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| **NATIONAL ASSEMBLY****WRITTEN REPLY****QUESTION 1861 / NW2730E****MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FISHERIES:****Mr TZ Hadebe (DA) to ask the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries:****QUESTION** |

1. With reference to the protest action that was embarked on by staff members of the Fisheries sector of his department at the beginning of May, has a memorandum of grievances been handed over to his department; if so, (a) what are the relevant details of their grievances, (b) which grievances have been attended to, (c) what actions were taken when attending to each grievance, (d)(i) which grievances have not yet been attended to and (ii) why have they not been attended to? **NW2082E**

**REPLY**

(a) - Yes

 The list of demands is as follows:

1. All vacant positions including all other posts beyond 12 levels in DAFF must be filled no later than Friday, 1 May 2015 to fulfil all departmental mandates (Food Security, Job creation and Economic Growth) and an end to chronic staff shortage we have at the moment.
2. Finalise the integration of the three sector branches ( Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries).
3. Union representation to ensure compliance to government legislation.
4. Improve the skills development plans of the officials in the department.
5. Prioritise the departmental visits including to remote offices and sites.
6. Equal pay for work of equal value.
7. Forensic investigation
8. Implementation of the Public Service Commission recommendation against the irregular appointment of Ms L Bouwer, Director: Human Recources Management.
9. Immediate changes in the employer’s delegation at Departmental Bargaining Chamber.
10. Immediate implementation of the sent inputs of the reviewed policies.

 (b) All the grievances have been attended to.

(c)A letter dated 7 March 2015 was forwarded to the Chairperson of NEHAWU addressing the demands contined in their memorundum dated 22 April 2015. The department responded as follows in each of the demands listed below:

1. All vacant positions including all other posts beyond 12 levels in DAFF must be filling no later than Friday, 1 May 2015, to fulfil all departmental mandates (food security, job creation and economic growth) and an end to a chronic staff shortage we have at the moment.

 Response from the department.

 The Department has considered this demand. However, it is not possible to fill all the vacant positions on such short notice due to the recruitment and selection processes which must be complied with as well as the financial constraints as a result of the budget cuts.

1. Finalise the integration of the three sector branches (Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries).

Response from the department.

The process of integration of the three branches has commenced and Organised Labour will continuously be consulted at the DBC in this regard.

1. Union representation to ensure compliance to government legislation.

Response from the department.

The Department has management structures and any issues with labour impact will be dealt with in terms of the Labour Relations Act, No. 66 of 1995, at the DBC and through the dispute resolution processes, where the need arises.

Furthermore, you are required to take note that as NEHAWU members you are also employees of the Department. No employees participate in management structures. The legitimate forum for consultation or engagement with unions is the DBC.

1. Improve the skills development plans of the officials in the department.

Response from the department.

The Department has a HRD Strategy and a HR Plan. In addition, every employee has a Work Plan and Personal Development Plan in terms of the Employee Performance Management System (EPMDS). All individual cases should be dealt with in terms of the relevant policy and applicable procedures. In addition, the Department has an Internal Training and Development Committee (ITDC) at which Organised Labour is represented.

1. Prioretise the departmental visits including to remote offices and sites.

Action taken by the department.

The Employer, with Organised Labour, conducted various operational visits to outside offices under the auspices of the DBC in the previous financial year. The proposed recommendations are due to be discussed at EXCO and MANCO due to their financial implications. Feedback will be provided at the DBC.

1. Equal pay for work of equal value.

Response from the department.

 The Department acknowledges this demand and will take the necessary steps to address the issue as it is also on the agenda of the DBC. Progress in this regard will be provided at this forum.

1. Forensic investigation

Response from the department.

It is a legal requirement that all SMS members disclose their financial interests on an annual basis. The office of the Public Service Commission as well as the Office of the Auditor-General monitors such disclosures on an annual basis. It will be appreciated if NEHAWU could indicate the basis for the allegations to enable the Department to conduct forensic investigations.

1. Implementation of the Public Service Commission recommendation against the irregular appointment of Ms L Bouwer, Director: Human Recources Management.

Response from the department.

 A letter dated 25 October 2014 was forwarded to Mr M Mahamba, Branch Secretary of NEHAWU responding to the allegations regarding the appointment of the Director: Human Resources Management (Ms L Bouwer) without following the normal recruitment and selection processes.

1. Immediate changes in the employer’s delegation at Departmental Bargaining Chamber.

Response from the department.

 Employer representatives have been duly appointed to serve at the DBC.

1. Immediate implemantation of the sent inputs of the reviewed policies.

Response from the department.

All relevant inputs on policies made at multilateral meetings needs the due policy development processes. In order to fast track the policy development process, it is advised that Organised Labour provides inputs at the first consultation process.

(d)(i) All the grievances have been addressed.

(d)(ii) Not applicable.