# Govt determined to conclude wage negotiations

Public Service and Administration Minister Ayanda Dlodlo says government is seized with working towards concluding a multi-term wage agreement with unions.



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The Minister said this after employer facilitators and trade unions adjourned negotiations on Tuesday to allow government to revert with a new offer.

On 4 May, government made an offer of 6% to 7% for 2018/19 and consumer price index (CPI) plus 1%, to CPI plus 0.5% for the successive two years.

Trade unions, on the other hand, reportedly tabled a demand of CPI plus 2% for the lowest levels and CPI plus 1% for the highest.

Tabling the department's Budget Vote speech in the Old Assembly Chamber on Wednesday, Dlodlo confirmed government had made a new offer but did not give details.

"I am pleased to announce that government has tabled an offer for negotiations at the bargaining chamber and the parties are all fully engaged in the process.

"The offer provides for a cost of living adjustment, increase in the housing allowance for certain levels and the equalisation

of pay progression for all employees in the public service," she said.

Dlodlo said that she recognised and appreciated the commitment and understanding of all social partners throughout the bargaining process.

"I am confident that in due course, the parties will arrive at an amicable outcome, which will be workable and sustainable for all of us.

"I would also like to thank my Cabinet colleagues, in particular the Mandate Committee of Ministers and the Executive Consultative Committee, for their constructive support in enabling my department to manage this process," she said.

## Addressing the public sector's rising wage bill

Dlodlo said, meanwhile, that the bargaining negotiations mark the beginning of a broader process to address the rising public sector wage bill within the context of a constrained economic environment.

She said the department will lead a government-wide process of initiatives to mitigate the impact of the rising public sector wage bill.

This includes:

- The development of a comprehensive remuneration strategy that covers the three spheres of government, including public entities in the medium term;
- Looking at the organisational structure of departments. This will result in a directive that will seek to limit the appointment of personnel additional to the structure and this will be done without affecting the operations of the department;
- Ensuring strict adherence to the guidelines of the Ministerial Handbook in respect of the appointments of support staff in ministries;
- Strict management of overtime, performance bonuses, leave management, implementation of Occupation Specific Dispensation and separation management; and
- Working extensively to finalise the Government Employees Home Owners Scheme to ensure affordable housing for all public servants.

Dlodlo said these initiatives will ensure that personnel expenditure remains within the budget ceiling of the medium term expenditure framework.

"Once the agreement is signed, we will ensure that these measures and initiatives are incorporated into the performance agreements of Heads of Departments and entities to guarantee their implementation and success.

"All other measures to effect efficiency and effective management of the administration… will be incorporated into the performance agreements of Heads of Departments," she said.

## Department to strengthen its hand against corruption

Dlodlo said the department, together with the Public Service Commission (PSC), will undertake several activities to curb corruption. This includes:

- Convening and ensuring the effective and efficient functioning of the National Anti-Corruption Forum, which will bring together all social partners who are involved in efforts to fight corruption in the public service;
- Strengthening the management of the National Anti-Corruption Hotline (NACH), which plays a strategic role as an important public participation mechanism to report cases of alleged corruption, and
- Driving the promotion of professional ethics through conducting workshops with selected government departments.

Dlodlo also said the PSC will issue a factsheet on completed disciplinary proceedings on financial misconduct for the 2017/18 financial year, in which the closure of cases will also be reported.

The PSC will conduct an assessment of the implementation of the Financial Disclosure Framework for the 2017/18 financial year, as ethical leadership remains one of the pillars of a developmental public service.

“In responding to the call by the President, we are developing a framework, which will inform how we institute or conduct lifestyle audits on all Public Service employees.

“This is in addition to existing measures, which prohibit employees from conducting business with organs of State.

“Together with National Treasury, we continue to monitor this practice using the registration interface between National Treasury’s Central Supplier Database (CSD) and the Personnel Salary System.

“Employees registered on the CSD and those found to be conducting business with an organ of state, are reported to my department for disciplinary action with immediate effect.”

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