06 October 2015

MEDIA STATEMENT – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NAMIBIA TRAINING AUTHORITY (NTA) RESPONDS TO INDUSTRIAL ACTION BY EMPLOYEES:

Employees in the bargaining unit at the NTA Head Office and the Vocational Training Centres (VTCs) under its supervision are to embark on industrial action on Wednesday, 07 October 2015, after salary negotiations with the two recognised labour unions, the Namibia Public Workers’ Union (NAPWU) and the Namibia National Teachers’ Union (NANTU), deadlocked.

The NTA wishes to clarify its stance with regard to this matter:

1. Prior to the commencement of salary negotiations for the 2015/16 financial year, the NTA had conducted a market remuneration survey. Pursuant to this, revised pay scales were approved and the Total-Cost-To-Company (TCTC) remuneration packages of 117 out of 370 employees in the bargaining unit were adjusted to align to the market. The adjustments took effect on 01 April 2015.
2. Annual salary negotiations with the two unions started towards the end of March 2015, and four meetings took place up to mid-June, but no agreement could be reached.
3. The matter was escalated to the Office of the Labour Commissioner, where a formal dispute was registered on 15 June 2015. Subsequent conciliation did not result in any agreement. The NTA offered a 7.5% TCTC increase for employees in the bargaining unit, whereas the unions demanded a 10% TCTC increase plus a monthly Transport Allowance of N$660, which effectively translates into a 13.2% TCTC increase.
4. The Office of the Labour Commissioner issued a Certificate of Unresolved Dispute on 22 September 2015, which paved the way for industrial action.
5. When the parties reconvened with the Conciliator on 01 October 2015, the NTA reconfirmed its offer of a 7.5% TCTC increase, coupled with commitments to investigate the viability of introducing a separate grading system for all VTC trainers, as well as establishing a joint task team to conduct benchmarking and make recommendations based on best practice to the NTA Board, in terms of options pertaining to the TCTC remuneration model.
6. On 05 October 2015, the unions, in line with Section 74 (1) of the Labour Act of 2007, gave the NTA notice that they were to embark on industrial action as soon as the required 48 hours’ notice period expired.
7. The offer of 7.5% TCTC, by the NTA, is 2.5% above the average inflation rate for the previous financial year that ended March 2015, and compares favourably with increases granted by employers in the broader education and training sector, and beyond.
8. The NTA would like to emphasise that funds collected through the Vocational Education and Training (VET) Levy cannot be applied in supporting its salary bill. As per Notice No. 5, published under the Vocational Education and Training Act (Act 1 of 2008), in Government Gazette No. 5395 of 27 January 2014, VET Levy funds are ring-fenced and can only be used as prescribed therein.
9. The NTA wishes to inform stakeholders about the following key arrangements which have been necessitated by the industrial action:
   o Training at the VTCs is suspended as from Wednesday, 07 October 2015 and trainees are to return home for the duration of the industrial action;
Similarly, no assessment services will be rendered by the NTA as from Wednesday, 07 October 2015 at assessment centres countrywide for the duration of the industrial action.

10. The NTA has put in place various contingency measures within the confines of the law, to ensure that other key services continue, *albeit* on a reduced level. The NTA wishes to apologise for any inconvenience in this regard and appeals to stakeholders affected by the industrial action to remain patient during this period.

11. Finally, the NTA wishes to reassure stakeholders that it has done everything in its powers to avert industrial action and that it remains committed to ongoing efforts to resolve the impasse.

SIGNED:

[Signature]

Jerry Beukes
Acting Chief Executive Officer