

November 21, 2003

**PRESS RELEASE BY TEACHER ORGANISATIONS ON H.E PRESIDENT MOGAE'S
STATE OF THE NATION ADDRESS.**

Dear Sir/Madam

It was with utter dismay and shock that we received the President's message that salary adjustment will only be effected on April 2004. This means almost a year and half since the De Villiers Commission was appointed. This means that despite the effects of V.A.T and inflation generally, the government has not done anything to assist Public Servants by cushioning the effects of inflation.

The adjustment announced by the President will only further entrench the status quo by making the richer grow richer and the poor poorer. We would have thought a government that aims at creating a just, caring and compassionate nation would attempt to distribute the resources more equitably. We are not saying we can all earn the same but surely the gap between the low and high scale can be bridged. Social justice cannot be achieved with the current wage disparities. There has been a recent mass exodus for greener pastures by magistrates, nurses, police, teachers etc. We had hoped to hear government strategies of retaining and attracting them back to boost the ailing public service. Rather government has played the populist card by making announcements which are only monetary.

The teacher organizations would like to further express their dissatisfaction with the way in which government continues to handle issues of teacher welfare. We would like to remind the general public that the issue of the teacher's overtime allowance is still pending. Government has through a letter from Hon K. G. Kgoroba told the teachers that the allowance is not affordable. It is disturbing to note that this is despite the fact that H. E President Festus Mogae had agreed in principle that teachers deserve an allowance. Perhaps these are other forces which are manipulating decisions of the President to cure parodied interests. We are still waiting for the president to come out clearly on the question of the allowance because he has raised our hopes. In fact, teachers are requesting the president to speedily release the white paper on salaries so that they can comment on it informatively.

We hope a performance based remuneration will not be abused to award people who do not deserve it. The controversial parallel progression had a provision for accelerated

progression where best performers or high flyers were to be accelerated to higher positions. This was never realized because teacher organizations hope the use of performance based rewards will be transparent enough.

Further we wish to make our views known on issues raised by the President's speech.

- Tax increases will further erode the buying power of the people.
- Reduction of subsistence will not help the poverty reduction strategy.

Teacher's organizations would like to applaud the President for acknowledging the hardships faced by the teachers, especially with regards to student indiscipline. The behaviour of the students has changed for the worst in recent years.

We also share strong sentiments with the President that the national teams have recently staged sterling performances, especially the Zebras and the All Africa team that went to Abuja. We applaud his observation. We would however like to add that these excellent performances are a result of teachers' dedicated coaching in schools. We call upon the President to speed up the teachers' request for an overtime allowance since this is still a painfully pending issue. There is also a need now to set up the Ministry of Sports to run and coordinate sporting activities in the country.

Thank you.

Teacher organizations

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