



# NEHAWU

National Education Health & Allied Workers' Union

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## MEDIA STATEMENT-FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday March 30, 2017

### NEHAWU REJECTS FOREIGN SERVICE BILL

The National Education Health & Allied Workers' Union [NEHAWU] rejects the Foreign Service Bill. The main thrust of the Bill is to take the Department of International Relations and Co-operation (DIRCO) out of the public service - turning it into stand-alone entity called the Foreign Service.

As part of this the Bill seeks to usurp a wide range of powers that are duly vested in other departments, including the Department of Public Service and Administration, Department of Home Affairs, Treasury and the Department of Public Works.

Our immediate concern and the primary basis of our rejection of this Bill relates to its adverse implications on the benefits and working conditions which are part of the gains that our union has won for members and public service workers over the years and DIRCO's attempt to create a parallel labour relations regime within government.

Yet despite these far-reaching implications on public services workers' rights and benefits, DIRCO has steamed ahead to table the Bill in Parliament without any consultation with organised labour at the Public Services Coordinating Bargaining Council (PSCBC).

We also welcome the fact that the Treasury has raised fundamental concerns that echoes NEHAWU's submission on the Bill, expressing serious concerns about DIRCO's attempts to create a parallel labour relations regime, undermining the Public Service Act and Public Finance Management Act.

Thus, as NEHAWU we reiterate our call that we have made during our submission yesterday – that it is the oversight duty of the Portfolio Committee on International Relations and Cooperation to ensure:

- That DIRCO has consulted with organised labour at a proper statutory forum, PSCBC, that is designated to deal with matters affecting labour rights and working condition of those who would be affected such as those dealt with in this Bill.
- That DIRCO consults with relevant departments that would be affected by its move to usurp their legislative mandates and roles through this Bill.
- That DIRCO tables a legislation that takes into account existing legislations, including the Public Service Act and Public Finance Management Act.

Whilst we appreciate Parliament's sovereignty to process and consider the Bill, we believe that it would be ill-advised for the Portfolio Committee on International Relations and Cooperation to continue entertaining such poorly crafted bill that is also liable for litigation.

For us NEHAWU if DIRCO does not heed our call for engagement at the PSCBC, all remedial options remain on the table including court challenge and a strike. NEHAWU shall soon report back to its members in the department with a view to also mobilise them for possible action.

### **Issued by NEHAWU Secretariat**

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