

ONDO WORKERS CALL OF STRIKE AS ODSG, WORKERS AGREE ON PAYMENT OF 'SALARY RELATIVITY

After six days of intense negotiations and a subsequent industrial action that lasted three days by workers, the impasse over the agitation for the implementation of the new National Minimum Wage between the organised Labour and the Ondo State government finally came to an end early Sunday morning.

While the Joint Negotiating Council (JNC) and Government agreed to the payment of N14,000 salary relativity to the least-paid worker beginning from July 1, 2011, they also initialled an agreement that the implementation of the N18,000 National Minimum Wage would not commence until an upward review of the Revenue Allocation Formula acceptable to the state government was released by the Federal Government.

The Chairman of JNC, Comrade Solomon Adelegan signed the agreement on behalf of Labour enjoined those castigating the State Government for the workers' strike that the workers action should not be misconstrued or be politicised by anybody whatsoever as a sign of government's act of insensitivity to the welfare of its workforce. The State Head of Service, Mr Ajose Kudehinbu appended his signature for the government. Adelegan, who read the agreement, declared that the workers were suspending the industrial action following an understanding between the two sides that the state finances would not be able to accommodate the payment of the new minimum wage for now.

According to him, "That after going through the facts and figures presented by the Ondo State government, which tallied with ours own figures, it was clear to the parties that the government cannot afford to pay the new National Minimum Wage of N18,000 for now.

"That pending a New Revenue Allocation Formula acceptable to the state government, Labour agreed with the proposal by the state government to introduce Salary Relativity under which government will pay for now, a minimum salary of N14,000 per month to workers under the aegis of the JNC in the public service.

"That the implementation of this agreement shall be effective from July 1, 2011.

The JNC Chairman, thereafter, declared that "based on the agreement that the state government will start the implementation of the Salary Relativity, the strike embarked upon by workers in Ondo State public service is hereby suspended and our workers are also directed to report at their duty posts immediately. He thanked the state government for its understanding of the situation saying that the workers action must not be politicized or be misconstrued in any quarter as a sign of government's act of insensitivity to the welfare of its workforce.

Responding after the suspension of the strike, the State Deputy Governor, Alhaji Ali Olanusi, who led the government delegation to the negotiation, expressed the gratitude of the Dr Olusegun Mimiko-led administration to the workers for their sense of maturity, understanding as well as quick and positive response to the situation throughout the negotiation period.

"We thank you for demonstrating to the whole world that the two sides can settle any rift between us and that we are capable of steering our boat without any interference from any outside force," he enthused. In his reaction, the State Commissioner for Information, Mr Ranti Akerele, who was on the state delegation, said the state government wished that it could give more to Labour because "nothing is too much to give to the workers as they truly deserved it. They too know that the present administration is known by the electorate as a workers-friendly government which had taken workers welfare as a priority since it came on board."

According to him, "we will continue to build on what we have started as government, what we have witnessed this morning was an evidence of sound relationship between us. Workers were agitating for their legitimate

right, yet they showed indescribable understanding of the situation on ground, we are very proud of them for that.”