



International Relations Bulletin

World Federation of Trade Unions Delegation to Zimbabwe

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Editorial

We publish this edition of the NEHAWU International Bulletin to reflect on the visit to Zimbabwe undertaken from 26th - 28th February 2026 as part of a delegation of the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU). It has been more than five years since NEHAWU last visited the country.

During this visit it was evident that certain developments have taken place in Zimbabwe. Infrastructure improvements are noticeable, particularly the major revamp of the Robert Gabriel Mugabe International Airport, which now presents a modern and



well-maintained facility. Our engagements also reflected that there have been shifts in the broader economic outlook of the country. Without suggesting that Zimbabwe is experiencing an economic boom, our discussions with trade union counterparts indicated that some improvements have taken place when compared to earlier periods of acute internal crisis.

However, our observations were less optimistic regarding the political developments in the country. Political change is a permanent feature of social life, as Marxism reminds us. Yet some of the current political developments appear to represent a regression rather than progress.

A key issue raised during our engagements is the ongoing political dispute surrounding proposed constitutional amendments. The ruling party, ZANU-PF, has tabled amendments in two parts. The first proposal seeks to extend the current President's term by an additional two years, until 2030. The second proposal concerns the removal of the constitutional two-term limit for the presidency. Zimbabwe's elections are normally held every five years, with the current framework harmonising elections across national, provincial and local government structures.



The primary purpose of the WFTU delegation was nevertheless clear. The delegation travelled to Zimbabwe to engage directly with the country's public service unions, to listen to their concerns, to understand the realities facing Zimbabwean workers, and to discuss the process of strengthening their relationship with the WFTU. A central objective of the visit was to welcome the Zimbabwe Confederation of Public Services Trade Unions (ZCPSTU) into the family of the WFTU and to explore practical steps to advance their affiliation.

It is our hope that these reflections will contribute to strengthening the political consciousness of our members and readers. International solidarity among workers is not an abstract principle. It must be built through concrete relations, exchanges and cooperation among trade unions across borders. The struggle of workers in one country is inseparable from the struggle of workers everywhere.

About the WFTU Delegation:

The WFTU delegation was led by Comrade Anastasaki Archontia, Executive Secretary of the WFTU. She also serves as Deputy General Secretary of the Trade Union International of Pensioners and Retirees (PyJ). Comrade Anda is a veteran trade unionist from Greece and is based at the WFTU headquarters in Athens. She also serves on the Executive Committee of the International Workers Institute (IWI), which is dedicated to ideological development and political education within the international trade union movement.

The General Secretary of NEHAWU, Comrade Zola Saphetha, participated in the delegation in his capacity as General Secretary of the Trade Union International of Public Services and Allied Workers (TUI-PS&A). His participation was considered important by the WFTU in order to share practical experience on the functioning of the TUI-PS&A and to strengthen relations within the public services sector internationally. NEHAWU also carries historical significance as one of the early affiliates of the WFTU on the African continent.

Comrade Lucian Segami, the Head of NEHAWU International Relations Department, also formed part of the delegation.

Introductory Meeting with the Zimbabwe Confederation of Public Services Trade Unions

The WFTU delegation was welcomed by Comrade Cecilia Alexander, President of ZCPSTU. During the meeting she explained that the confederation's name is commonly pronounced *Zee / cop / stu*.

In her remarks, Comrade Alexander outlined a number of serious challenges confronting public sector workers in Zimbabwe. These include the rising cost of living, the steady erosion of wages over time, and deteriorating working conditions. For many workers, wages are no longer sufficient to meet basic needs. The struggle for dignified wages therefore remains central to the trade union agenda in the country.

A major point of contention concerns a job evaluation exercise in the public service, the outcome of which was rejected by the unions. According to the unions, the proper procedures were not followed in evaluating workers' jobs. Although labour participates in consultations through the Joint National Council, unions have demanded a review of the entire process.

While collective bargaining, including the right to strike, is recognised in the Zimbabwean Constitution, in practice public service workers do not enjoy these rights. Zimbabwe is also a signatory to International Labour





Organisation (ILO) Convention 98, which guarantees the right to organise and bargain collectively, yet these rights remain largely unrealised in the public service

The meeting also discussed political developments concerning proposed legislative changes affecting the electoral framework. Public hearings are underway on legislation that would harmonise the regulatory framework governing national, provincial and local government elections. This includes the controversial proposal to extend the current presidential term until 2030.

Another critical issue raised by ZCPSTU concerns the management of pension funds. Workers are currently excluded from decision-making regarding the administration of their deferred wages. Government management of pension funds has taken place largely without worker participation, and unions have raised concerns regarding certain investment decisions.

Despite these challenges, ZCPSTU continues to maintain cooperative relations with other trade union federations in Zimbabwe, including the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) and the Zimbabwe Federation of Trade Unions (ZFTU).

Comrade Cecilia emphasised the importance of international solidarity and called for stronger cooperation with the WFTU and its affiliates. She noted that the absence of genuine collective bargaining remains one of the most serious structural challenges facing public service workers in Zimbabwe. Although the constitution recognises this right, public service unions currently enjoy only consultative status.

Representatives of one of ZCPSTU affiliates, the Federation of Education Unions of Zimbabwe (FEUZ), also presented the situation facing teachers. They reported that teachers' salaries have effectively been reduced by up to 50%, severely affecting their livelihoods. Where teachers previously earned approximately US\$500 (~R8326.24) per month, many now receive around US\$250 (~R4163.12), while the cost of food, housing and transport continues to rise. As a result, many teachers are opting for early retirement simply to access pension benefits. According to the unions, the current pension system is unsustainable and has become a major point of conflict with the government.



Engagements with the WFTU Delegation:

In response, Comrade Anastasaki introduced the WFTU delegation and explained the structure and work of the WFTU and its Trade Union Internationals. The WFTU maintains representation across major international institutions, including the ILO, Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), World Health Organisation (WHO), World Trade Organisation (WTO) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), and operates through regional offices across the world.

She described the meeting with ZCPSTU as historic, noting that the WFTU had never previously formally visited Zimbabwe. She emphasised that the WFTU sees Zimbabwean public service workers as part of the same international family and expressed the federation's commitment to building long-term cooperation.

The WFTU currently represents more than 130 million workers across 125 countries. It provides support to affiliated unions through training programmes, political education, and international campaigns across various sectors organised through its TUIs.

Comrade Anastasaki invited ZCPSTU to formally join the WFTU. Given the limited time before the upcoming WFTU Presidential Council meeting in Bahrain, it was agreed that ZCPSTU would initially participate as an observer, with full rights to attend meetings and participate in discussions, although without voting rights. ZCPSTU was also invited to attend the 19th World Trade Union Congress, where it would be able to present its credentials.

The Role of the TUI-PS&A:

Comrade Zola Saphetha presented the work of the Trade Union International of Public Services and Allied Workers (TUI-PS&A), which currently represents approximately 38 million members worldwide, and is the largest WFTU TUI.

He proposed that the TUI would organise an initial virtual induction programme for ZCPSTU, followed by direct training programmes at a later stage. He also introduced the publication produced by the President of the

IWI and Honorary President of the WFTU Comrade George Mavrikos titled Critical Notes on the History of the World Trade Union Movement: Issues of Tactics and Strategy.

In line with the commitment to strengthen ideological work and trade union education, the TUI-PS&A General Secretary invited ZCPSTU to send ten trade union cadres to South Africa for training. The proposed training themes include collective bargaining, internationalism and ideological development.

Comrade Saphetha also formally conveyed an invitation for ZCPSTU to attend the 13th National Congress of NEHAWU, where the union intends to announce the strengthening of relations between the two organisations. Efforts will also be made to facilitate ZCPSTU's participation in the congress.

The leadership of ZCPSTU welcomed these initiatives and reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening cooperation with the WFTU and the TUI-PS&A.



Courtesy Visit to the Minister of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare

At the request of the government, the WFTU delegation and the leadership of ZCPSTU paid a courtesy visit to the Minister of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare of Zimbabwe, Hon. Edgar Moyo.

The Minister, himself a former trade unionist, welcomed the delegation and expressed appreciation for the engagement with Zimbabwean public sector unions. The meeting provided an opportunity for the delegation to explain the purpose of the visit and the role of the WFTU in the international trade union movement.

During the discussion the Minister acknowledged the complex and often contradictory nature of labour relations. He noted that the government remains engaged in difficult negotiations with organised labour regarding wages, pensions and broader public service conditions.



Meeting with the National Office Bearers of the Zimbabwe Confederation of Public Service Trade Unions:

A further meeting was held with the National Office Bearers of ZCPSTU, including the confederation's national negotiators.

Union leaders explained that public service labour relations in Zimbabwe are governed by the Public Service Act. Under this framework, the Joint National Council functions primarily as a consultative structure rather than a collective bargaining forum. As a result, negotiations are often convened at the discretion of the employer.

Union leaders also described the existing labour relations framework as rooted in colonial-era legislation. For example, in order for disputes to proceed to arbitration both parties must declare a deadlock, a condition that unions argue is extremely difficult to achieve in practice.

Public servants are also prohibited from striking, which unions argue contradicts the constitutional guarantees of workers' rights. By contrast, workers in the private sector enjoy collective bargaining rights.

Comrade Anastasaki reiterated that ZCPSTU is not alone in confronting these challenges. She emphasised that affiliation with the WFTU would connect Zimbabwean workers to the support and solidarity of millions of workers across the world.

She reaffirmed that the WFTU exists to represent the real interests of the working class against exploitation, capitalism and imperialism. The WFTU will work together with ZCPSTU to develop training programmes and organisational support that respond directly to the needs of Zimbabwean public sector workers.



