

# 10<sup>th</sup> National Congress Declarations

21-24 September 2009

## Preamble

We the delegates, representing more than two million members across the spread of workplaces in South Africa:

1. Appreciate the opportunity as the current generation of trade unionists to take forward the vision, aims and objectives of our forbears. We rededicate ourselves to further strengthen COSATU and its affiliated unions; to build working class power in all sites of power; and to realise the objective of a living wage; better working and living conditions for workers and working class communities.
2. We emerge from the Congress emboldened and united to carry out the mission fostered upon us. It is a mission we aim to fulfil, sparing neither strength nor energy. We take this responsibility seriously and commit ourselves to realise the objective of a strong, vibrant, democratic and united workers' movement. We are encouraged by the fact that COSATU is on a growth path and likely to reach the target to double its membership by 2015.
3. We appreciate the historic moment within which the Congress takes place. Once again, the Congress proved that COSATU is a united and mature organisation. The Congress was marked by robust and fearless debate, a hallmark of COSATU's internal dynamism. We appreciate the invaluable and enriching inputs from our Alliance partners, the mass democratic movement and the international friends in our congress. We will work hard to retain COSATU as a true champion of the interests of workers, a fearless fighter for justice and a conscience of the nation. We shall not disappoint comrade Rolihlahla Mandela our international icon, who called on us to continue being the conscience of our young democracy.
4. It is a moment full of opportunities that can be exploited to further the aims of the national democratic revolution and for better working conditions. The historic ANC 52nd Conference has restored our hope that the ANC and the Alliance will work together to achieve common goals. The installation of the new government, led by comrade Jacob Zuma provides a new opportunity to redefine and strengthen the state; and to refashion state-society relations.
5. In particular, we welcome the willingness and openness of the new government, which we aim to use to place workers' concerns on the table. There is breath of fresh air within the Alliance, opening the space for a democratic and mature discussion. We commit ourselves to grasp this historic opportunity to maximise workers' gains and better the life of working class communities. The Alliance should function properly at the national and at lower levels.
6. This year marked the fifteenth anniversary of the democratic breakthrough in 1994. We salute the ANC for a stunning victory in the general elections. Once again, an overwhelming majority of the people of South Africa has placed their hopes and trust in the ANC. The ANC led democratic movement has a duty to fulfil the peoples' desire for a better life. To that end, the movement has signed a contract with our people, expressed in the Manifesto, to fulfil the historic mission to build a truly non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and united South Africa. We recall the prescient warning of the 1969 ANC Strategy and Tactics that a revolution that translates into elite enrichment and no substantial change in the lives of our people amounts to cosmetic and not real change!
7. The democratic breakthrough has recorded important gains for the working class and the project to build a new nation. Still, we note that the historic inequalities in terms of race, gender and class remain firmly entrenched and have to some extent widened. Underdevelopment continues to co-exist with enclaves of prosperity and wealth. Colonial-apartheid accumulation centred on extraction and export of minerals continues to date.

8. We recognise that we have made important strides to redirect the NDR and the mass movement in the last five years. However there is no time for complacency because there is no permanent victory. We must prepare to defend our gains and to deepen the struggle

9. Further, we appreciate that this historic moment poses serious challenges to the democratic movement globally. The global economic crisis caused by the unrestrained greed of the capitalists threatens to erode some of the gains of our new democracy. The loss of employment across the world coupled with 500 000 jobs lost in South Africa is a serious outcome of the crisis.

10. Capitalists, especially in the industrialised world, have been cushioned from crisis through bail-outs and nationalisation of private debts by the state. They continue to arrogantly pay themselves hefty salary packages in the midst of company failures and rapid drop in company profits. It is still a mystery how performance of company executives is determined! During bad times they get above inflation salary increases, bonuses and other incentives. During good times they reap even more. Workers on the other hand are told that it is a virtue to accept inflation-linked salary and wage increments.

**Against this background we declare:**

1. That we embrace the political and organisational tasks set for this Congress in the Secretariat Report. To that end we commit to develop concrete plans to implement these tasks to ensure:

a. **Ideological clarity** about where we are, what the forces ranging against the strategic interest of the working class are; who are our allies; and clarity about the international ideological warfare. We further commit to build Marxism-Leninism as a tool of scientific inquiry to search for answers in the contemporary world. Marxism is also a guide to action. It is also pivotal to rebuild working class confidence in its ideas and heritage.

b. **A programme for transformation** setting out the short-term, medium-term and long-term objectives to deepen the NDR and the attainment of socialism. The programme will reflect the multitude of challenges facing the working class at the point of production and reproduction; and in all sites of power, the state, judiciary and the media. To that end, we embrace the challenge to sharpen our ideology and theory of revolution. We will open the space for discussion in the left and empower our members and leaders to understand the different theoretical approaches.

In this context, the state should be transformed into an effective and democratic developmental state. It must have the capacity to formulate a vision and programme for development; capacity to plan and coordinate its various interventions; and capacity for implementation. In this regard, we welcome the reconfiguration of Cabinet to build the capacity of the state to plan, coordinate, implement and monitor progress. Ultimately the State President bears the responsibility to translate Alliance positions into programmes of government and to steer the ship of government. We are opposed to fragmentation of the state through building of fiefdoms or kitchen cabinets within the state.

For that reason we call for the overhaul of the content of the Green Paper on Strategic Planning. That said, COSATU is not opposed to a discussion that clearly articulates a coherent planning process and machinery to ensure an effective state. We object to the marginalisation of the Alliance and other key ministries in shaping this policy intervention prior to its public release. This is reminiscent of the past, where COSATU and the Alliance were treated like ordinary NGOs and not allies. This contemptuous attitude flies against the spirit of the recent Alliance summit and engagements. Congress calls for a discussion on this issue by the Alliance.

c. **An organisational development** and building programme to build the organisational machinery of the working class and the liberation movement. The programme will ensure that the organisation has vibrant structures at branch/local, provincial and national level. This will also ensure internal

dynamism; democracy through heightened mass education and activism to raise the level of class consciousness. In this regard we have adopted policy proposals tabled by NALEDI as the congress for a continuing systematic organisational renewal programme.

2. Reaffirm the historical thesis that the NDR is the terrain upon which to wage a socialist struggle. Socialism is not a deferred struggle, nor is it a deferred perspective. In struggling for basic national democratic objectives, a broad national movement will be rolling back the capitalist market and constructing elements of socialism. Against this background, we commit to taking forward the task to learn the lessons of history to inform our practice today; to build a socialist movement coalescing around the SACP; develop a critical theory of the present and a theory of the transition to socialism; as well as define a vision for socialism in the 21st century. The Political Commission is hereby mandated to develop a detailed programme on the struggle for socialism.

3. We recognise the need to maximise the unity of working class forces. The working class, as a primary motive force of the NDR, bears the responsibility to unite the broadest range of social and political forces to take forward the NDR as the basis to build the momentum for socialism. To that end, we must strive for unity of the ANC, the SACP and COSATU and a vibrant and strong Alliance. Further, the organisational weaknesses that manifested in the 2009 General Elections should be tackled head on. An Alliance summit should be convened soon to address a variety of issues.

4. We commit ourselves to an unceasing battle against corruption; the use of the state and our organisations for self-enrichment; crass materialism and politics of patronage. These practices constitute a cancer that is slowly eating away the historic values of our movement, such as selflessness and service to the people. The aim of this campaign is to reassert revolutionary morality and ethics. We call for public representatives and unionists to relinquish their business interests otherwise they must leave to pursue their private interests. In future the workers will vote only for those who are genuinely pursuing the interests of the working class and the poor. Those not actively pursuing the interests of the working class do not deserve its vote.

Further we also call for a debate on how to manage the phenomenon of state officials who are using the state for private accumulation and a cooling-off period for senior managers in the state. To that end we call on state officials to choose to serve the people rather than their own private accumulation agenda. They have a choice to serve the people or to leave to pursue private agenda.

5. The response to the global economic crisis requires clear short-, medium- and long-term goals. In the short term we support the *Framework Response to the Global Economic Crisis*. The main objective of the programme should be to save and create jobs; stimulate production and economic growth, as well as to cushion the unemployed and the poor from the effects of the global economic crisis. We believe the framework should be linked to, and inform, a development strategy for South Africa to break out of the apartheid-colonial accumulation path. In the interim a package of measures to support local production, decent employment and incomes should entail the following:

a. A supportive macro-economic policy. Fiscal and monetary policy should support economic recovery through *inter alia* public investment in infrastructure project; mass public works programmes to support employment creation; an interest and exchange rate regime that support growth, employment and exports rather than a narrow focus on inflation targeting.

b. Strategic use of government procurement to support local production, empowerment and employment. To that end, we call for the review of the procurement framework consistent with our development objectives.

c. Investment in skills and human development. This entails measures to improve the school and higher education system and work place learning; measures to increase the social wage for workers through investment in efficient and affordable public transport; provision of basic services, and a functioning public health system. All these measures are critical to productivity enhancement in the

workplace. In this regard as a revolutionary trade union movement we pledge to work with government to improve efficiency of the public sector.

d. The mandate of development finance institutions should be reformulated to support the agenda for development and employment creation.

6. In the long run the necessity of an industrialisation strategy and regional integration cannot be over-emphasised. South Africa and Africa in general needs to break out of dependency on exports of primary commodities.

7. The Reserve Bank which plays a crucial public mandate cannot be left in the hands of private owners. COSATU therefore calls for the nationalisation of the Reserve Bank as an asset of our people and not shareholders.

8. We are appalled by the state of health care in South Africa. Private health care continues to take the lion's share of health resources while serving fewer than 20 percent of the population. This illustrates the inefficiency and wastage rampant in the private health care system. The push for profits in private health care is raising health care costs for ordinary workers that are members of medical schemes.

At the other end, is a poorly resourced and over-burdened public health care system, which caters for the poor. It is against this background that we will work hard to ensure the creation of a National Health Insurance Scheme. We however caution that the changes in the health care system should be sensitive to employment in the entire health system.

9. Congress is concerned with the rising burden of disease again largely concentrated among the poor. The HIV epidemic, coupled with new epidemics like N1H1 virus/swine flu and avian flu are attacks on the health and future of our nation. As delegates, we commit to step up our efforts to ensure a healthy nation. We recommit to an effective campaign to improve the quality of healthcare, particular a comprehensive HIV and AIDS strategy. Unequal access to nutritious food and healthcare add to the burden facing the poor and working class families. Congress commits to the campaign against high food prices to support access to healthy and nutritious food.

10. The struggle for a living wage is the lifeblood of the trade union movement. To that end we support the current ongoing strikes in the clothing and mining sectors. We call on all our affiliates to pledge their solidarity with these workers on strike. Further, as part of the struggle for decent employment, we call for the elimination of the practice of labour broking. We have adopted a number of resolutions on decent employment and working conditions that have implications for our labour laws. To that end, we commit to a programme to realise the aspirations of the 10th Congress to tighten labour laws to protect workers. Congress further call for:

a. The withdrawal of the threat to de-unionise the security cluster is a serious threat to workers rights. While we appreciate the sensitive role played by the security cluster, removing the right to unionise is a strong attack on the rights of workers in this sector. We also urge government to urgently attend to the grievance of members of the defence force that have been festering for many years. Some of the grievances arise from the manner in which former members of the liberation movement armies were integrated into the standing army.

b. COSATU will raise sharply the rights of disabled people, in particular in the work place. It will also step up its efforts to organise this layer of workers into the trade union movement.

c. Further, congress resolved to accelerate its effort to organise young workers into the trade union movement.

11. This congress has noted with serious concern that COSATU and its unions have not moved with the necessary speed to implement the comprehensive gender equity strategy. Further, we are worried about the position of working class Black, particularly African, women in the economy and society. They continue to be trapped in low paid jobs, employed as casuals and subcontractors; they are the hardest hit by unemployment and poverty.

The congress also notes with serious concern the new glass ceiling for women leaders in the union movement. Women occupy positions of deputy or treasurer but hardly as Presidents and General Secretaries. Our target to reach equitable (50/50) and proportional representation remains in danger. In this regard we commit ourselves to redouble our effort to ensure systematic implementation of our policies. We will further engage with the new women ministries to address the gender dynamics of inequality and poverty.

12. We also appreciate that the future of humanity is at stake. Climate change caused by reliance on fossil fuels is a reality that we must now confront. This has unleashed natural disasters, such as hurricanes, floods, and extreme weather patterns. South Africa is on the edge of a catastrophic water crisis, which demands a proper management of this scarce resource. The world has to act urgently to reduce emission of carbon dioxide; find new sources of renewable energy; and environmentally sound production methods.

13. We will continue to support the ANC in the next local government elections. The preparatory work must start now driven by the entire Alliance at all levels. In this instance there have to be fiscal interventions by the government to address shortcomings in service delivery faced by many municipalities. Victory in the next elections is contingent on addressing weaknesses revealed by the 2009 General Elections, especially in the Western Cape. It also depends on a strong, active and functioning Alliance at all levels. This will include convening local and regional meetings to assess the strengths and weaknesses of our local government.

14. We reaffirm our strategic goal to create a single national retirement fund as part of our strategy to control workers deferred incomes. Further to use these resources to support development and industrialisation rather than fuelling speculation in the equity and property markets. In addition we call on workers' trustees in retirement fund to make investment decisions that support the decent work agenda. We further affirm that we will work tirelessly to build a single administration company of the retirement funds and a Workers' Bank. In this regard we will use TEBA Bank and other institutions as vehicles and mandate the CEC to work out the modalities of achieving this aim.

15. We noted with concern the accelerated rate of liquidation in the midst of the financial and credit crunch. Workers are finding themselves in dire straits after company liquidations. In these circumstance workers lose the entire earnings. It is against that background that Congress adopted the resolution for the creation of a Liquidation Trusts to address the needs of workers in liquidated firms.

16. Sport plays an important role in uniting our people. However, Congress was appalled by the manner in which Caster Semenya was publicly humiliated. COSATU calls for those responsible for this spectacle to be held responsible and if possible removed from their positions of power. Further, we are worried by the tussle for leadership in SAFA which we believe is not in the interest of football.

17. International solidarity remains one of the weapons available to workers and the trade union movement. We commit to a programme to build a unified and fighting international trade union movement. We also commit to build a global movement for change including working through the World Social Forum. Congress noted the plight of the Palestinian people, the people of Western Sahara; the continuing blockade against Cuba; as well as the murder of trade unionists in Mexico; and the military junta in Burma which continues to hold power illegally.

Congress further notes the continuing conflicts ravaging the people of Sudan, Somalia, the DRC and battle between Eritrea and Ethiopia for hegemony in the horn of Africa. The West also plays an active role in fanning these conflicts but then cynically projects them as wars between Africans. We further noted the conditions of workers in Zimbabwe and the lack of democracy and suppression of political freedoms in Swaziland. To that end, we commit ourselves to a programme of international solidarity and to building a progressive trade union and global social justice movement. As part of the programme for international solidarity we commit to:

a. Campaign for PUDEMO to be recognised as the genuine representative of the people of Swaziland, and for that reason we urge that it be granted observer status within the AU and UN structures; and to have diplomatic offices in various countries. The South African government should grant PUDEMO humanitarian assistance similar support given to the South African liberation movement. We welcome the release of PUDEMO President, comrade Mario Masuku from the dungeon of the Swazi monarchy. We declare and call on the Swazi monarchy to contradict us,

that comrade Masuku was released by mass struggles and not the kangaroo courts that pass for a system of justice in that country.

b. Call on the ILO to recognise cross border sympathy strikes especially in the same multinationals and also urge ITUC and GUFs to ensure that this right is recognised by governments and transnational corporation so that workers can protect themselves against the abuse and exploitation of TNCs as they relocate production from one country to another. Congress calls on ITUC and other global trade unions organisations to campaign for the right to embark socio-economic strikes to be enshrined in the laws of all countries.

c. Congress further calls on affiliates to engage in mass action on the 7th October 2009 to press home our demands for the banning of labour brokers by the South African government. This is also in line with the call by ITUC and GUF's for an international day of action against precarious work.

d. Reject Judge Richard Goldstone assertion that the situation in Palestine cannot be compared to that of war. The people of Palestine have been subjected to unremitting attacks from Israel and their hope for an independent state constantly deferred.

e. To urge government to put a motion in the AU and the UN for the lifting of the United States embargo against Cuba.

We declare to the country and the world to know that we will spare neither effort nor energy to achieve the resolutions of this Congress as we march towards our thirtieth anniversary in 2015!