

STRIKE IS SUSPENDED

The COSATU Public Service Unions and the Independent Labour Caucus (ILC) that represent more than 1.3 million workers have been on strike for three weeks fighting for a living wage and improvement of the conditions of employment. Labour has decided to suspend the strike and this does not mean that we have accepted the state offer.

The reasons for suspending the strikes are:

The employer has failed to crush the strike and finally succumbed to the demand by labour to withdraw the signed agreement. This is a victory in the history of the public service negotiations where the employer was forced to reopen negotiations.

Our action was about the plight of our people to receive quality service by motivated public servants. The strike was about placing the needs of the poor and social issues such as health, education and a social safety net at the top of the national agenda by paying a living wage to the workers by the government.

We acknowledge our people who supported our action and our legitimate demands without wavering. In particular we must salute our heroic workers who sacrificed days' wages and remained united in order to push the employer to move from their original position as follows:

- The employer budgeted for 5.2% in the current financial year for salary adjustment. Workers and the people of South Africa pushed the employer to revise the offer by 44% to 7.5%. Workers forced the following concessions: 5,3%, 5,7%, 6%, 6,2%, 6,5% and 7%. The final concession was from 7% to 7,5% and the reopening of negotiations.

- The employer had initially refused to negotiate housing allowance for the current financial year but workers have forced government to concede and increased the current housing allowance by 60% to R800 and agreeing to conclude all matters related to universal home ownership by 31st March 2011 for implementation 1st April 2011.

- The employer had refused to open negotiations on medical aid equalisation at the beginning of negotiations but as pressure mounted from the workers and the people of our country they conceded and agreed to put a definite process to resolve the matter by 31st December 2010.

- The employer has finally succumbed to pressure by reintroducing the 1st April as an implementation date to be phased in from 1st May 2011, and thereby to realign the bargaining processes with Government's budgetary

processes.

. We finally forced the state to appoint the Essential Service Committee to finalise a minimum service agreement for essential services.

The co-operation between the two caucuses has been exemplary and proves that workers are able to unite forces to serve the interests of all workers, the citizens of South Africa and the country in general. This method of co-operation serves as an excellent basis for future negotiations and the level of mutual trust will enhance the efforts of unions and workers.

The general public, parents, learners, organs of civil society in particular TAC and NAPWA who have been inconvenienced by the strike are thanked for their support and patience. The hope is now expressed that workers will be able to return to their workstations, and that service delivery will resume. Labour recommits the respective unions and their members to quality service delivery in the interest of South Africa and its citizens.

Labour has decided to suspend the strike in the Public Service and all unions have 21 days to finalise consultations on the draft agreement.