

MEDIA ALERT - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEHAWU STATEMENT OF THE 1ST PLENARY SESSION OF ITS 11TH NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Thursday November 2, 2017

The National Education Health and Allied Workers' Union [NEHAWU] convened a National Executive Committee [NEC] on the 30-31st October 2017. This was the first meeting of the NEC after our successful 11th National Congress held in Boksburg in June. The NEC considered the international context, national political and socio-economic situations and organisational matters affecting our members and the working class in general.

The meeting paid tribute to the former President of the African National Congress [ANC], Comrade Oliver Reginald Kaizana Tambo, whose sterling contribution in our liberation struggle shall forever serve as an inspiration to redouble our efforts in fighting against the capitalist onslaught faced by the working class and the poor. Cde Tambo served the ANC with distinction and commitment while in exile.

The meeting took place as we approach 100 years since the Great October Socialist Revolution in Russia and the 150th year since the publication of Capital: Critique of Political Economy by Karl Marx. The meeting agreed to mark the two historic events by promoting a return to mass ideological training in the union.

The meeting noted the report by Statistics South Africa which paints a bleak picture on the socio-economic realities faced by the working class and the poor. The report reveals that after 23 years of democracy more than half of the South African population lives in poverty. In fact, the number of people living in extreme poverty [e.g. persons living below 2015 Poverty Line of R441 per person per month] has increased by 2, 8 million to nearly 14 million. This must be attributed to the crisis of capitalism and state capture which continues to rob people of jobs and much needed services by poor communities. The instability in government coupled with the syphoning of state funds by the Gupta dynasty further impose a severe brunt on the working class in their quest to survive.

This further solidifies the realistic possibility of the ANC losing power in 2019. With a stagnant economy that does not inspire job creation the working class especially the youth faces a very bleak future. A 27.7% unemployment rate should be a course for concern for our government and a radical shift in policy would have to be implemented in order to remedy this dreadful situation.

On the international front

The NEC notes that with the persistence of the long and deep global crisis of the capitalist system, there is alongside it the creation of many more crises in the environment, in energy, in food supply, crises of a military nature within and

amongst small and advanced nations and in virtually every sphere of human existence.

Under these circumstances, workers have to bear the overwhelming burden of the crisis. They are outsourced, retrenched, are paid low wages and generally suffer intense exploitation with growing inequality and poverty. Everywhere they fight to preserve their gains and to score new victories under difficult conditions of attacks from the ruling class.

The NEC further notes that the ideological and organisational crisis facing the ANC is part of a downward trajectory suffered by many national liberation movements in the African continent and elsewhere in the immediate period following the achievement of formal political independence. As part of evaluating the general 100 years socialist experience in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, the NEC agreed to contribute to the study regarding the decline of national liberation movements and towards strengthening the defence of the goals of national liberation.

The NEC also paid considerable attention to the situation in Swaziland. Following the national union visit to our Swazi counterparts in August 2017, it is clear from the many ominous signs that the leadership of King Mswati III will continue to be a source of major distress for the people of Swaziland. This corrupt regime has placed more diabolical restrictions to limit and violate the rights of the Swazi people and the workers. It introduced a public service bill intending to bar unions and civil servants from participation in politics. It also offered civil servants a 0% salary increase from their demand of 9%. This is notwithstanding allegations that it conceded to senior public servants as much as 118% in salary increases. The Swazi students are emerging as a bastion of youth militancy and are challenging the regime for their right to education and dignity.

The NEC resolved on a solidarity delegation to Swaziland before the end of 2017 to support our counterparts, against the public service bill, against the forthcoming sham elections, for democracy and for the unbanning of political parties.

We will also work with the South African Students Congress [SASCO] in its effort to strengthen ties with the Swaziland National Union of Students [SNUS].

One of our key priorities is the strengthening of the class-orientated trade union movement, the WFTU in Africa working with both the SACP and Cosatu.

The NEC conveys solidarity to the Palestinians, the people of Western Sahara, Venezuela and Cuba. It directed that efforts be made to support Cuba's reconstruction following hurricane Irma and condemns the US blockade as genocide.

National political situation and socioeconomic situation

On the home front, the NEC noted with concern the dire state of both government and the ANC under the leadership of Jacob Zuma. Under Zuma's leadership our

government continues to be unstable and this is further emphasised by the alarming fact that under the current administration there has been 11 reshuffles and 216 Director-Generals have been suspended since Zuma took over in April 2009.

This instability breeds a crisis which does not bode well for government to fulfil its role of providing service delivery. The intention of a reshuffle is to reinforce the capacity of the state in order for government to ensure that there is service delivery and to uphold the principles of good governance. Most recently reshuffles are done in order to further narrow political agendas like that of Cde Blade Nzimande, Pravin Gordhan and Mcebisi Jonas. As NEHAWU we see this as nothing but the silencing of dissenting voices and rewarding those who belong to the Zuma cabal with promotions or keeping their positions even when they don't deserve to.

State capture and corruption continues unabated and this is further obtruded by the failed attempt to install Brian Molefe as Minister of Finance and the positioning of Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma in government amid claims that the Deputy President is to be removed. The Zuma-Gupta faction is constantly positioning itself to loot as much state resources as possible. The tendency of using state resources to further narrow and selfish agendas is a tendency we thought we defeated post the 52nd National Conference in Polokwane.

We vehemently reject any plastic 'unity' that is meant to salvage waning campaigns. We reiterate our long held position that Cyril Ramaphosa is the correct candidate to unite and help salvage the ANC from the current state of deterioration. As the 54th National Conference of the ANC draws closer we will upscale our campaign in ensuring that our candidate, Cde Cyril Ramaphosa, emerges as the President at the Conference. In this regard, our provincial structures will lead and coordinate the campaign in all the nine provinces and subsequently cascade it down to regions and ultimately branches.

As NEHAWU, we also note the recent meeting of the Alliance National Political Council which for us further confirms the fact that the ANC in its current state and class orientation is no longer capable of uniting and spearheading the struggles of the broader masses of our people, of which the working class is the primary motive force. We are disheartened by the fact that there was no clear timelines in relation to the establishment of the commission of inquiry into state capture. An immediate establishment of the commission will give us an idea of the severity of the rot in government.

On socio-economic assessment we note the lacklustre tabling of the Medium Term Budget Policy Statement by the Minister of Finance, Malusi Gigaba. For us the budget does not even begin to scratch the surface in addressing a dwindling economy, rising unemployment and the fact that more than 50% of the population lives in poverty. Instead of providing answers in relation to the above mentioned social ills it creates new platforms for more looting.

As NEHAWU, we will outright reject any austerity measure that will affect workers because of the looting spree that has been taking place. We are already aware that

treasury intends to reduce governments wage bill by introducing headcount reduction. The national union will intensify the fight against the freezing of posts and the non-filling of funded posts in the public service. We will fight this tooth and nail more especially after the Auditor-General revealed in the financial report for the country's national and provincial departments, as well as government entities for the 2016/17 financial year that state irregular expenditure is currently at R45.6bn. This is money that could be better spent on improving the salaries of the loyal public servants.

Treasury is already planning to offer workers increments that are below CPI when public service wage negotiations commences. NEHAWU will engage other Cosatu affiliated public service unions to reject any offer that is less than a double digit because of the blunders by President Zuma.

The meeting made the analysis that the fees commission report was leaked deliberately by those who stand to benefit from the leakage of the report. The national union working with SASCO will lead a campaign for the release of the report before the end of the current year.

The meeting also noted the seriousness of the foreign Services Bill and will as a matter of urgency also engage the new Minister of Home Affairs on the Border Management Agency Bill.

We welcome the agreement between the Minister of Health and UNAIDS on the purchase of single-pill called Dolutegravir for HIV treatment in 2018. This move will save the fiscus up to R11.7bn over the next six years. However, we are concerned whether the production of these pills will be done locally and assist in the creation of jobs. We hope the state-owned pharmaceutical company, Ketlaphela, will play a major role in the production of these lifesaving pills.

As NEHAWU, we are not surprised by both the behaviour and the sloppiness of the Minister of Social Development in relation to the handing over of the payments of social grants to the South African Postal Services [SAPO]. We have time and again been at the forefront of pointing out the total disregard of the more than 17 million people who rely on social grants for survival. The same carefree attitude she is exhibiting on this matter is the very same one she has been exhibiting on the issues that made us to go on strike earlier this year. We want to send a clear message to the Minister that we will not hesitate to go on the street on the outstanding issues that she made commitments to resolve in April at the Department of Social Development.

Lastly the union will engage the Government Employees Pension Fund [GEPF] in relation to the crises at the Public Investment Corporation [PIC] and its failure to play a role in the supplying of houses to the more than 900 000 public servants who are without housing. As contributors to the fund workers wellbeing must be prioritised rather than investing in huge malls that do not benefit workers in anyway whatsoever.

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