

Declaration of the 9th NEHAWU National Congress

27-30 September 2010

Preamble

We delegates, gathered at the 9th National Congress of our union, NEHAWU, representing 247 095 members across the public service, post-schooling education, private health, private welfare and state agencies throughout the country:

1. Emerge from this congress convinced that our union has indeed come of age; hence we are proud of our history and confident of our future. In this regard, both in terms of the work-place and socio-political terrains of our struggle, we proclaim that we are ready to advance union organisation and working class power for socialism. We are also inspired by the on-going growth and strengthening of our 2 million strong federation, COSATU, as we join the broader organised working class in celebrating its 25 fighting years.
2. We appreciate with concern that since our last congress the South African economy has also been engulfed by the global capitalist crisis in which more than a million jobs have been lost, hence we are witnessing the deepening of inequalities and the escalation of unemployment, poverty and super-exploitation. Nonetheless, as borne out by our own public service strike this year, we are inspired by the fact that this deepening socioeconomic crisis is finding political expression in the upsurge of militant working class mobilisation in work-places and working class communities across the country.
3. Whilst we celebrate the defeat of the 1996 class project and the advent of the post-Polokwane conjuncture, we recognise that our national democratic revolution is poised at the crossroads as a result of the twin dangers of the emergence of the new tendency and the on-going spread of the cancer of corruption in our movement and society in general. Nonetheless, we are inspired by the outcomes of the recently held NGC of the ANC, which on the whole has made advances on the progressive outcomes of Polokwane, especially in terms of the major task of building a progressive developmental state. The NGC also decisively signalled the turning of the tide against ill-discipline and divisive manoeuvres instigated by tenderpreneurs inside and outside the ranks of our movement. In this regard, as members of the ANC in our own right and as part of the Alliance, we commit to play an active role in ensuring that the advances of the NGC are not reversed and are implemented.

Against this background we declare:

1. That having considered the broader national political situation in its totality, we reaffirm that our strategic posture of supporting and defending the collective

leadership elected in Polokwane, the progressive policy outcomes thereof, as well as fighting against attempts to cause divisions in the ANC and the Alliance by the counter-revolutionary new tendency, remains correct. In the same vein, we commit to scale up the swelling-of-the-ranks of the ANC in the spirit of discipline, unity and cohesion that characterised the NGC deliberations and outcomes.

2. As part of the identified political tasks of the present conjuncture to shift the balance of forces and to advance the struggle for socialism, we commit ourselves to play a leading role in support of our federation's mass mobilisation campaign in 2011 and beyond. In the same vein, we also commit ourselves to help strengthen the SACP as an organisation, to deepen our joint programme on the Chris Hani Brigades, to establish SACP units in our work-places and we pledge to support and work with the SACP in creating a workers' college of ideological and organisational training. This we shall do, convinced that as a vanguard of the South African working class, the SACP is best placed to lead the popular movement for socialism.
3. As a leading agent of transformation in health care, we welcome the commitment made by the NGC on the implementation of the NHI from 2012. As a union, we fight for the NHI that is based on principles of the right to health care, social solidarity, universal coverage and a single public administration. We shall mount a campaign on the NHI based on these principles. For us the bulk of the health care funding must come from general taxation. We will oppose the increase of the VAT to fund the NHI, unless such an increase is exclusively levied on luxury items. In this regard, we commit ourselves to continue fighting against private-public-partnerships in the public health system and in the process of the introduction of the NHI. We further pledge to campaign for the creation of a state pharmaceutical company and the local procurement of medicine in the context of the introduction of the NHI, as part of the debates on the new growth path.
4. Similarly, we pledge to launch our own sustained campaign amongst our members in support of the government's HIV Testing and Counseling campaign launched in April 2010.
5. As proud as we are of our achievements and strengthens, we are fully aware of our shortcomings, which we commit to overcome in the coming years. Indeed, based on our discussions in this congress it is clear that there are many lesson to be drawn by the union from the recent public service strike, which we pledge to continue to do on an on-going basis throughout the structures of our union.
6. As we advance union organisation, we fully commit ourselves to the centrality of long-term planning in building our union, hence we pledge to heighten and internalise our 10 year plan in all our structures. In this regard, in the coming term

of office, we shall focus on the following five priorities, which shall define the overall organisational strategy:

- (a) The building of strong and vibrant branches and regions
 - (b) The recruitment and registration campaign
 - (c) Education and training
 - (d) Case handling and management
 - (e) Collective Bargaining.
7. Financial self-sufficiency is the lifeblood and a precondition for a vibrant trade union movement committed to the principle of worker control. Therefore, whilst we still have a long way to go in positioning our union finances and our accounting practices at a level befitting a union of our stature, there could be no doubt in the fact that we have made strides in this direction over the years. Hence, we commit to take the necessary measures to strengthen our finance apparatus and to implement measures to monitor and evaluate compliance with the adopted finance manual in all levels of our structures. In this way, as a union we would ensure that we achieve proper controls in our systems in order to enforce responsibility and accountability as part of our task of safe-guarding the union's assets.
8. As ever our congress located the deliberations on our domestic terrain of struggle within the broader context of the unfolding global economic crisis. In this regard, we are inspired by the insights that our congress received from the variety of the local and international guests during our international seminar. Clearly, the progressive and socialist transformation that is taking place in Latin America today continues to be our lodestar, as is the unrelenting and defiant Cuban revolution. This calls upon us to build and strengthen relationships with the trade union movement in the continent and to continue fighting against the blockade and the release of the Cuban five. In our region we commit to work with other unions in building the WFTU on the African continent, beginning at home and in our subregion. Indeed, we will continue to work with progressive formations seized with the socioeconomic and political crisis in Palestine, Zimbabwe and Swaziland.

Finally, there is no doubt in the fact that we emerge from this congress stronger and united to carry out the mission placed upon us by the historical moment. Working side by side with other unions in the public service, our federation COSATU, our vanguard party SACP, components of the progressive youth movement the YCL and SASCO, this

is a mission we aim to fulfill, sparing neither strength nor energy. We take this responsibility seriously and commit ourselves to realise the objective of a strong, vibrant, democratic and united giant public service union. Faced with such huge challenges as the congress has identified, and emerging with such daunting mandate to advance union organisation and the struggle for socialism, we call on all our members and all our leaders to close the ranks, to unite and defend the glorious workers' movement of our forebears.

Amandla!

Matla!

All power!