

Wage settlement to chart new way of doing things

Public Service and Administration Minister Lindiwe Sisulu says the public sector wage settlement reached between government and labour unions last night will ensure stability, proper planning and chart a new way of doing things in government.



(Image: GCIS)

Sisulu, who described the settlement as a "give and take agreement", said the agreement was reached after sleepless nights and selfless dedication by all parties involved.

She insisted that the multi-year agreement would, among other things, craft a service charter that would measure performance, productivity and professionalism in the public service, which she said had been a stumbling block in service delivery.

Sisulu said they wanted to make the red tape in the delivery of services a thing of the past.

"This agreement communicates a message to all public servants, that we have started a new journey together -- a journey with a higher level of productivity, a journey in which public servants are preoccupied with only one thing - serving the public. The agreement is also important as it allows us to kick start a process to improve the conditions of service of our public servants," Sisulu told media on Wednesday.

Last night's settlement brings to an end the protracted negotiations, which began in February. The unions had initially demanded a 10% wage increase.

The three-year agreement stipulates that public servants will receive a 7% increase for 2012 and from 2013 to 2015, the increase will be based on the Consumer Price Index plus 1%.

The 7% increase will be backdated to May 1 and the housing allowance will increase to R900, an improvement of R100.

According to the settlement, government will also recognise long service employees who have been in the public service between 10 and 40 years and reward them.

Also offered is the recognition of improved qualifications, including a once-off cash bonus of 10% of employee's annual salary notch, provided this does not exceed the minimum notch of salary level 8.

Qualifying periods for pay progression have also been amended from 12 to 24 months for new employees.

in the public service.

A significant agreement

Sisulu said this was a significant agreement and that the labour unions were committed to a working relationship towards a service delivery accord, while the state was committed to investing in public servant through skilling and empowerment to ensure higher productivity.

"We are committed to a public service that exists on the best conditions of service, a public service that understands the expectations of the public and work very hard every day to meet and exceed those expectations. Our colleagues from the unions also told me they are more than committed to the same thing. We are working together as a team."

Sisulu believed that the agreement was a "good and reasonable offer" taking into account the current economic conditions.

Sisulu added that the agreement was in line with government's planning cycle and ensured stability and proper planning.

The minister said that in order to empower the public and to receive ongoing feedback about service delivery, the department would be going back to basics.

The department will soon embark on a nationwide listening programme, re-launch the Batho Pele Call Centre to empower South Africans to compliment and also report bad service, as well as start a programme to ensure that all public servants use name tags, so they are readily identifiable by the public.

"We are coming to listen to you on how we can improve from where we are. We will then conclude a service charter with labour so that public servants know your expectations and they work to exceed them. South Africans can also check our service against that charter. Things have to change, and it is time for that change," said Sisulu.

The charter, which will be launched in September, will among other things, define what a public servant is and what is expected of them, as well as define the timelines of service.

"We seek to create two-way communication with all citizens to allow them to play a role in the improvement of our service. We are in this together," said Sisulu.