



NEHAWU POST 13TH NATIONAL CONGRESS STATEMENT

MEDIA STATEMENT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday July 15, 2026



The National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union [NEHAWU] convened a highly successful and united 13th National Congress from 26 to 29 June 2026 at the Birchwood Hotel in Boksburg, Gauteng Province, under the theme: "Advance Workplace Organisation to Defend Collective Bargaining, Heighten Class Consciousness and Advance Internationalism."

Over 609 delegates representing 289 665 members attended the 13th national congress to receive reports on the implementation of resolutions since the last congress that was held in 2021 and also to analyse and assess the international and domestic balance of class forces, renew the leadership mandate and adopt a programme of action guiding the union as it advances the struggle of workers and the broader working-class.

The congress received valuable addresses from the African National Congress (ANC), the South African Communist Party (SACP), the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), progressive organisations from South Africa and across the world, as well as the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) and the Trade Union International of Public Service and Allied (TUI PS&A). Our 13th National Congress represented an important moment in the history of our organisation and it was not merely a constitutional gathering to elect leadership and adopt resolutions, but reaffirmed the ideological direction of our union including renewing commitment to building a militant, democratic, worker-controlled and class-oriented trade union that remains firmly rooted in the struggles of workers and the working-class.

We proudly declare that our congress held robust, frank and constructive discussions on the challenges confronting our members, workers, the labour movement and our country.

Delegates emerged from congress united, confident and determined to implement the resolutions adopted under the clarion call to advance workplace organisation, defend collective bargaining, heighten class consciousness and advance internationalism. The congress reaffirmed that the interests of the working class remain the entry point into every pillar of our work and that union shall continue to discharge its organisational responsibilities guided by this fundamental principle.





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The congress took place during a period of profound global uncertainty, where the international capitalist system continues to experience a protracted structural crisis characterised by economic stagnation, widening inequalities, ecological destruction and intensifying competition between imperialist powers for markets, resources and geopolitical influence.

The congress observed with serious concern the continued escalation of imperialist wars and military aggression in different parts of the world, which continue to inflict untold suffering on millions of working people.

The congress condemned the ongoing genocide against the Palestinian people and reaffirmed the union's unwavering solidarity with the struggle for a free, independent and sovereign Palestine. We reiterated our full support for South Africa's genocide case before the International Court of Justice and called on our government to remain steadfast in defence of international law and justice despite increasing pressure from imperialist forces.

The congress further reaffirmed its unconditional solidarity with the peoples of Cuba, Venezuela, Western Sahara, Swaziland and all oppressed nations resisting colonial domination, imperialism and capitalist exploitation. We resolved to intensify our participation in the global Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign and strengthen practical international solidarity through the campaigns of the WFTU and TUI Public Service and Allied.



On the national political situation, the congress undertook a comprehensive assessment of the current conjuncture and concluded that South Africa has entered a complex phase in the National Democratic Revolution [NDR].

The congress reaffirmed that the NDR remains the strategic path through which the working class must continue advancing towards socialism. However, the congress expressed concern that the revolutionary content of the NDR has increasingly been undermined by neoliberal macroeconomic policies that have weakened the capacity of the state, developmental agenda, and entrenched monopoly capital and frustrated the aspirations of the Freedom Charter.

The congress reaffirmed the resolution of the 12th National Congress and COSATU's 13th and 14th National Congress on supporting the SACP in electoral contestations. We welcome the fact that the SACP's 15th National Congress resolved to contest elections, with or without a reconfigured Alliance, as part of building working class hegemony in all key sites of power and in the context of the absence of a clear and resolute working class voice in the formal and institutional political terrain.





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It further reaffirmed that the interests of the working class remains the primary objective through which the union advances the class-struggle. Especially at a time when capitalism continues to deepen inequality, unemployment, poverty and exploitation, and imperialism intensifying its aggression in the world, the union reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to international working-class solidarity under the principle that an injury to one is an injury to all.

The congress resolved that the union shall actively engage and support the Party's programmes and campaigns while contributing towards the building of the Left Popular Front as a strategic platform for uniting workers, communities and progressive formations around a common socialist programme.

Furthermore, the congress assessed the emergence of the Government of National Unity and agreed that the GNU reflects the changing balance of political forces in our country and the continued erosion of public confidence arising from decades of neoliberal economic policies that have failed to resolve the triple crises of unemployment, poverty and inequality.

Nearly three decades after the adoption of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) policy framework, South Africa continues to experience mass unemployment, deepening poverty, widening inequality, deteriorating public services and growing social instability. Congress concluded that these conditions are not accidental but are the inevitable consequence of an economic trajectory that prioritises profits over people.

The congress therefore reaffirmed our longstanding opposition to austerity measures, privatisation, outsourcing and all neoliberal reforms that seek to privatise public services and weaken the capacity of the state. We remain convinced that quality public services, decent work and development can only be achieved through a capable developmental state driven by the interests of the working class and the poor.

The congress also reflected extensively on the deteriorating condition of public services. Congress expressed serious concern over the impact of budget cuts, chronic vacancies, collapsing infrastructure, shortages of essential equipment and medicines, and poor management across many public institutions. The congress reaffirmed that the defence of quality public services is inseparable from the struggle to improve the working conditions of public servants.

In this regard, congress resolved to intensify the Public Service Delivery Campaign and place renewed emphasis on defending and strengthening the National Health Insurance as the most progressive mechanism for ensuring universal access to quality healthcare. We shall continue campaigning for the filling of vacant posts, improved healthcare infrastructure, adequate provision of medicines and medical equipment, and the establishment of a publicly administered National Health Insurance Fund.





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The congress further resolved that the union shall continue exposing and opposing attempts by monopoly capital and conservative political forces to undermine the implementation of National Health Insurance and preserve the unequal healthcare system inherited from apartheid.

The congress equally reaffirmed the union's commitment to transforming the post-school education and training sector and advancing the struggle for free, quality and public education. Working together with progressive organisations, we shall contribute towards building a Popular Education Front capable of driving meaningful transformation of the education system.

The congress also deliberated on the Just Energy Transition and resolved that South Africa's transition towards cleaner energy must never become another vehicle for privatisation, job losses and corporate profiteering. The congress reaffirmed that workers

and communities must not bear the costs of the transition. Instead, the transition must be publicly owned, democratically planned and socially controlled in the interests of national development.

The congress further resolved to intensify campaigns against the cost-of-living crisis, rising unemployment, food insecurity and growing inequality. The union shall continue working with COSATU, the SACP and progressive community organisations to campaign for pro-poor budgets, strengthened public services, expanded social protection, land reform, decent housing and sustainable livelihoods for working-class communities.

The congress reaffirmed that workplace organisation remains the foundation upon which the strength of our union is built. The congress directed that every structure of the union must prioritise recruitment, member servicing, political education and workplace organisation as to advance workplace organisation and defend collective bargaining.





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Furthermore, the congress also reaffirmed the strategic importance of strengthening the union's paralegal structures, improving dispute management, modernising case management systems and enhancing organisational capacity to provide quality service to members across the country.

The 13th National Congress reiterated that collective bargaining remains the lifeblood of the union. As such, we shall continue defending collective bargaining, resisting unilateral employer's actions and mobilising workers against all attempts to undermine collective bargaining, and the rights of workers.

The union emerges from its 13th National Congress more united, politically focused and organisationally stronger. We emerge from the congress inspired by the confidence shown by our members and determined to implement the resolutions adopted. We are more determined and resolute to defend collective bargaining, advance workplace organisation, heighten class consciousness and strengthen proletarian internationalism.

Lastly, the NOBs as part of responding to the clarion directive of congress of Close Ranks and Defend the Base, visited our branch [Armcor Dockyard] in Simons' Town. Our members informed the union that the Chief of Navy is still intent on terminating the Navy's contract with Armcor. Armcor has been rendering services for the navy in the dockyard for many years. There are around 400 employees of Armcor in that dockyard and the pronouncements by the Chief of the Navy are reckless and put the jobs of our members and workers at risk.

As NEHAWU, we will not stand idle whilst the Chief of the Navy undermines our members and the rights of workers. We want to send a strong warning to him that he must desist from his nefarious agenda. As NEHAWU, we are combat ready to defend the rights of our members, workers and defend collective bargaining.

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