



## **SACP message of support to the NEHAWU 12<sup>th</sup> National Congress**

*Delivered by the General Secretary Dr Blade Nzimande*

3 November 2021

Allow me on behalf of the SACP Central Committee and the entire membership of the Party to convey our revolutionary greetings. We wish your 12<sup>th</sup> National Congress a resounding success. From the onset, we also wish to stress the importance of unity to all the three elements of the theme, to the union at all levels, and to the entire progressive trade union movement both in the public and private sectors. We wish to underline that engaging in seeking consensus with each other on all major questions is part and parcel of working-class democracy and principles of solidarity.

### **Strengthen workplace organisation, deepen class consciousness, and advance internationalism**

NEHAWU has been playing a key role in the trade union movement in advancing all the three elements of your theme for this congress, “Strengthen workplace organisation to defend collective bargaining, Deepen class consciousness and Advance internationalism”. This was without doubt visible in the struggle to seek the implementation of Resolution 1 of 2018. The SACP came out in a principled support of the workers, in defence of collective bargaining and mindful of the wider implications of the National Treasury-led U-turn in honouring the negotiated public service and administration salary increases. More than anything else underpinning the U-turn is the neoliberal policy of austerity and the arguments that go with it.

Collective bargaining is a key pillar of social dialogue in labour relations and the decent work agenda. If compromised, by among others post-settlement U-turns, other things break down. The consequences can spread beyond the confines of the workplace, as we have seen it happening. Also, certain sections of the private sector took their cue from the U-turn in honouring public service and administration salary increases by engaging in acts that undermined collective bargaining. We cannot overemphasise the crucial importance of strengthening workplace organisation to defend collective bargaining.

The second element of your theme, “Deepen class consciousness”, draws attention to the imperative of linking the workplace struggle with the broader political struggle to build working-class power in pursuit of universal social emancipation. Through its campaigning and union education, NEHAWU has played an active role in building class-oriented trade unionism. We need to deepen our joint efforts, such as the Chris Hani Brigade Programme, which has produced a good number of well-trained leaders

and union officials within NEHAWU. This has also benefitted our broader movement with the capacity that it has produced.

NEHAWU has also played an important role in line with the third element of the congress theme, “Advance internationalism”. We wish to take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude for the role that the union has played within the World Federation of Trade Unions, in international solidarity and anti-imperialist struggles. It will fill pages to name all the international solidarity and anti-imperialist programmes that NEHAWU has taken part in and supported.

We are looking forward to the union strengthening workplace organisation, deepening class consciousness, and advancing internationalism. On this score, one key task that NEHAWU and other public service unions face is that of using your strategic location in the state to help dismantle the networks of corporate state capture and other forms of corruption. We say this appreciating the positive contribution that you have made in the battle.

We acknowledge working together in a widest possible patriotic front, buttressed by the combined power of the workers, and united through progressive trade unions both inside and outside the state, we could have succeeded much earlier than our first breakthrough in dealing state capture networks a decisive blow. We refer to “both inside and outside the state” because the state capture networks, and their nexus of corruption, comprised elements from both inside and outside the state. This understanding is important to recognising and advancing the imperative to build working-class power in all key sites of the struggle, including the economy.

There are key lessons for us to learn from the answers to the vexing questions that we have posed in our battle against state capture. For instance, how did state capture and the industrial scale looting that it facilitated take place and entrench while we have a strong, progressive trade union movement in the public sector? How can we use our strength as the progressive trade union movement in the public sector to build and defend a capable democratic developmental state, while providing quality service to our members? Is there a contradiction between, on the one hand, building a capable democratic developmental state, and, on the other hand, providing quality service to our members as the progressive trade union movement?

One key aspect that makes these questions essential for your objective consideration is that it is the working-class that suffers more from state capture, corruption and associated weakening of the state.

### **Put People Before Profit: Socialism is the Future—Build it Now**

This year marked the 100<sup>th</sup> founding anniversary of the SACP. We also wish to thank you for the SACP centenary celebration that you have organised to take place on November the 4<sup>th</sup>. We celebrate the centenary of the Party under the theme, “Put People Before Profit”. This is guided by the strategic slogan that captures both our immediate and long-term objectives, “Socialism is the Future—Build it Now”. Hence, “Put People Before Profit: Socialism is the Future—Build it Now”.

We put forward the theme in a strategic response to the capitalist bosses and their neoliberal hangers-on advancing more of the same measures that coalesce into putting profit before people in the face of the multiple capitalist system crises. By the way, neoliberalism has hollowed out and weakened the capacity of the state, like state capture. The industrial scale looting of state capture was more concentrated in the connection between the state and its entities, on the one hand, and the tenderisation of the state, outsourcing and privatisation promoted by neoliberalism, on the other. Neoliberalism is still driving similar measures globally. This time around, it uses the notion of structural reforms. The Washington-based IMF and World Bank, the Paris-based OECD, and Western imperialist credit rating agencies, to name but a few, are among the institutions intransigently pushing the neoliberal agenda.

The crises to which our centenary theme form a strategic response include the global COVID-19 pandemic which resulted in NEHAWU and other frontline workers' trade unions losing their members in the course of duty. We wish to express our sincere condolences once again to the families that lost their loved ones because of the deadly virus, and to you, dear comrades. We also wish to thank NEHAWU members for the role they have played in fighting the pandemic! We need to drive vaccination more robustly to achieve population immunity and stop the pandemic.

The other crises in contemporary capitalism to which our centenary theme refers in response are the economic crisis and the multiple crises of social reproduction. The economic crisis is showed by the persistent high levels of unemployment, poverty and inequality that affect the working-class, while the social reproduction crisis is showed by the associated inability of the affected working-class households to support their lives.

One manifestation of the multiple crises of social reproduction is that of gender-based violence and the subordinate position of women in society generally. The progressive trade union movement has a particularly important role in the forefront of the struggle against gender inequality, women's oppression, and the associated gender-based violence. Our workplaces are still sites of women's oppression and gender inequalities. Unless the progressive trade union movement goes to the front of this battle, we might never really defeat it.

Some sections in our country have, for many years, tried to convince us that the so-called economic policy fundamentals were in place. Now some of them insist that South Africa has good policies, that the only problem has been a lack of implementation. These arguments were and are still overwhelmingly one-sided. Neither do they appreciate the complexity of our situation, besides. In the end, they serve to maintain the failed paradigm.

The reality in South Africa is that the persistent high levels of unemployment, poverty, and inequality are long-term structural policy outcomes. For instance, unemployment in South Africa rose from below 20 per cent in terms of the narrow definition that excludes discouraged work-seekers to above 20 per cent in 1996. That was the year in which GEAR was imposed from within the government. Since then, unemployment never returned below 20 per cent. It has fluctuated above the crisis high level of 20 per cent. Like the global COVID-19 pandemic, the global economic crisis that broke

out in 2008 and the end of the global minerals super cycle in or around 2011 only worsened the pre-existing crises of unemployment, poverty, inequality, and social reproduction.

The long-term structural persistence of the crises of unemployment, poverty, inequality and social reproduction is one reason during the recent local government election campaign we stressed our message for a policy change. We did this while recognising the commendable social advances that benefitted millions of our people since our 1994 democratic breakthrough. We overemphasise the crucial importance of a change in the macroeconomic framework under whose auspices the systemic crises of unemployment, poverty, inequality, and social reproduction not only remained persistent but also worsened. Politically, these were a serious factor in the recent local government elections.

The interrelated crises of unemployment, poverty, inequality, and social reproduction also manifest in high incidents of criminality and different forms of violence afflicting many of our communities. We appeal to you, dear comrades, to reflect on how we can end the scourge of criminality, gender-based violence in particular, violence in general, drug dealing and drug and substance abuse in our communities and country at large. We need to achieve victory against these scourges and the individuals and forces behind them, regardless of their nationality.

In the same way, we must strengthen our mobilisation to roll back the neoliberal policy of austerity, as part of our effort to achieve the policy change that our country desperately needs to overcome the crises of unemployment, poverty, inequality and social reproduction. Among others, prescribed investment assets requirements, transformation of the financial sector, large-scale investment into infrastructure, industrialisation—including through beneficiation of our minerals, agro-processing, expansion and diversification of manufacturing in other employment creating drivers—and advancing more progressive social policy towards a comprehensive social security system. These must become an active reality in our policy trajectory.

We must solve our energy crisis through, among other measures, additional investment to turn Eskom around and reposition it to serve as the mainstay of our national and regional energy security of supply. This must include investment to end load shedding and secure the future of Eskom in renewable energy production. We cannot overemphasise the importance of the green transition to turn the tide against the catastrophic crisis of climate change, which is driven by profit-seeking interests.

As the SACP, we are saying it is not enough to articulate these policy perspectives. We need to actively mobilise the widest range of social forces to campaign for the realisation of these policy perspectives. This requires, amongst other things, deepening the joint campaigning of the SACP and COSATU, together with the entire progressive trade union movement, and other progressive organisations in society. We need to build a Left popular front to achieve radical structural transformation of our economy. This must be underpinned by returning to our joint political schools in order to build the necessary layer of cadreship to drive our policy commitments.

**Sincere gratitude to the people**

Dear comrades, allow us to take this opportunity to thank our people who voted for the ANC in last Monday's local government elections. We will conduct a detailed assessment of the results and develop the way forward. However, we have initial observations to highlight.

The results that started emerging yesterday were predictable. Which is why during the campaign we sought to turn the tide against, or at least limit the extent of the decline. There were service delivery problems affecting a number of communities across the country. Problems within our broad movement, such as internal divisions and counter-campaigning of the ANC, factional conduct, and situations where Alliance partners were marginalised, resulting in divided communities and a failure to provide quality services. The decline in voter turnout affecting the ANC could be attributed to such subjective factors, besides the objective factors such as the crises of unemployment, poverty, inequality and social reproduction.

There is a warning from the decline that occurred in different areas and the weaknesses that underpin it. Going forward, the ANC needs greater internal unity, the Alliance stronger than before, the widest possible support from the masses through maximum unity and strengthening of service delivery. Those who think otherwise, those who think that the ANC can survive and do well by abandoning the Alliance, will cause more harm to the ANC and its nature and character. To allow that to take precedence would be tantamount to paving the way for the abandonment of the path of a national democratic revolution and strengthening the counter-revolutionary current, of which some elements are to be found within the ranks of our broad movement.

The 2016 and the 2021 local government elections also pose a serious challenge to the SACP and COSATU, as well as to the entire progressive trade union movement, that of the state and role of the organised section of the working-class in our metros. For instance, in the 1980s it was the organised section of the working-class in the metros of our country that was the leading motive force in the mass struggle against the apartheid regime. It is in the same metros, where the working-class has been historically very strong and firmly part of our Alliance, that our broad movement is now becoming weaker. This is a challenge we must all grapple with on the state of organisation of the working-class in our metros and the task of rebuilding its strength. Indeed, part of the challenges we face in the metros is the rapid casualisation of the working-class, retrenchments and labour brokerage. This, I would like to say, is one of the key challenges that we need to discuss and come up with practical measures to rebuild working-class power in the metros.

In the same vein, to emphasise the message we consistently drove throughout the campaign, we need to strengthen our organisational capacity to ensure that the government implements people-centred priorities. This is in line with our call for a policy change. We must serve as the most advanced and resolution force that holds the government to account. This is too important to be left in the hands of the right wing and all sorts of opposition parties.

### **International solidarity**

We also want to take this opportunity to express our solidarity with the people of Swaziland in their struggle for democracy and social emancipation. The current situation in eSwatini requires the intensification of our solidarity activities on all fronts. We also wish to restate our solidarity with the people of Western Sahara and Palestine against occupation by Morocco and the apartheid Israeli regime, respectively, and with the people of Cuba, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Bolivia, and others in Latin America. We continue to condemn the United States led imperialist aggression in Latin America and other parts of the world. We reiterate our strong condemnation of the recent coup in Sudan and express our solidarity with the people for democracy in that country.

This is also the time when international trade union solidarity has never been so necessary as we also face vaccine imperialism in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Such solidarity must remain at the heart of working-class internationalism, and we salute NEHAWU for the role it is playing in this regard.

We wish you a successful congress and look forward to engaging with the resolutions you will take at this workers' parliament!

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1921–2021: 100 YEARS OF UNBROKEN STRUGGLE  
PUT PEOPLE BEFORE PROFIT  
SOCIALISM IS THE FUTURE—BUILD IT NOW!

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Dr Alex Mohubetswane Mashilo  
SACP Central Committee Member:  
Media & Communications

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FOR INTERVIEW ARRANGEMENTS, MEDIA LIAISON & CIRCULATION SERVICES  
Hlengiwe Nkonyane  
Communications Officer:  
Media Liaison, Multimedia & Digital Communications Platforms Co-ordinator  
Mobile: +27 79 384 6550

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OFFICE & OTHER CONTACT DETAILS  
Office: +2711 339 3621/2  
Twitter: SACP1921  
Facebook Page: South African Communist Party  
Website: [www.sacp.org.za](http://www.sacp.org.za)

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