



**ADDRESS BY ANC DEPUTY PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA AT THE 11TH
NATIONAL CONGRESS OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATION HEALTH AND ALLIED
WORKERS' UNION**

**BIRCHWOOD HOTEL, BOKSBURG
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Leadership of NEHAWU,
Leadership of the Alliance,
Comrades and Compatriots,

Thank you for inviting me to address you on the occasion of your 11th National Congress.

It is fitting that we meet here today on the 62nd anniversary of the adoption of the Freedom Charter at the Congress of the People.

It is the vision contained in the Freedom Charter that binds us together, as an Alliance, as a democratic movement and as a people.

It is a vision of a South Africa that belongs to all who live in it, black and white.

It is a vision of a society where no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of all the people, where the people share in the country's wealth, and where there are houses, security and comfort.

It is this vision that finds expression in the Constitution of NEHAWU, in its objectives, in its policies and its programmes.

As you gather to review progress since your 10th National Congress, as you identify the priorities of the moment and the tasks you need to undertake, it is important also to consider the progress we have made in advancing the vision of the Freedom Charter.

Working together, as the people of South Africa, we have changed the face of our society in profound ways.

We have dismantled the apartheid state and built credible, durable and accountable democratic institutions.

We have provided housing, electricity, water and sanitation to millions of our people.

We have opened the doors of learning, significantly expanding access to both basic and higher education.

Through redistributive policies and social security programmes, we have lifted millions of people out of absolute poverty.

We have improved access to health by ensuring that clinics are built, maintained and appropriately equipped.

Although we have achieved much, we know that there is still much more that we need to do.

Many of our people are still poor and unemployed.

Many have yet to fully realise their Constitutional rights and enjoy the benefits of freedom.

Too many of our people die from hunger, disease and neglect.

We are still among the most unequal societies in the world.

As we gather here, at the 11th National Congress of NEHAWU, it is this challenge – to fundamentally improve the lives of all our people – that must be at the centre of our deliberations.

It is this challenge that must also occupy the minds of delegates to the ANC's National Policy Conference, which starts later this week.

For it is at the Policy Conference where the ANC, together with its allies, examines in detail the progress made in implementing its policies for radical change.

It must examine the extent to which it has advanced the vision of the 2012 Mangaung Conference of a new era of accelerated social and economic transformation.

It must establish what has worked, and what hasn't.

It must determine where policies need to be refined or changed, where implementation needs to be enhanced.

Most importantly, the Policy Conference must establish a platform for rapid growth, massive job creation and fundamental economic change.

This is an opportunity to place the South African economy on a new trajectory.

This is a critical discussion to have now as the country finds itself in difficult economic circumstances.

Having recently entered a recession, the economy is still some distance from achieving the rates of growth needed to create jobs on a significant scale.

The recent ratings downgrades not only undermine investor confidence, but they make it more difficult and more expensive to raise finance for the transformation and development of our country.

We need to address these challenges in the context of relatively low global demand for the commodities we export.

We also need to address these challenges in the context of the inherited distortions, inefficiencies and severe inequalities of the apartheid economy.

It is therefore critical that we act with purpose and urgency on a common programme to stimulate growth, job creation and transformation.

It is critical that all social partners bring together their resources, capabilities and energies to implement practical measures that can effectively turn our economy around and set us on a path of shared prosperity.

We need to address the concentration of ownership and control in our economy.

Not only does the economy need to be deracialised, but we need to end the dominance of a few large companies in key sectors.

By ending unhealthy market dominance, we will be creating space for new entrants, improving efficiency, encouraging innovation, creating new jobs and reducing prices of goods and services.

We will begin to make our economy more competitive and more resilient.

Government is working to increase levels of investment in productive capacity through streamlining investment procedures, establishing special economic zones and refining industrial incentive programmes.

We are also leveraging our infrastructure investment spend to promote local production and local skills development.

We are working to reposition our state owned enterprises to more effectively fulfil their developmental and economic mandates.

That includes improving coordination and oversight, improving governance and financial sustainability and addressing inefficiency in operations.

Most importantly, we need to urgently get young people into employment.

In part, this means ensuring that young people have the skills and qualifications that our economy needs – through increased funding for higher education, the expansion of TVET colleges and greater collaboration between education institutions and industry.

It also means mobilising companies across the economy to recruit young people into paid internships as part of a massive programme to provide valuable work experience to a million youth over three years – and even more beyond that.

It means significantly increasing support to small black owned businesses by replicating successful models of incubation, training and financial support across the country on a far greater scale.

These are among some of the measures that are underway – and which need to be accelerated and intensified – to transform our economy and promote inclusive growth.

To succeed however, we need to ensure that there is clear leadership from all sectors of society.

All social partners need to be united and all need to be aware of their responsibility to act in the interests of the country.

Within this, the Alliance needs to play a central role, providing direction, leadership and support.

The Cuban revolutionary Manuel Pineiro was speaking to all of us engaged in this struggle when he said:

"Let us increase our vigilance against complacency and arrogance – which may appear like weeds in our work and, if we don't uproot them in time, wind up by invading everything.

"Let us oppose them with revolutionary unpretentiousness... Let us oppose this with the careful administration of resources, systemisation, planning, and the most intelligent use of all human and technical resources we have."

We cannot effect meaningful change if we become complacent, if we become comfortable with our own positions in the status quo.

We dare not accept that the pace of change is fast enough or that the means we have employed so far are sufficient.

We dare not allow ourselves to be blinded by arrogance to the needs of the people.

We dare not allow whatever differences we may have among ourselves to blunt our efforts to improve the lives of the working class and poor.

We cannot have a fractured Alliance, we cannot have a weakened State.

We need to confront the challenges we face.

We need to identify our shortcomings and acknowledge our failures.

Most importantly, we need urgently to take measures to correct our weaknesses.

We need to restore hope and trust.

We must address the concern among our people that some leaders – across all spheres of government and in the private sector – are helping themselves to resources meant for the poor.

We must confront the allegations of state capture, as more and more evidence emerges of undue external influence over appointments and procurement decisions within public institutions.

The announcement by the President that he will soon be appointing a judicial commission of inquiry to investigate all these allegations needs to be welcomed and supported.

We should also be encouraged by statements from the Hawks that they are investigating allegations of criminal conduct in this regard.

South Africans do not want, and do not deserve, leaders who are unaccountable and act with impunity.

They want leaders who conduct themselves with honesty, integrity and selflessness.

They want leaders who are able to innovate, manage change and drive essential programmes for development.

They want leaders who will listen to them, leaders who will keep them engaged, interested and informed.

They want leaders whose only commitment is to bettering the lives of the people.

They want a liberation movement and a progressive trade union movement that is responsive, accountable, effective and efficient.

This year, we have several opportunities to advance the renewal of our movement and Alliance.

We must emerge from this Congress and those of other affiliates of Cosatu, from the 14th National Congress of the SACP in July and from the 54th National Conference of the ANC in December, more united, more coherent and more capable of fulfilling our responsibilities to the people.

Let us seize these opportunities to decisively tackle the difficulties in our movement and Alliance.

Let us speak openly and honestly.

Let us be disciplined and principled.

Let us ensure that we listen to our members and empower our branches.

Comrades,

It is our duty to organise the working class to ensure radical economic transformation is truly inclusive and that it fundamentally benefits workers.

It is through the struggles of the working class that the national wealth of our country, the heritage of South Africans, will be restored to the people.

That means that we must work harder to ensure the broad participation of workers in the direction and exercise of political power.

We must create opportunities for workers to make a meaningful contribution in decision making.

This needs to take place throughout society, but especially so within the Alliance.

The unity of the alliance is founded on a common programme and commitment to the strategic objectives of the National Democratic Revolution.

We should understand that workers participate in the advancement of the National Democratic Revolution because it creates the most conducive conditions through which South Africans will be able to feed, clothe and shelter themselves as part of the journey towards realising their full human potential.

The ANC cannot lead a national democratic struggle without the well-organised motive force of the working class, nor can socialists create the conditions for socialism without a democratic society.

Workers must therefore organise themselves to ensure that the ANC is indeed a disciplined force of the left.

It needs to ensure that the working class bias of the ANC is not mere rhetoric, but is evident in policy and practice.

In a developmental state, progressive unions are partners.

They serve the interests of their members while at the same time collaborating in advancing a programme of social and economic development.

They are as committed to the fight against poverty, inequality and unemployment in broader society as they are to advancing the rights and working conditions of their members.

They know that a union's struggle cannot be merely to strive to eat, drink and have shelter and clothing before it pursues politics.

They understand the intersection between struggles on the shopfloor and the struggle for political and economic freedom.

To succeed in fulfilling its mission, NEHAWU needs to redouble its efforts to grow union membership.

It needs to recruit those workers that are not unionised, proving that it is a capable instrument to protect and promote their interests.

We look to NEHAWU not only to advance the interests of its members in the workplace, not only to advance the interests of its members in communities, but also to take responsibility for contributing to the success of radical economic transformation.

We look to NEHAWU to organise, to mobilise, to conscientise to strengthen COSATU, the Alliance and the ANC.

It is no coincidence that this NEHAWU Congress takes place on the anniversary of the Freedom Charter.

The Freedom Charter is fundamental to the character of the union.

We have every confidence that NEHAWU will continue to pursue the vision of the Congress of the People, to advance the cause of the working class and to be at the centre of the fundamental transformation of our society.

On behalf of the African National Congress, we wish you every success in your deliberations.

I thank you.



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