

Transnet, Satawu ink wage deal

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Transnet and the South African Transport and Allied Workers Union (Satawu) on Thursday, 27 May 2010, finally broke the deadlock, ending the three-week-long wage dispute that has cost an estimated at R7 billion, crippled the parastatal's operations and led to the accumulation of a backlog.

Satawu members will return to work today, joining their counterparts who belong to the United Transport and Allied Unions (Utatu).

Utatu accepted and signed the 11% wage agreement with Transnet last Friday.

Signed and sealed

The transport utility confirmed on Thursday afternoon that the strike had ended with Satawu inking the wage deal.

"Transnet is pleased to announce that it has settled the three-week-long strike following the signing today of the wage settlement agreement with Satawu," the company said.

Satawu also confirmed that it had signed the wage deal at 3pm SA time on Thursday, ending the strike.

In terms of the agreement, all workers would receive an additional 1% pay. "This will be paid as a once-off payment in June.

"The payment will be calculated as 1% of annual salary," it said.

The additional 1% will not be built into the salary, Satawu said, and noted the baseline wage remained unchanged at 11%.

'Victory'

"The valiant continuation of the strike by our members, despite every effort by management to coerce them back to work, has paid off," Satawu said, hailing the settlement as a "victory".

Satawu said it had been a "tough" two-and-a-half weeks for Satawu and its members.

"With huge resources at its disposal, management has used every trick in the book to sow division and fear in the hearts of

workers. But management has failed miserably," it said.

Satawu said its members would return to work from Friday.

Keeping things moving

Chris Wells, acting CEO of Transnet, said now that the wage dispute was behind, he wished to thank all the substantial number of dedicated staff who had kept critical commodity flows moving at levels of efficiency, safety and productivity that have made us all proud.

"Our rail and pipeline teams have kept the jet fuel supply at capacity and the supply of petroleum by our pipelines to the inland market continued as normal," Wells said.

Priorities

The port teams, he said, had worked hard to bring in every ship and handle every FIFA-related container delivered to ports and move priority containers.

"We have also managed to move many other priority commodities, and we are working day and night to reduce the backlog.

As an example, the efficiency in the Durban Container Terminal moved up to world class levels on certain shifts (such as 30 gross crane moves per hour)," he said

Wells said he welcomed back all employees.

"The key priority now is to work on the recovery plan to ensure that all the backlogs that have built up are cleared as quickly as possible," he said.

The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), a global federation of which Satawu is a member, welcomed the agreement.

"We congratulate them on their perseverance in seeing this difficult dispute through to the end, and warmly welcome their assurance that international solidarity has helped them on their way to victory," the ITF general secretary David Cockcroft said.

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