

CEC Report

30 May 2003

The Central Executive Committee of the Congress of South African Trade Unions, with delegates from COSATU's 19 affiliated unions, met for three days this week and discussed a wide range of important issues.

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT

The CEC received an updated report on preparations for the Growth and Development Summit (GDS) scheduled to take place on 7 June. The CEC noted with regret, anger and frustration that the Alliance has once again completely failed to lead such an important process, despite the explicit resolution of the Ekurhuleni Summit. The Ekurhuleni Declaration called on the alliance to lead the process, resolve the differences on certain aspects, such as privatisation and the development path, and have a deeper engagement with our people through their formations. The alliance had envisaged a process that would unite the democratic forces first, followed by the engagement with the ruling elite - capital.

Instead of this we are now back to a process led by Nedlac with the alliance completely isolated. This has weakened the hand of the democratic movement.

The GDS should be the opportunity for a decisive step forward in the struggle for economic transformation. Despite our disappointment at the failure of the alliance to lead this process, negotiations over the past three weeks have gone a long way to lay the basis for consensus on the aims and outcomes of the GDS.

However, the CEC noted with concern attempts by some to produce a GDS document that will have no real commitments in respect of investment or job creation.

For COSATU the minimum requirement of participation in the GDS process is that it should firstly have real and meaningful commitments to job creation, particularly public works programmes, support for cooperatives and local procurement policies.

Secondly there should be a meaningful commitment to increase investment, including setting a target on the retirement industry for investment in social infrastructure and decent work.

Thirdly there should be promotion of social equity, particularly for workers, but also more generally for black people, through a programme of skills development, ownership in the economy, decent work and the extension of services to the poor.

These issues should all be implemented through a programme of effective local action. The GDS will address short-term urgent issues, but for COSATU it must also lay a basis for a serious social dialogue on policy issues and frameworks and the structural transformation of the economy and place South Africa on an employment generating growth path.

The COSATU leadership will assess progress over the weekend and has sought the ANC's urgent intervention to make sure that the GDS produces meaningful results for workers and the poor. A special

Executive Committee meeting will be convened on 5th June to evaluate the final draft agreement and decide on the way forward.

8th NATIONAL CONGRESS

The CEC received an updated report on preparations for the 8th National Congress of COSATU which will take place on 15-18 September 2003 at Gallagher Estate, Midrand, Johannesburg. The theme of the congress will be finalised in the July CEC. The CEC agreed to confer the Elijah Barayi Award posthumously to Chris Hani, OR Tambo and Walter Sisulu. Congress will confer National Congress Awards on a number of major figures in the fields of trade unionism, politics and arts and culture, and will recognise outstanding achievements by long-serving officials of the trade union movement. COSATU will also confer an award to the worst and to a model employer.

The CEC started a preliminary discussion on the programme that the Secretariat will present to the congress for adoption. This programme will take COSATU from this congress to the year 2015. Its key themes shall be:

- Consolidation of the political and social gains of the past 9 years;
- Contributing to finding a real solution to the worsening problems of unemployment, poverty and inequality;
- Ensuring that the economy is transformed to serve the majority;
- Ensuring that the working class play their leadership role in the NDR and the Alliance, and
- Ensuring that globalisation serves the needs of the majority instead of the powerful few.

2004 ELECTION

The CEC unanimously reaffirmed the existing COSATU policy to back the ANC in the coming elections scheduled for 2004. The CEC political commission will be the political structure to lead the campaign. The commission has been mandated to set up an internal election infrastructure for an effective campaign, as well as developing a structural link to the ANC and alliance structures. The commission will make a final recommendation on the issues of the levy each union will pay to an election fund in the July CEC meeting.

The CEC also made an assessment of both our gains/victories and setbacks since 1994. Whilst this is intertwined with the programme to 2015 to be presented in the congress, the CEC is satisfied that whilst workers had suffered major setbacks, in particular at the economic level, overall they have gained immensely from the government led by the ANC. A document assessing these setbacks and gains shall be incorporated into the programme to be discussed in the 8th national congress.

Further, we are seeking an engagement with the Alliance to discuss the electoral platform and processes to address long-standing differences within the alliance. A COSATU election platform, spelling out what we want to be in the ANC election manifesto, will be presented in the July CEC and the 8th National Congress.

LABOUR JOB CREATION TRUST

The CEC was given a report on the projects which have been funded by the Job Creation Trust. This was created at the Presidential Job Summit in 1998 and was funded by donations by thousands of workers. R57 million out of the R80 million raised has now been committed and R12 million paid out or loaned to 59 projects. This has created 4439 jobs. The distribution of funds has been biased in favour of the poorest provinces. 30% of the total has gone to the Eastern Cape, 22% to KwaZulu/Natal and 17% to Limpopo. More is to be done to publicise these projects and raise more funds.

NEHAWU Commission

A comprehensive report from the Commission that was set up to investigate financial and political problems which have arisen in the National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union (NEHAWU) was endorsed by the CEC. See attached the resolution adopted by the CEC.

CEPPWAWU

The CEC declared its full support for the Chemical, Energy, Paper, Printing, Wood and Allied Workers Union which is coming under attack from the Anti-Privatisation Forum, arising from its decision to suspend its Wits regional office bearers. The CEPPWA WU national executive committee decided to suspend the comrades for failing to respect decisions of the union arrived at through a democratic process in which they participated. The CEC reaffirmed the policy that COSATU is a home of all political and ideological tendencies that exist in our society and that this should at all time be defended. However when a decision is taken in the constitutional structures, all, in particular those elected into positions of leadership, must defend these, even though they may not be in agreement with them. That is how all organisations work and CEPPWAWU is no exception.

ZIMBABWE AND SWAZILAND

Collin Gwiyo, Deputy General Secretary of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions, gave a report and painted a grim picture of the economic hardships and the attacks on human rights facing workers in that country. He noted for instance that whereas Zimbabwe formerly had one nurse for every 10 000 people, the figure now is one nurse for 50 000 people.

The ZCTU supports a plan for a transitional authority, pending the adoption of a new democratic constitution and new elections. COSATU undertook to ask President Mbeki to put pressure on President Mugabe to agree to this transitional authority.

The CEC agreed to send a fact-finding delegation to Zimbabwe and declared its support for the ZCTU's week-long stayaway in June. It will use the media to highlight the demands of the trade union movement and will demonstrate active solidarity with the workers of Zimbabwe by supporting their actions and demonstrations. Limpopo Province will plan demonstrations and pickets around the Beit Bridge area to highlight the plight of Zimbabwean workers and maintain constant contact with the ZCTU.

The President and General Secretary of the Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions, Jan Sithole, reminded the CEC that Swaziland is the only absolute dictatorship on the African continent. It is a member of the UN, AU and ILO and bound by their conventions, but is not complying with them. He thanked COSATU for its consistent support for the trade unions and the struggle for democracy.

The fact that the King is to hold a national dialogue about a constitution in July is only as a result of the pressure he is under, domestically and internationally. The SFTU is insisting that this dialogue be held in public at a neutral venue, under an impartial chairperson, and with the King present as a participant. If the King refuses to accept this, the SFTU is planning mass action in August and COSATU will support the proposed blockage of goods into Swaziland in July to support protest actions by the democratic forces. The CEC endorsed the call by the international community for free political activity, the repeal of the draconian laws that limit freedom of speech and free political activity, and the restoration of the rule of law in Swaziland. It will encourage union-to-union exchanges and solidarity.

CUBA

The CEC reaffirmed COSATU's support for the socialist government of Cuba and its rejection of the United States' economic blockade. COSATU also called on the US government to release the 5 Cuban comrades serving jail terms in U.S. prisons.

JOINT STATEMENT BY AMERICAN AND SOUTHERN AFRICAN UNIONS

Southern African and United States trade unions have held a joint workshop to discuss the free trade agreement which is to be negotiated between the US and Southern African Customs Union countries. They agreed that the interests of the workers must be prioritised and that the unregulated forces of the market and the sudden removal of tariffs can have devastating consequences for developing countries. Such policies invariably help to strengthen the position of the big multinational corporations in the USA and the European Union and further weaken the economies of poorer countries. Further, we shall resist U.S attempts to use the FTA to undermine the sovereignty of SACU government to determine national developmental policies.

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