

## PRETORIA June 30 Sapa SOLIDARITY REJECTS ESKOM'S OFFER

Solidarity will not accept Eskom's eight percent wage offer and has pushed through certain revisions for the power utility to consider, the union said on Wednesday.

"We need more time to discuss with our members. We believe there's still room for negotiations," general secretary Flip Buys told a press briefing in Pretoria.

There were obstacles in the way of a settlement and these had to be addressed for negotiations to be concluded, he said.

Eskom had been given until Monday to respond to revisions, including a minimum service agreement, which the union said had to be in place before 2011 wage negotiations.

Currently, there was no minimum service agreement, meaning workers couldn't go on a protected strike.

"Workers cannot vent in the current situation," said the union's deputy general secretary Dirk Hermann.

The union also wanted additional housing benefits and an external audit of Eskom to determine the state of relations between workers and management.

"We are experiencing real labour relations problems with Eskom... This break in trust of such a nature cannot continue, or else we will have this sort of dispute every year."

"We want to know why and what is the problem within Eskom."

The union called for a probe into spending patterns at the power utility after it bought World Cup tickets for R12 million and paid R9.6 million in performance bonuses to directors and senior managers.

"This R9.6 million is expected to increase to R16.3 million next year. This will send out a wrong message, so we want to challenge the directors to carry that money over to a trust for skill retention and development within Eskom."

Eskom had revised its wage offer to eight percent from 5.5. Unions wanted nine percent.

There had also been disagreement on housing allowances.

Not ruling out the possibility of going to arbitration, Buys said there was willingness on Eskom's side to increase the offer.

While the National Union of Metal Workers of SA was still consulting its members on what action to take on Wednesday, the National Union of Mineworkers formally notified Eskom of its intention to go on strike next week. The union brushed off the possibility of the industrial action being illegal, because Eskom

was an essential service.

The three unions would meet in the next couple of days to develop a joint strategy.