

Swaziland National Association of Teachers

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THE 2022 NEW YEAR STATEMENT BY THE SWAZILAND NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS (SNAT)

1. PREAMBLE

The Swaziland National Association of Teachers (SNAT) National Executive Committee (NEC), acknowledges the fact that the year 2021 has never been a good year for educators in the country.

- Mindful of the atrocities and all forms of injustices that are imposed on our Nation in General and our members, in particular, by the Government of Swaziland and the ruling elite. These include the economic deprivation of our people in various ways.
- Inspired by the resilience and unmatched collectivism and activism exemplified by our members and the rest of the Swazi Nation in 2021 as we fought for the attainment of a Constitutional Multiparty Democracy in our lifetime.
- Convinced that indeed a positive improvement in our general terms and conditions of service shall be realised under a truly people-driven and participatory democratic government.

- Therefore, affirm that we shall escalate the fight against all forms of the socio-economic and political injustices that we are subjected to as teachers and as members of the society in 2022.

2. CRUX OF THE STATEMENT

As we enter into the New Year (2022), we are still confronted by the following challenges, amongst others.

A. Salary Review [SR]

Refusal by the Government of Swaziland, our employer of choice, to comply with the 06 July 2016 Order of Court, according to which she (Government) had to implement the Salary Review Exercise in the current financial year (2021/2022). With three (3) months remaining before the current financial year ends, we can deduce that the language by the Government is clear that she wants to uphold her contemptuous act of not allowing the Salary Review exercise to proceed. As Public Sector Unions, we have since taken the Government to Court over this matter. We hope for a speedy resolution of the matter since this was a clear violation of a right by the employer.

B. Trade Union Bashing

The Government has escalated its warpath against unions and their members. In 2021, worker rights violation by the government reached alarming levels where unarmed and harmless members of the SNAT, alongside other government employees, were teargassed inside buses and as they alighted, gasping for air, were shot at by State Police [OSSU] and the enemy. In another novel case, the Government forced some members of the SNAT to resign from the organisation, in total violation of the **Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention (No. 87)**. The Government is currently engaged in clandestine ways of purging and dismissing union members from their work for merely expressing their political views on national issues of concern. The year 2022 will therefore be a highly turbulent year in this regard.

C. Employment and Deployment of Teachers'

The advent of Covid-19 gave the Government an opportunity to exploit and to ill-treat teachers. Many of our Comrades had their contracts not renewed by the Government. Those teachers who are on permanent and pensionable

employment had to be overburdened by work which could have otherwise been carried by those teachers whose contracts were not renewed. Our mentioning of this as a problem must not be misconstrued to mean that we condone Casualisation of the teaching profession. As the SNAT, we have always been condemning such a practice since it is a gross human rights violation and an unfair labour practice. Placing an employee under a fixed term contract in a job or occupation that is perpetual in nature is inhumane and grossly unfair. The Government has only worsened this situation during the Covid-19 era. Instead of heeding to our call of employing more teachers, Government engaged on a teacher re-deployment exercise which is unfortunately not guided by any policy. The Government is clearly engaged on a mission to de-professionalise teaching.

D. Under funding of Education

Education as a merit good has to be free and accessible to all who deserve it. The Government is strategically destroying education through underfunding. The none or late disbursement of the Free Primary Education (FPE) and Orphaned and Vulnerable Children (OVC) grants is by design. Many schools could not procure learning materials and resources due to lack of financial resources. Our colleagues who were engaged by schools as ancillary staff have gone for months without salaries and that demotivates these education workers. Schools owe huge sums of money to various suppliers for goods and services that were supplied to schools a while ago. The government has relegated education to the background. As the SNAT, we are well aware that even the grants that are offered per child are much lower than the actual costs of education per learner, presently. The upward review of the grants is long overdue.

E. Organisational activities

The Covid-19 pandemic prevented the SNAT from having its annual events such as Mass Meetings and Mass Teachers Day Commemoration. The introduction of Covid-19 vaccines into the country and the administering of same gave us renewed hope as a People. In 2022, the SNAT shall be going through its renewal process by way of holding Conferences: a process that will start in February until September. It is in such gatherings where discussions and debates on organisational and National issues are deepened and broadened, resulting to the crafting and ratification of organisational policies that will take the organisation forward. Since the 2022 conferences will be elective, we will,

as we have always done put in place a new leadership and refresh the mandate with some. The task that lies ahead both at the organisational and national spaces is a huge one and we are ready to confront all challenges that we will come across in the future.

3. WAY FORWARD

In light of the issues that have been discussed above, the SNAT therefore commits to the following. That;

- a) We shall push for the finalisation of the Salary Review issue, alongside other Public Sector Unions.
- b) We shall wage a fierce campaign against the simmering attack of the Union and its members by strengthening both domestic and international solidarity.
- c) Re-focusing on sectoral issues such as Casualisation of teaching, education financing and housing of teachers shall be escalated.
- d) A calendar of the SNAT activities shall be generated and will be shared with Branch Leaders in due course of time.
- e) As the SNAT, we will fully participate in all TUCOSWA Activities and those of the Mass Democratic Movement [MDM].

4. CONCLUSION

This Statement might not be exhaustive in terms of highlighting all the critical issues and challenges that confront us now. Other accomplishments, which have been realised by the SNAT collective, will be highlighted in our Organisational Report, which will be delivered during our conference. Our campaigns, which we will be pushing in 2022, are inextricably bound with the National call for the attainment of constitutional multiparty democracy in our lifetime. Our ardent belief is that unless and until total democracy is embraced in this country as a political system of governance, our disabilities as educators will be permanent. Our active participation in political debates and processes whose objective is to usher the country into a democratic dispensation is not a sign of wisdom; rather, it is an appropriate act of responsibility by the teachers to the Swazi society. This line of reasoning is premised on the indisputable fact that, as educators, we are members of the society, first and last.

May we end with these two [2] quotes:

“Whenever the people have been captured by spontaneous forms of popular collaboration, it has never been successful wisdom for those in

political leadership to use threats and violence as a means of confrontation.” (Comrade Kati Masuku, 2013)

“Any person, who argues that he or she has nothing to do with politics, is like a person who is in the deep sea drowning but maintains that he or she is not in contact with the water.” (Mlaba, 2014)

Amandla!

ISSUED BY THE SNAT SG on Friday, 31.12.2021



SIKELELA J. DLAMINI
(SECRETARY GENERAL)