

MEDIA RELEASE	SONA: PSA urges President Ramaphosa to ensure labour stability
DATE	11 February 2021
EMBARGO	None
ENQUIRIES	communication@psa.co.za

The Public Servants Association (PSA), as one of the largest unions in the Public Service, ahead of the State of the Nation Address (SONA) on 11 February 2021, appeals to the President Cyril Ramaphosa to urgently address core issues currently impacting on service delivery by the Public Service.

One of the main factors with the potential to cause instability in the Public Service and the entire economy, is Government's stance on collective bargaining and its respect for adherence to labour laws. Collective bargaining has come under threat following Government's non-implementation of duly negotiated collective agreements. This conduct by Government has huge potential to result in widespread labour instability and thus destroying labour peace. Under such circumstances, investor confidence in South Africa will be at risk. In addition, already stressed service delivery to citizens could collapse. Government recently reneged on the implementation of a crucial agreement reach with unions for salary increases for its own employees. This matter is set to be heard by the Constitutional Court. It is crucial for Government to ensure that it restores the integrity of collective bargaining and labour rights and such assurance should come from the highest office in the country.

The PSA further calls on the President to ensure that more funding is allocated towards the improvement of capacity within Government. The PSA has for years been prompting Government to increase capacity in key departments such as the Department of Correctional Services, the safety and security sector as well as the health and social development sector. These calls were based on provisions already contained in the National Development Plan as well as in response to challenges experienced at various workplaces. Public servants are working excessive overtime hours and loaded with more responsibilities than for which they were appointed. This situation increase pressure on employees and impact on service delivery to the public. Government's failure to address these challenges contribute to negative impressions regarding public servants. In addition, capacity at the SA Revenue Service should be prioritised to ensure systems are upgraded and maintained to assist with tax erosion. More employees are needed to investigate the cash economy, enforce tax compliance, and address illicit trade, which is booming under COVID-19 lockdown regulations.

COVID-19 further dictates an urgency to ensure that all frontline employees are vaccinated with a safe and effective vaccine. These workers are under tremendous strain and despite prevailing understaffing and workplace challenges, perform their functions to the best of their ability. It is of utmost importance that a solution be found to vaccinate all frontline workers to enable them can perform their duties without a risk of the collapse of services with an impact on vaccination rollouts. The roll-out anticipating future and similar challenges, should be strategically integrated to ensure speedy implementation.

The vaccine rollout process should further not be seen in isolation of the implementation of the long-awaited National Health Insurance (NHI). During the pandemic, the need for this was clearly demonstrated and it is in the country's best interest to prioritise implementation.

Recent media reports have revealed that the funding and conduct of various medical aids and regulatory bodies are plagued with challenges and allegations related to fraud, waste, abuse, corruption, and discriminatory practices. The implementation of the NHI will go a long way in ensuring that citizens benefit without further losses to corruption.

The PSA is extremely frustrated by the slow progress with prosecutions of those implicated in corruption. The PSA has made repeated calls on Government to implement effective measures to decisively address corruption, ensure accountability and speed up prosecution and recovery processes. Increasing the capacity of institutions such as the National Prosecuting Authority will contribute to resolve these matters and restore public confidence in Government's commitment to root out corruption that has near-paralyzed the economy and dented the country's reputation.

A demand for fruitless and wasteful expenditure to be curbed and addressed is included in the PSA's wage demands for public servants for the coming year. Money amounting to billions are lost to corruption and mismanagement without any consequence management. At the same time, ordinary public servants are subjected to frivolous disciplinary actions and unfair labour practices, resulting in a further waste of tax-payer's monies when such matters are defended and eventually won at the Labour Courts. Again, there is no repercussions for those who are guilty of such conduct.

The PSA further and again advises President Ramaphosa to take a firm stand the continuous bail-out of failing state-owned entities. Such assistance should be stopped, especially in view of the extent of corruption prevalent in such institutions, including Eskom and the SAA. Tax payers can no longer be expected to pour money into a bottomless pit of looting and corruption in the glaring absence of consequence management.

Government's failure to take decisive actions on these issues are draining state coffers of funding that should have been allocated to address service delivery impediments and to ensure that Government honors its commitments towards its employees. The PSA calls on President Ramaphosa to address these core issues in his address and provide short- and long-term plans on how the South African economy will be resuscitated in the face of growing unemployment.

END