

Update: Wage negotiations 2021/22-financial year

The PSA with other unions tabled wage demands on 1 March 2021 with a view to conclude a collective agreement to ensure that public servants receive a wage increase for the 2021/22-financial year.

It was previously reported that negotiations continued on 23 April 2021 where the employer tabled a revised offer. Its offer was based on a principle to use funds allocated for pay progression, resettlement, daily allowance, and encashment of leave, to mention a few, to fund a once-off cash gratuity whilst parties build a “self-sustaining multifactor system”, which will be an automated system to regulate wage increases. This proposal was rejected, and a deadlock was reached.

As labour intended on 4 May 2021 to file for a dispute jointly, a request was received from the employer for an urgent special PSCBC meeting to hear a proposal on the appointment of an independent facilitator to break the deadlock. This meeting took place on 3 and 4 May 2021. The PSA did not agree to the proposed process as it was regarded as another tactic to frustrate the process and delay its finalisation. The concern is also that the date of the Constitutional Court hearing of 24 August 2021 is drawing near and the outcome may have an impact on signing an agreement on the latest round of negotiations. The exact process that is being introduced by the employer is also already provided for in the Dispute Resolution Process. Therefore the request for such a facilitation process does not make sense, except to gain more time for the employer. The PSA believes that the dispute route is the only option to force parties to commit to an earnest approach to find a speedy solution to the impasse.

The PSA did not share the same optimism as the rest of labour and therefore expressed disagreement with the facilitation process and reserved its rights on record on whether to file immediately for a dispute. The conditions set by the rest of labour to the employer to follow the said facilitation process were that:

- The process should be regarded as part of the continuation of the meeting convened on 3 May 2021.
- It does not extend the negotiation process as envisaged and stipulated in the PSCBC’s Constitution.
- It is subject to the employer tabling a new offer during the facilitation process, other than what was previously tabled.
- The process should commence on 7 May 2021, proceed on Sunday, Monday and for the remaining days of the ten-day period for the process.
- If there is no new revised offer tabled during this process, labour will immediately be in dispute and follow the Dispute Resolution Process.

The PSA understands the desperation of the rest of labour to force for an agreement as an immediate accomplishment. The PSA therefore expects a substantial offer to be tabled by the employer on 7 May 2021 as it requested a further meeting, failing which, the PSA will proceed with the Dispute Resolution Process of Council.

It is more important at this stage for labour to remain united in its attempt as there is strength in unity.

Members will be updated on developments.

GENERAL MANAGER