

MEDIA RELEASE **PSA welcomes much-awaited suspension of Public Protector**

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The Public Servants Association of South Africa (PSA), representing the majority of employees at the Public Protector of South Africa, welcomes the much-awaited suspension of the Public Protector.

President Cyril Ramaphosa suspended the Public Protector, Adv Busisiwe Mkhwebane, with immediate effect until Parliament decides on impeachment. The suspension comes after parliamentary processes ensued to pave the way for her impeachment. The PSA fully supports the suspension as Adv Mkhwebane's conduct did not contribute towards raise the profile of the institution but rather created unnecessary, controversy, and reputational damage.

The PSA further welcomes the appointment of Ms Kholeka Gcaleka, Deputy Public Protector, to act as Public Protector and call upon her restore the dignity of the office and ensure that rights and interests of employees are promoted. The acting Public Protector must further work at restoring the relationship with labour, which is at an all-time low owing to the mistreatment of union representatives by her predecessor.

Adv Mkhwebane's suspension follows public outcry regarding her incompetence, which led to many of her decisions being set aside by courts. The PSA's main bone of contention has been her treatment of employees. The Public Protector harassed and purged PSA shop stewards by subjecting them to dubious disciplinary hearings. She used external lawyers in these disciplinary hearings and ignored seasoned labour-relations officials who are paid to perform this job. She instructed external lawyers to confiscate laptops of investigators without them being provided with security clearance, compromising the work of the Office of the Public Protector. She further appointed tainted senior staff who were dismissed from government departments owing to their indiscretion and misconduct.

The PSA calls upon the acting Public Protector to pursue labour peace and create a conducive environment to enable optimum performance by employees. The ill-treatment of employees, victimisation and suppressing of different views must be a thing of the past. The PSA is prepared to work with her to restore the image of the Office to allow for the execution of its constitutional mandate.

The PSA remains adamant that Advocate Mkhwebane was not fit to run the Office. The PSA reiterates the call that her removal from the Office must be expedited as she remains a stumbling block for in the way of restoring the integrity of this critical institution.

END