

MEDIA STATEMENT-FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TUESDAY, 24 MARCH, 2015

NEHAWU WARNS GOVERNMENT TO STOP PROVOKING WORKERS IN THE ONGOING PUBLIC SERVICE WAGE NEGOTIATIONS

NEHAWU denounces the reckless and provocative decision by the government, to revise their initial tabled offer of 5,8% to 5% , in the ongoing public service wage negotiations at the Public Service Co-ordinating Bargaining Council (PSCBC) last night. This is the worst form of arrogance and disdain that the employer has shown for the workers in 20 years and this will only serve to poison the relations between labour and government.

These negotiations have been characterised by intransigence and haughtiness on the side of the employer with irresponsible public statements, voluntary austerity measures and acts of brinksmanship. This has delayed the conclusion of the negotiations as a result of these government impediments.

All the parties at the PSCBC agreed during the pre-negotiations process that the base from which the negotiations will start for this round of negotiations will be 5,8%, based on the year-on-year CPI of the 2013/14 Financial Year.

Despite that understanding the employer tabled their opening bid at 5% increase which was against the spirit of the pre-negotiations meeting. Labour rejected that offer on the basis that the employer was reneging on the undertaking of the pre-negotiations process. They later came with a proposal of 5, 8% salary increase across the board for the Financial year 2015/16 within a multi-term agreement of 3 (three) years.

The unions responded to this offer by revising their demands from 15% salary increase across the board to a double digit increase of 10% and moved from R3000.00 housing allowance to R1500.00, for all qualifying workers from level 1-10. We also demand a 28% increase for Medical Aid to cover losses of the past four years.

We were very stunned and troubled when employer yesterday, reversed its offer of 5,8% to 5% claiming that it was a projected average CPI for the 2015/16 financial year. They also proposed the housing allowance to R1500 for only less than 30% of qualifying public

servants; an insult to the majority of workers at level 1-5. The Medical Aid has not been increased for four (4) years and the employer refuses to address the challenges facing Gems

NEHAWU views this attitude by the employer as a gross betrayal of trust and we want to warn government that this stratagem will completely misfire. We warn government that if they visit upon workers things they cannot bear, it will all end up in tears and the price for getting labour relations wrong is disaster.

Our negotiators will go back to the PSCBC tomorrow, 25 March 2015, with the intention of continuing the negotiations and finding an amicable solution. We call on government to take these negotiations seriously and stop with these substandard antics and voluntary austerity measures. We have the patience to resolve these negotiations but, we won't allow the unabated provocation of workers to go on forever.

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