

## Workers' Day 2021

Workers' Day has been commemorated since the late 1800s, born from the struggle to ensure equal rights and opportunities for workers, as well as serving as a celebration of worker and trade union achievements through the ages. The PSA, representing more than 235 000 public-sector workers, is, however, aware that the struggle for improved working conditions, occupational health and safety, and even fair compensation persists.

This reality is compounded by Government's dismal failure to deal with the damage done to the country and the economy through rampant fraud, corruption, mismanagement, and wasteful expenditure. Gains made by public servants have in recent years been eroded by poor governance to the extent that workers are being used as scapegoats by Government to hide the real cost of the damage caused by irregular activities. This includes the continued use of the public service wage bill as an excuse for Government's failures in achieving basic service delivery goals. National Treasury continues to affirm the decision to implement a three-year wage freeze in the public sector to cut government spending by R300-billion.

Another attack was Government's failure to honour the final leg of the 2018 three-year Public Service wage agreement. Collective bargaining governs the relationship between the employer and employees and allowing Government to renege on such agreements puts collective bargaining and labour peace at great risk. An additional insult to workers was the 0% wage offer that was tabled by Government for the 2021/22-financial year. Similar situations are evident at institutions such as SARS, SALGA, etc. where collective agreements have not been implemented.

The PSA, in understanding the importance of collective agreements, has approached the Constitutional Court, on the non-implementation of the 2020-Public Service wage increase and the matter will be heard on 24 August 2021. In addition, Public Service industrial action is becoming a reality based on Government's 0% salary offer for 2021.

The ills facing the successful management of the Public Service are known. It is, however, deeply concerning that Government continues to show a lack of urgency in tackling issues that have a direct impact on workers and service delivery to citizens. The PSA reiterates its stance that if government fails to treat its workers with respect and continues efforts to reduce their negotiated benefits, industrial action will become labour's only option.

GENERAL MANAGER