



Speech Delivered by COSATU President, comrade Sidumo Dlamini at the NEHAWU 2017 National Congress held at Birchwood

The president of NEHAWU comrade Mzwandile Makwayiba

The entire leadership of NEHAWU from all levels of the union

The COSATU National Office Bearers

The COSATU CEC members present here today

The Alliance leadership present here today

Invited guests

Comrade delegates representing the members of the union who are the real builders and owners of this union

Please accept warm and revolutionary greetings from COSATU House

I am personally happy to be standing here today attending this 11th National Congress for this 30 year old organisation because like many members , who are watching this congress from home , it is comforting to see that worker control is alive and well and democracy is entrenched in our organisation.

As members, we are all interested in the outcomes of this Congress because this is a difficult year for the public service; we are re-opening wage negotiations after the lapse of a three year agreement. More importantly these negotiations will be taking place in the context, where our country has entered into a technical economic recession and when the dictatorship of the ratings agencies is fully in charge and has already downgraded the country into a junk status. This means that you comrades should take this congress seriously, I will come back to this point later.

Firsrtly , it will be amiss of me not to take this time to pay homage and salute Comrade Adimba Toyvo Ja Toyvo, the father of the Namibian Revolution, who recently passed away. Comrade Nelson Mandela described comrade Toyvo as a formidable freedom fighter, he belongs to that generation of leaders who made a contribution to the freedom of our people without counting the costs nor expected anything in return.

We are also meeting here today, at a time when the right wing which has taken over in the USA under the leadership of Donald Trump has declared that they will continue to intensify economic sanctions against the CUBAN people. We need to have a focused campaign to expose the intersection between the right wing agenda and imperialism focusing on our solidarity with CUBA, Venezuela and Latin American countries; which are confronted by the

regime change right wing-imperialist offensive, such as we have seen in Brazil in the recent past.

This congress is taking place in a year in which we are celebrating the centenary years of comrade Oliver Tambo, who led the ANC under very difficult conditions but was able to bring back our movement still intact; we dare not destroy it when we are in charge of the levers of state to drive radical transformation. We need to draw lessons from some of the African countries. One of the reasons which led to the demise of many liberation movements is when they ignored the strategic task of linking state power with organisational power on the ground.

The primary focus of every delegate in this congress should be to build NEHAWU and you all have to spend most of your time sharpening your tactics and developing strategies on how you are going to defend the members and push back against employers.

Comrades, unity is not an option but the only thing we need to achieve particularly during this period in which workers are under siege. Unions should be at their best during this period that is characterized by political and economic contestations. During this period everything that we do must be informed by our class interests, as the working class. We should clearly define our enemies and our friends.

We should work to build our federation, work hard to defend our alliance and also work to unite our movement and help it resolve the issues of factionalism before they become irreversible. Do not be shy to discuss political issues here in this congress; do not listen to those rented analysts, who accuse COSATU of paying too much attention to politics. In its 32 years of its existence, COSATU has never shied away from engaging in the political affairs of this country.

We were born in the belly of the beast that was apartheid and baptized by the apartheid state of emergency and many of our leaders and members paid the ultimate prize in the process of influencing and changing the politics of this country. How can workers be expected to remain neutral, when government decisions have brought us –e-tolls, labour brokers, neoliberal economic policies and the privatization of our public assets?

The first leader to be taken to the gallows by the apartheid regime was comrade Vuyisile Mini and he was a trade unionist. A number of the ANC leaders who were in the Treason Trial were trade unionist. Amongst these were comrade Lawrence Nkosi, Billy Nair, Lesley Masina, Harry Gwala, Curnick Ndlovu and many others.

In the Rivonia Treason Trial again most of those arrested as part of the MK high command were trade unionists. These included comrade Raymond Mhlaba, Elias Motsoaledi and many others; many of the cadres who worked underground and served in MK were trade unionist such as comrade Eric Mtshali , Zola Zembe and many others.

We remain guided by a perspective articulated by Chief Albert Luthuli when he said that *"I am glad that SACTU has not listened to the ill advice that they should not be interested in politics. There is a Zulu saying that if you are pricked by a thorn you also have to use a thorn to get it out. Workers are oppressed by political action; they must take political action in reply. "While the South African Congress of Trade Unions must thus pursue an independent policy in the interests of the workers, it must also participate unreservedly in the struggle to mobilise the people behind their demands as embodied in the Freedom Charter and must cooperate with all other organisations engaged in this struggle."*

We will defeat any attempt to reduce us into a gumboots federation, like we defeated the attempts to turn us into a political party. We will continue to fearlessly link our workplace struggles with community struggles and in the process engage in the politics of the country, and the politics that directly affects our beloved ANC and SACP. These two are our organisations. To paraphrase comrade Oliver Tambo, when we speak about the SACP and or the ANC we do not do so as a guest addressing foreign organisations but “rather we speak of and to our own”.

Comrade Lenin taught us that politics is “the most concentrated expression of economics”, and that “politics must take precedence over economics”. Those who argue that we should stay away from politics are advancing workerism and economism of the highest order; whose central ideology is to dismiss the political struggle as not important. The other extreme version of this sees the trade union as the main or even the only organisational base to advance a political struggle even to lead the struggle for socialism.

As COSATU, we have cleansed ourselves of all these thoughts in our 2015 Special National Congress and in the 12th National Congress when there was an attempt to convert COSATU into a political party that would replace the ANC and the SACP.

We expect a lot from the ANC and the SACP and we shall continue to voice our views and opinions about these two organisations. We will fight to defend them from internal and external enemies. As we speak, we are going to the ANC policy conference and we have been reading the ANC’s discussion documents. Some of these papers are apologetic to the private sector and seeks to appease foreign investors and credit rating agencies.

The federation is going to the Policy conference to contest the neoliberal policy framework that has left the economy of our country in white hands, and that has failed to distribute the wealth and resources to the people as a whole. These policies have left the colonial social relations intact, with racialised unemployment, racialised poverty and racialised inequality.

Part of what we want to see is the push for a review of the fiscal and monetary policies that have compromised the fiscal sovereignty of our country, in that for an example we no longer have a policy on exchange control and that means the inflow and outflow of money in South Africa is not regulated.

The South African state must develop its extractive capacity, which means that the state must have capacity to extract social surplus, mobilize national resources, in order to fund social and economic development. Extractive capacity includes, but is not limited to the mobilization of national saving for development; Quantitative regulation of credit allocation by the financial sector; and a progressive tax and levy system amongst others.

Comrades, we can argue and debate whether white monopoly exists but we cannot argue and quibble about the fact that it is black and African people in particular who are the poorest in this country, and that they do not own the means of production. We also cannot argue that a majority of companies registered in the JSE are white owned. No one can dispute the fact that 68 percent of senior managers who are directly involved in decision making are white as shown in the recent employment equity report. No one can argue that strategic sectors of the economy are both white owned and foreign owned.

No one can dispute the fact that the 4 large privately owned banks are not owned by black people. It is a fact that the wholesale sector and manufacturing sector is also not owned by blacks. The pharmaceuticals sector is controlled by Aspen, Adcock-Ingram, Sanofi, Pfizer,

Norvatis, etc and all have all significant foreign-ownership. These are monopolies and they are not owned by blacks, and a question must be asked as to who are their real owners?

As part of our unapologetic stance to participate in the politics of this country we have also taken a clear stand on the upcoming 54th Conference of the ANC, where we firmly support the ANC Deputy President, comrade Cyril Ramaphosa to be the next president of the ANC. We took this decision because we cannot afford to stand on the sidelines, while other classes are contesting and shaping the future of our movement.

Under the leadership of Cde Cyril, we expect and demand that the ANC confronts the issue of labour brokers, take a decision to scrap e-tolls, and ensure that our State Owned Entities are not used as milk cows by anyone including by big capital and the parasitic bourgeoisie. We want a democratic, militant, radical, and united ANC that maintains its mass based character. We want an ANC which understand that Alliance should be positioned as a strategic centre of power and the ANC should remain the leader of that strategic centre of power.

This in practice should translate into the alliance political council meeting regularly and at the centre of its work should be to drive the National Democratic Revolution. It should mean that the Alliance Political Council should be part of deployment, accountability and recall of cadres in and from all centers of state power including in government. It should mean that the Alliance should be part of strategic policy formulation such as economic policy and it should be part of monitoring and evaluation of such policies and their implementation.

The alliance political council should regularly meet with strategic parliamentary structures such as parliamentary caucuses to give mandates and a line of march.

The 1969 Morogoro Strategy and tactics defined the alliance as the "fighting alliance" and after the 1994 democratic breakthrough we allowed the Alliance to be treated as a by the way. For a second more radical phase of our transition to be a reality, the Alliance should be defined in as a "governing alliance" in practice. We want meaningful consultation on all major and strategic decision in government including on socio-economic policy and on deployment and or recall of cadres. We will soon be meeting with the SACP to discuss how exactly should we get the Alliance being reconfigured.

We want an ANC that consciously work with the Alliance to drive radical socio economic transformation.

This includes taking forward the task of building a developmental state. In our view a conscious effort to build a developmental state is at the centre of driving radical socio – economic transformation.

In this regard, we expect NEHAWU to provide leadership on the construction of a developmental state because the state is your theatre of operation. A key question that will have to be answered as a point of departure in discussions about the developmental state is: in whose class interest is the developmental state constructed? Building state capacity, restructuring its organs and redefining its role in the economy in particular can either serve to deepen and escalate the exploitation, oppression and domination of the working class or it can reduce and ultimately eliminate such phenomena.

NEHAWU must lead a debate on this front which should include revolutionary consciousness of public servants as servants of the revolution who must be provided with adequate resources to do their work and be paid properly to keep their moral high. But we want public servants who put the interests of our country first, we want public servants who are effective and always demonstrate commitment to serving the people but we want to stress that they must be provided with adequate resources and paid properly. In COSATU's view, as a country we don't have a developmental state yet and NEHAWU must lead us on we should construct such a state

Comrades, workers are waiting to hear what this Congress will say about the government employee's housing scheme, given the fact that more than 900 000 public servants out of a workforce of 1, 3 million do not own houses.

NEHAWU members want to know how their pensions are being used by the PIC and as COSATU ,we want NEHAWU and all the public sector unions to lead our a campaign directed at all institutions ;which are responsible for the investment of workers retirement and pension funds such as the PIC and GEPF. These institutions should ensure that their investment directly benefits the workers and the working class in general. If the PIC can invest in BEE deals and in the building of malls so must it also invest in the government employees housing scheme.

Coming out of this congress, NEHAWU must heighten the campaign on the implementation of the National Health Insurance system, which must highlight the fact that NHI will not be realized if there is no state pharmaceutical company. NHI will not be implemented through Public private partnership. The NHI must be implemented through conscious building of state capacity.

NEHAWU should also be at the forefront on our campaign for free education not only because higher education .In our view the struggle for free education is therefore a struggle for radical socio economic transformation.

But comrades all this will remain a dream if we don't build our organisation. The COSATU 6th Central Committee said that all our demands will remain on paper if we do not prioritise the building of the organisation. In this context the Central Committee directed that our demands can only be translated into reality through building a strong organisation on the ground. This include the fact that big unions like NEHAWU should use their size to build and work in solidarity with other unions which requires support and our focus is on building industrial unions.

We need to build COSATU unions in the workplace and get leaders to move out of boardroom and be practically on the ground to lead workplace struggles. We want to see NEHAWU leading the recruitment offensive for itself and working with other unions based on providing quality service to members and organizing the unorganized and those workers who are in vulnerable sectors.

Comrades, these are the tasks which requires a strong organisation a strong and united NEHAWU for a strong and united COSATU.

Amandla!



KHAYA XABA

Media Liaison Officer

Tel: +27 11 833 2902 Ext: 60636

Mobile: +27 82 455 2500

Email: khaya@nehawu.org.za

NEHAWU HEAD OFFICE

National Education Health and Allied Workers' Union

56 Marshall Street | Marshall Town | Johannesburg

PO Box 10812 | Johannesburg | 2000

Tel: +27 11 833 2902 | Fax: +27 11 833 0757 (Secretariat)

Website: www.nehawu.org.za

Follow us on   