



RESPONSE TO THE STATEMENT PURPORTEDLY ISSUED BY THE MINISTER FOR PUBLIC SERVICE ON THE WELFARE OF CIVIL SERVANTS BY THE PUBLIC SECTOR UNIONS OF SWAZILAND ON THURSDAY [07-04-2022]

1. INTRODUCTION

On Thursday (07-04-2022) evening, we, the Public Sector Associations (PSAs) of Swaziland: the National Public Services and Allied Workers Union (NAPSAWU), the Swaziland National Association of Government Accounting Personnel (SNAGAP), the Swaziland National Association of Teachers (SNAT), the Swaziland Democratic Nurses Union (SWADNU), came across a public statement that was purported to have been issued by one Mabulala Maseko, the sitting Minister for Public Service. As the PSAs collective, we have noted with dismay, disappointment and unmatched sadness, the contemptuous attitude with which the minister of the crown, has articulated issues insensitively in that statement thereby undermining the over 44 000 government employees. The manner in which Mr Maseko addressed the issue of the Salary Review for the workers and the renewal of contracts for some employees exemplifies his (minister's) wet behind the ear approach to issues of national importance and further explains the intensity in which he undermines public servants workers, in the main. As the PSAs collective we deem it necessary to respond, as we hereby do, in an endeavor to put things in the correct perspective.

2. CORE OF THE STATEMENT

As the PSAs, we have been noting the wayward behavior of Mr Maseko, each time issues of interest to the workers were being discussed at the Joint Negotiations Forum (JNF). Mr Maseko has been running to the electronic media particularly the radio station where he is given airtime to misguide the nation on certain issues. As workers, we kept quiet because we thought as a human being himself, he was still going through the learning process and hoped that in the fullness of time he will get his

senses back so that they assist him to do things appropriately as a professional Minister. Since we have been noting that his despicable behavior persists, we have to therefore respond as follows;

I. Salary Review [SR] Exercise

According to the 06 July 2016 Collective Agreement (CA), which was then made an order of Court, the government was expected to commission a Salary Review exercise during the 2021/2022 financial year. The escalation of the agreement to the level of being an order of court was actually giving the collective agreement a force of law. Even though the agreement itself was a result of an interest based dispute but the conversion of same to be an order of the court made the agreement to be one that accorded workers certain rights in so far as the review of our salaries was concerned. In principle, there was no need for any negotiation to be conducted on a rights based dispute such as in the matter at hand.

By failing to oppose the registration of the said agreement as an order of court effectively meant that the government fully understood her responsibilities and expectations as espoused in the agreement and one does not need to be a Harvard University graduate to think this way. Common sense therefore dictated that the government ought to then make deliberate efforts and attempts from way back in 2016, to start to prepare for ways in which it would implement its legal mandate so enshrined in the order. This did not at all need rocket scientists to be implemented. It is interesting why Mr Maseko in his (07-04-2022) statement conveniently runs away from giving responses to the nation on why the government, our employer of choice has failed to deliver in this cardinal task. The failure by the Government to prioritize the welfare of its workers is an indication that the Tinkundla system of government is not at all people centred. How can a Minister justify the non-increase of salaries when prices of basic commodities are hiking on a daily basis. Any argument that is advanced by Mr maseko regarding the advent of Covid 19 as a cause for his government's monumental failures further buttresses the argument that the Tinkundla System of Government has dismally failed to lead and that it is high time that it is replaced by a more people centred government.

To request Civil servants to be calm and not demand the implementation of the agreed upon salary review exercise is an



insult not only to the 44 000 workers but also to their families as well. It is dreadful that Civil servants are expected to be calm when they are hungry and cannot put food on the table for their families but the government is able to spend resources on less important cultural events like the recently held Buganu Ceremony.

The recent price increases in basic commodities and goods such as fuel, electricity, water and bread means many of our people shall be further condemned into the abyss of poverty and deprivation and we are not going to allow that to happen. The useless and rotten dangled carrot of CoLA by the minister shall, as our experiences have told us, further complicate the socio-economic status of the government workers. We know that the Minister wants to confuse workers into believing that the COLA will make an impact on their lives when in fact there will not be any significant difference to the lives they live today. As workers, we want to re-iterate that we do not want CoLA but we need the implementation of the Salary review Exercise.

II. Casualisation of the Public Service

This cancerous act by the government was justified by the Principal Secretary [PS] from the Ministry of Public Service [MoPS], arguing that the government was indeed saving money by employing workers such as teachers and nurses on contract. Our employer has not considered our clarion call for government to end this. This is now spreading to other departments and it must stop. For the minister to then argue that because the government has renewed contracts of some nurses and that they will now renew contracts of some teachers, to that we say “thanks BUT no thanks”. It is a contemptuous act by the government to place our members on a fixed term contracts and yet the work that they do is perpetual in nature and that cannot be allowed.

On Friday (08-04-2022) one of our member organizations, the SNAT shall be meeting the Ministry of Public Service over several issues with the issue of Teachers’ contracts, chief amongst those issues. The minister must remain a politician and allow his messengers, the Principal Secretary, Mr Siphso Tsabedze and his senior management team to deal with such technical issues.



Before he comments, he must learn to get clarity on those he has mandated to deal with such issues. In short, the minister is hereby ordered, rather than being advised to stop descending into the arena in such matters. If he does that, he will confuse the operational systems of his very own ministry, this is just a word of caution.

Conclusion

As the PSAs collective, we are resolute and determined more than ever before that we shall push for the implementation of the 2016 Order of court, nothing more and nothing less. As mass-based organizations, we will do everything in our power to ensure that the 44 000 workers, unionized and non-unionized are given that which rightfully belongs to them – the Salary Review Exercise. There is therefore no amount of intimidation, torture and bashing that shall make us scale down our efforts. We have suffered far too long, we have put a lot of effort in such struggles, and we have spilled a lot of blood in the process. However, it is high time that the efforts that we have been putting in work and societal related struggles thus far give us dividends and the blood we have been spilling over the years, as workers, must now set us free. As workers, we deserve to enjoy economic freedom like other workers in other parts of the world. We shall therefore stop at nothing in ensuring that our wishes as workers are realized.

ISSUED BY THE PSA SECRETARIAT ON THE 07TH OF April, 2022

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