with prosecutions.

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