

MEDIA-STATEMENT-FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TUESDAY, 14 APRIL, 2015

NEHAWU NEC STATEMENT

NEHAWU convened its 1st National Executive Committee {NEC} meeting of 2015, on the 12-13th of April 2015. The meeting took place at a time, when the national liberation movement as a whole and the broad masses of our people, joined the SACP in observing the 22nd anniversary of the assassination of our revolutionary martyr, and alliance leader Comrade Thembisile Chris Hani. The NEC also salutes the South African and Russian governments for bringing back the mortal remains of two of our struggle stalwarts and communist heroes, Moses Kotane and JB Marks.

The NEC sharply condemned the xenophobic attacks directed to our brothers and sisters from countries in the continent and supports the call made by various leaders and organisations for the prosecution of the criminals involved. We also salute and pay tribute to students, workers and academic staff at UCT, for their inspirational campaign to remove the vulgar Cecil John Rhodes statue. We believe that this underscores the potential for militant offensive against the Neoliberal corporatisation of higher education institutions and for fundamental transformation.

International situation

The NEC discussed the protracted crisis of global capitalism and which is gendering an ever more aggressive posture on the part of western imperialism. Thus, amongst others, the Ukraine, North Africa, and the Arab peninsula have been turned into proxy theatres of imperialist wars.

Obama's release of the remaining Cuban patriots and review of diplomatic relations with Cuba only represents a tactical move ;merely intended to still pursue the defeat of the Cuban revolution by other means. Nonetheless, this represents a victory of the Cuban 5 Campaign. Therefore our task remains one of stepping up the fight for the normalisation of the diplomatic relations between Cuba and USA, including an ending of the blockade. The Executive Order declared against Venezuela underscores the determination of the empire to reverse the revolutionary gains in the hemisphere.

National Political Assessment

The NEC has concluded that the course of the national democratic revolution thus far ,reflects the overall balance of class forces that favour the enemy triangle of white monopoly capital, western imperialism and domestic political opposition, despite the huge gains that have been scored by the ANC in the interest of masses of our people since 1994. The white

monopoly capital undermines the NDR with its sustained disinvestment and capital flight, whilst western imperialism exerts sustained pressure and influence on the economic policy content through sustained threats of downgrading issued by sovereign rating agencies. This includes a hostile posture on negotiations around AGOA by USA and on the Economic Partnership Agreement by the EU, since SA has become part of BRICS in 2011. The domestic political opposition is now led by the predominantly hostile media, which is at the service of an otherwise desperate and weak parliamentary opposition.

The NEC noted with concern an unprecedented appalling spectacle of extreme anarchic conduct by the EFF and DA since the inauguration of the fifth democratic Parliament. We have also noted with concern the growing constitutional litigation industry, spearheaded by the DA and other predominantly white NGOs, hell-bent on blocking the democratic mandate of the ANC and reversing the transformatory gains through the courts.

The NEC expressed concern regarding the persistent lack of internal cohesion amongst the Alliance formations around the macroeconomic policy content of the government. This is despite the agreement of the Alliance Summit on the Task Team to deal with this matter. This underscores the imperative of an organised working class that is united; ideologically independent as a class, and that takes seriously the responsibility of building hegemony within the ANC and strategic centres of power in the state. Otherwise, the radical second phase runs the risk of being reduced into a pipedream.

Cosatu

The NEC considered and endorsed the report on the outcomes of the 30-31 March 2015 of the COSATU Special CEC regarding the expulsion of Zwelinzima Vavi from the federation. As with the expulsion of NUMSA, this is indeed a sombre moment in which with deep regret the COSATU CEC found itself with no option but to discharge its constitutional duty of defending the foundational principles and integrity of the federation in the face of an unprecedented theatrical display of extraordinary defiance.

The NEC reiterated the union's view that this is the manifestation of an endemic organisational malady that has been long in the making, whilst the centre was more concerned with making headline grabbing outbursts. This malady includes the germination of a personality cult and delusions of grandeur on the part of the former General Secretary. The NEC asserted the federation's guiding principle of democratic centralism, which means the subordination of the individual to the organisation, the subordination of the minority to the majority, the subordination of lower structures to higher structures, including the CEC and Congress.

Thus, the NEC resolved that going-forward the union shall focus on defending the federation of Elijah Barayi and our own union, by raising the intensity of the implementation of our programme of action, including ideological consciousness, closing ranks and paying special attention on improving service delivery to our members.

Socioeconomic assessment

The NEC noted that the South African economy marginally escaped sliding back to recession eventually registering a mere 1,5% growth rate. We are therefore concerned that in its response to this dire economic situation, the Treasury has stuck to its old Neoliberal targets of GEAR. This is despite its proclamations that it pursues a counter-cyclical macroeconomic policy framework. Thus, the meeting condemned the Treasury's announced austerity package, in which overall spending is only planned to grow by an annual average of 2.3% over the next three years, with a view to reduce the budget deficit to 2.5% by 2017/18 and public debt to below 40% of GDP. This includes a moratorium on additional jobs, the cancellation of funded vacancies in the public service and the imposition of an increase in fuel levies by 80.5 cent a litre.

PSCBC

The NEC received a report on the public service collective bargaining negotiations. The NEC reiterates NEHAWU's condemnation of the employer's lack of good faith in the current negotiation round as marked by its downward revision of its opening offer. We reject with contempt the insinuations by the spokesperson of the DPSA that "Labour is undecided on a settlement figure". All of this is an unnecessary display of arrogance and in fact it is a provocation to our members, especially because the employer is currently sitting on the same 5,8% that they presented to us seven {7} months ago, whilst labour has revised its offer. It is unfortunate that the employer appears not to have learned any lessons from the protracted 2007 and 2010 strikes. Whilst the conciliation process is underway at the moment, like other COSATU unions we are currently rolling out an extensive consultation process with our members in their workplaces, with our constitutional structures about the public service bargaining process. At this stage, we can only warn the employer that unless it significantly revises its offer and ceases divisive tactics, it is bound to be met by unprecedented rage from our members that might lead to a total shutdown of government soon.

Health & Education

We are deeply concerned by the Treasury's failure to release the White Paper on the National Health Insurance, despite their commitments to do so, and the ANC National Executive Committee's call for them to do so. What perturbs us is the fact that in the National Budget Review, the Treasury suggested that until there is sufficient economic growth the NHI project would remain stalled, claiming that the costs are unaffordable. The NEC is also discontented that the call made by the ANC NEC in its January 8th 2015 statement, for the in-sourcing of all outsourced services in the health sector is yet to be implemented.

The NEC also instructed the union to intensify its campaign for the NHI and also strengthen its service delivery campaign that has already resulted in the dismissal of the KZN Head of department, Dr Zungu. The campaign would also be directed towards GEMS to stop the ongoing looting of resources. We are deeply worried by the state of affairs in the Free State department of health. Our union will be taking its service delivery campaign to the Free State to demand accountability by the province and an urgent intervention by the national department.

On education, our analysis has shown that the crisis around access to higher education dramatically discloses the inherent contradictions of the NDP, i.e. on the one hand there is a commitment to expanding access whilst at the same time a conservative macroeconomic policy framework is applied. This means students would continue falling through the cracks as improvements in matriculation pass rates are not matched by adequate proactive planning for absorption with the necessary increment in financial support.

We condemn the new tendency in historically white institutions, where poor students are shunted to NFSAS, whilst the historically accumulated reserves in these institutions are not made available as financial aid by these universities, as it was the case in the past. This significantly contributes to the perennial crisis of shortfalls in NFSA's disbursements towards poor students, as manifested by the sporadic protests in different institutions.

The NEC expressed its disappointment at the DHET's failure to implement their FET Colleges Turnaround Strategy. We previously welcomed this Strategy because it outlined guidelines for the necessary interventions in dealing with specific challenges experienced by individual colleges and called for accountability in each institution in order to ensure the implementation of transformation and to ensure a stable transition in terms of the migration process.

But today we find ourselves in the middle of a crisis caused by a dismal failure to implement the strategy and also our calls for national intervention are ignored. The Director General of DHET is more interested in ensuring that the corrupt and reactionary managers dismiss our members, as we have seen in the case of the Eastcape Midlands College. The union will therefore be mounting a campaign for the removal of the Director General of the Department of Higher Education; he has been ineffectual and unhelpful in resolving the higher education problems.

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