MEDIA RELEASE **PSA demands secure SASSA grant processes and systems**

DATE 10 February 2022

EMBARGO None

ENQUIRIES communication@psa.co.za

The Public Servants Association of South Africa (PSA) is extremely concerned about numerous ongoing reports of how people have unlawfully and fraudulently benefited from social grants approved by the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA).

President Cyril Ramaphosa will be delivering the State of the Nation Address (SONA) to the Joint Sitting of the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces tonight at 19:00 amidst calls from some sectors of society for the introduction of a permanent basic income grant. A grant of R350 was introduced as a means of social relief for South Africans who were unemployed during the COVID-19 hard lockdown in 2020. The period for the grant has since been extended until March 2022. Most South Africans are waiting to hear what the President will announce regarding the grant.

The PSA, as the Union that represents the majority of SASSA employees, is deeply concerned about the vast amounts lost SASSA annually to fraudulent beneficiaries. SASSA's grant processes and systems are clearly not secure against fraud. An Agency entrusted with billions of taxpayers' money cannot afford to have processes and systems that a susceptible to manipulation and fraud.

An internal investigation was conducted by SASSA to assess if there were loopholes in its social pension grant system and processes and some measures were put in place to tighten the system's security. The PSA, however, urges SASSA's Chief Executive Officer, to fully secure the system with regular security upgrades to avoid manipulation of grant processes.

It will be disastrous for the country for SASSA to be entrusted with the responsibility to issue a permanent basic income grant whilst it is already failing to prevent fraud and corruption related to other social grants that have been issued for years. A basic income grant will come at a huge cost for the country, particularly already strained taxpayers. The PSA therefore demands stricter measures and more accountability by SASSA to ensure that fraud and corruption related to grants are eradicated.

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