Welcome to our loyal and new readers of the ShopSteward publication.

We are still in the middle of the deadly COVID-19 pandemic, with the third wave of infections upon us. We hope you are all fine and we continue to urge everyone to wear a mask, sanitize and socially distance to keep yourselves and your loved ones safe.

Salute to our resilient frontline workers who continue to lead the fight against this deadly pandemic. We call on everyone to vaccinate and encourage their family members to also vaccinate so that we can pushback against this deadly pandemic.

This deadly pandemic continues to create havoc on the economy and jobs with unemployment sitting at 32% and the economy only grew by only 1.1%. The economy though is still 2.7% smaller than it was in the first quarter of 2020. This has left many workers reeling from the high cost of living and the employers are on the offensive against collective bargaining and worker rights.

The ongoing electricity load shedding has put more strain on the workers and their families. During this round of wage negotiations, many employers are adopting an intransigent attitude where they are attempting to impose wage freeze in many sectors of the economy.

We are also seeing a sharp rise in layoffs and unemployment in many of our SOEs and a growing call for their privatization. The biggest threat to the economy is the pending collapse of the SOEs, the burgeoning levels of corruption, the loss of R150 billion a year to corruption and the collapse of the SOEs, the burgeoning threat to the economy is the pending for their privatization. The biggest task is to address these matters, but the only plan is the Eskom Social Compact that was conceptualized by COSATU. The other SOEs are imploding, and some are shutting down.

These many challenges and blatant attacks on labour rights, and demand of us to unite if we are going to succeed in pushing back. We need the working class to unite regardless of colour, religion and sexual orientation. We need to unite around aims which reflect our contemporary needs. Workers should wage their struggles based on their class interests, starting in their workplaces.

Our federation’s message to all workers is that we cannot afford as the working class to fight each other when the economic crisis is deepening. It can never be allowed that capital tries to maneuver its way out of the crisis by shifting its burden to the working class.

Our government has already succumbed to the temptation of adopting regressive and contractionary policies by cutting social expenditure. We are preparing to convene a 6th Central Committee meeting, where we plan focus on socio-economic issues as well as our approach to the 14th National Congress.

We are dealing with huge challenges at the current moment. Long before the COVID-19 inspired crisis, jobs were already getting lost in the manufacturing sector, and technology is making some jobs redundant, and those at the top are seeing their salaries grow, while at the bottom it is the opposite.

In our view, to ultimately address the ongoing crisis of unemployment, current economic power relationships must be challenged and transformed; the economy must be developed to reach and sustain full employment. Standards of living and quality of work must improve over time. Jobs must not simply be created, but also enhanced. Furthermore, employment creation must support the provision of public services and basic needs.

It is also important to ensure that macro-economic policies encourage employment growth by, among others, facilitating the implementation of the appropriate industrial, and investment, labour market, and public sector policies.

This may entail the need to maintain and expand demand for domestically produced goods and services; meet increased demand through an expansion of production, which in turn would generate new jobs; stimulate demand by lowering interest rates, pursuing redistributive fiscal policies, and developing effective strategies to boost exports.

Government needs to create an environment conducive to boosting the productive capacity in the economy, increase investment to ensure that increased demand can be met through domestic production, and not through greater levels of imported goods; ensure that the parameters of fiscal policy are consistent with employment creation and retention strategies; and avoid imposing rigid and rapid deficit reduction targets which limit public expenditure and infrastructure development.

What should be clear is that we will reject any calls for the so-called labour market flexibility, low wages under the guise of encouraging Foreign Direct Investment. We need a change of policy direction. South Africa is...
grappling with the failure of the false gradualism solution that was adopted in the mid nineties and...

Even today, our government is still doing the bidding of the private sector, arguing that ‘inflexible labour markets’ act as an impediment to small businesses growing, along with regulatory burdens and red tape. They get unconditional tax breaks, but they still demand full or partial exemptions from certain kinds of regulation including the extension of bargaining council agreements. The private sector is even moving away from the understanding that buying local should be prioritized.

Government is also sleepwalking and failing to expedite the implementation of the Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan, and this is very disappointing.

Periodically, government acknowledges that the fuel price regime is stifling economic growth but fails to say what is the solution. They are not giving us a report on what happened to the research commissioned by the government on a Fuel Price Cap that was supposed to be finalised two years ago.

The challenges facing us are enormous and they are going to get worse and for us to manage to fight back and win, we need to build our organizations. The bargaining power of the union and the strength of the federation is dependent on the number of members you have. There is a strength in numbers, and we have a challenge of recruiting the unorganized and then offering them quality service.

Let us negotiate where we can but also be ready to defend our gains and fight where we do not have a choice. Stay safe and vaccinate.

Welcome once more to another edition of the workers’ mouthpiece! South Africa has in the recent weeks provided confidence in the face of depressing levels of Covid-19 pandemic across our communities.

The reported cumulative cases of coronavirus infection are getting worrisome to many, but the Pfizer vaccine programme unleashed by the National Department of Health was received with huge praise by the elderly.

The unemployment rate released did not stop from creating a panic to many families as employers are declaring retrenchments in various sectors. Unless government hold employers liable to halt these job losses, workers would not stop organizing these uncalled-for actions by bosses.

In this edition, we covered the virtual May Day celebrations held at COSATU House by Alliance partners, wherein ‘the SAC also calls for the government to take the lead in ensuring that the dispute with public sector workers is resolved through the courts, but by taking it back to the negotiating table. The SAC does not expect our own government not to honour bargaining agreements with public sector workers. This also sets a very bad example for private capitalist bosses who think they can now embark on unilateral actions thus undermining the collective bargaining system that South African workers fought so hard for.’

The message by COSATU President, Zingiswa Losi was eloquently simple and she said, ‘As long as the struggle of the workers against the ruling class continues, May Day will be the yearly expression of our demands. Our labour is the source of all wealth and life. We honour the sacrifices, the struggles, the contributions of millions of workers and their families, from the clothing factories of Salt River to the farms of Limpopo. We applaud the nurses of Chris Harri Baragwanath Hospital and the teachers in rural schools in Qeparha where learners lack decent sanitation.’

This year the country will be holding Local Government Elections around October and President Losi articulated the resolution of the federation by saying, ‘Local Government Elections in October we have the Local Government elections. COSATU in its recent Special NEC has reaffirmed its support for the ANC. It is up to our ally the ANC to determine the success of this upcoming campaign. The ANC government needs to intervene and resolve the issues that workers have raised or else we will have a parallel campaign preparing for a massive strike.’

On Trade Union section, we covered the class struggles waged by workers to demand adherence to Occupational Health and Safety legislation, implementation of the salary agreement in the public service, the struggles to demand a halt on retrenchments.

Affiliates are arguing that ‘higher wages give workers the power to afford essential services, to buy food products and miscellaneous goods for themselves and their immediate families. Every year workers receive wage increases but inflation reduces their buying powers.’

On International front, we continue to cover COSATU solidarity work in various continents and in particular ‘the recommitments to engage in solidarity actions with our fellow workers under attack in Palestine, Swaziland, Western Sahara, Burma and other parts of the world.’

We urge all workers and their families to adhere to World Health Organization [WHO] Health Protocols and all Workplace Regulations to curb the spread of Covid-19 pandemic.

All unorganized workers must join progressive Trade Unions to defend quality jobs and we wish all Shop Stewards elected in various Congresses success in their endeavor to become Advocates of workers at the workplace. It is not yet Uhuru!
**Virtual celebrations**

**May Day 2021**

The Congress of South African Trade Unions, Alliance partners, the African National Congress and the South African Communist Party gathered together at COSATU House, Braamfontein, to jointly reminisce about the important milestones in the labour markets in South Africa.

The International Workers’ Day is celebrated globally by all toiling classes since 1886 in Chicago, wherein the workers put their demands on the table for bosses to meet. This year’s event commenced with a solidarity message by the SACP General Secretary, Blade Nzimande, who reminded the working class about the adverse effects of "vaccine imperialism".

Nzimande said ‘we must remember all those we lost to the deadly virus, both in our country and globally, including workers and working-class leaders. By the end of April 2021, the deadly virus had killed over 3 million people globally, of whom over 54 thousand deaths occurred in South Africa, including health and other frontline and essential workers.’

He alluded that the ‘...most immediate task and challenge facing workers and the progressive trade union movement both locally and globally is to intensify the battle against the COVID-19 pandemic on all fronts. The development, production, and access to vaccines to all is the most immediate battleground, especially access for developing countries populations.

The single biggest obstacle to access to vaccines is what we refer to as vaccine imperialism—the actions by the big multinational pharmaceutical corporations headquartered in the United States and Western Europe, backed by their governments, to impose draconian conditions, imperialist in content, for supplying vaccines to Global South countries.

For instance, the United States and Western Europe headquartered big multinational pharmaceutical corporations demanded that our
country must set up an insurance scheme in case something goes wrong, thus, they do not want to take responsibility for the efficacy of their own vaccines.”

Nzimande said “Today, we call for action by all progressive trade unions in our country to challenge the greed by these big multinational pharmaceutical companies.”

The United States and Western European countries are also driving vaccine nationalism, among others involving buying more vaccines than they need for their populations, which are 14 per cent of the total world population. We need to rise against imperialism on all fronts, including in the battle against COVID-19 itself as a front of struggle, and confront vaccine nationalism.

We must struggle for vaccines and vaccination as a right and not a commodity! An essential component of this struggle against vaccine imperialism and nationalism is the fight for COVID-19 patents waiver so that Global South countries with vaccine productive capacity can produce the vaccines to make them available to all as public goods and vaccination for all as a public healthcare service.

That is one reason in our message on this important occasion, the SACP centenary year International Workers’ Day, we say, Put People Before Profit! We say, let us Learn from the Past of our liberation struggle against colonial and apartheid oppression, let us Intensify our Activism, let us Deepen the Struggle Against Capitalist Exploitation and Imperialism, let us Build Momentum Towards, Capacity for, and the Elements of Socialism in the here and now. We say, in short, Socialism is the Future—Build it now!”

Another set of workers struggles that the SACP pledges to support are the struggles against retrenchments and undermining of collective bargaining rights. It surely cannot be that the negative economic impact and the brunt of COVID-19 must be carried by workers alone. Forging a wider progressive trade union unity in action to advance the common interests of the workers should include strengthening the fight against retrenchments. Let us not allow our belonging to different worker federations to stand in the way of joint action for common interests, for common demands, and against retrenchments, among others.

The SACP also calls for the government to take the lead in ensuring that the dispute with public sector workers is resolved through the courts, but by taking it back to the negotiating table. The SACP does not expect our own government not to honour bargaining agreements with public sector workers. This also sets a very bad example for private capitalist bosses who think they can now embark on unilateral actions thus undermining the collective bargaining system that South African workers fought so hard for.

One of the biggest enemies of the working class in the current period is that of corruption, both in the public and private sectors. Yes, corruption is rife in both the public and private sectors, as it is being currently exposed by the Commission of Inquiry into State Capture. Corruption in the public sector involves not only those located in the public sector but also corrupt elements form the private sector.

On this day, we also call upon workers and all our trade unions to close ranks and jointly intensify the struggle to fight the scourge of corruption. Workers and trade unions should also be asking themselves as to where they were as state resources were being stolen through state capture networks. Never, and never again, as Nelson Mandela would have said, should workers be found wanting in not confronting state capture and all other forms of corruption.

We wish to take this opportunity to thank you, President, in your capacity as the President of the ANC, for your frank engagement with the Commission of Inquiry into State Capture. The SACP welcomes the latest decisions and actions taken by the ANC to deal with corruption and factionalism within its own ranks.

The SACP, COSATU and all the democratic forces must unite in support of the decisive stance by the ANC to deal with corruption. However, at the same time we must remain vigilant that those who find themselves in a corner do not try to weaponise the struggle against corruption to manufacture lies and baseless allegations as part of their fight-back strategy. Such tactics are used to try and undermine the determination of the ANC to implement its resolutions.

The web of state capture and factional networks thrives on the fake news and disinformation propaganda. These factionalist networks use both the new media platforms and traditional media outlets, such as the print media, especially compromised media outlets, to spread fake news and disinformation. They do this both to defend those implicated in real corruption and to drive a smear campaign against those genuinely committed to fighting real corruption.

The fight against corruption must also be accompanied by the struggles to defend and deepen our democracy, by seeking to unite the widest possible sectors of our society to defend our gains, to isolate and defeat all counter-revolutionary actions by those driving attempts to steal our organisations in pursuit of corruption. We should all say with one voice, our Alliance and our democracy are not for sale! Defending and protecting collective bargaining is part of defending our hard-won democratic gains!

The working-class also needs to intensify the fight against neoliberalism and its austerity agenda in the here and now and seek to advance alternative economic policies that stand to benefit the workers and poor of our country. This must be done at the same time as we struggle to dismantle the networks of state capture. This is what we mean, as the SACP, when we talk about the struggle on two fronts.

The SACP calls upon and commits to join the workers of our country in fighting the scourge against gender-based violence as part of deepening the struggle against oppression and exploitation based on gender.

The SACP joins COSATU in pledging our support for an ANC victory in the forthcoming local government elections. However, this is not a blank cheque. We join the President of the ANC by supporting his call that local government elections must be used by our people to flush out corrupt councillors. Similarly, as the SACP, we will not support imposed councillors or those who are in ANC electoral lists through corrupt and fraudulent means or who are imposed on communities. We call upon the ANC to ensure electoral lists that are inclusive of its Alliance partners and popular candidates in communities!

The SACP wishes on this day to strongly condemn actions by organisations like Solidarity and Afri-Forum in opposing the international solidarity brigades of Cuban doctors and engineers. These organisations, relics of the apartheid past, were beneficiaries of a racist labour relations and governance regime that never allowed black people to train and become artisans, technicians, and engineers. They remain silent with continuing racism and patriarchy in many of South Africa’s workplaces, including murders of farmworkers and community members by racial farmers in farming areas.

Let workers of our country recommit themselves on this day to fight racism wherever it occurs, especially in our workplaces. To succeed as organised workers, as class-conscious workers, and as the Communist Party, we must consolidate and strengthen our unity. We must organise the unorganised into progressive trade unions, and politically into our national democratic revolutionary front, paying special attention to political education and recruiting advanced cadres into the Communist Party to strengthen its vanguard character. The Communist Party reiterates its call for wider progressive trade union unity in action, behind the common interests of workers.

Let us defend the unity of the workers, the unity of the ANC and the unity of our Alliance. Let us unite to build the capacity of our state to transform society for the better. Let us defend and strengthen our state-owned enterprises to build a better economy based structural transformation going to the root of our economic problem and consequent broader social and political problems.

Let the workers join a broader revolutionary front to go to the root of our problems, and work to uproot the capitalist system and its exploitative methods’.
Employers are crushing us, they are reversing our gains

'Let Us Unite Our Unions and Organise the Unorganised'

My fellow South Africans, President Cyril Ramaphosa, General Secretary of the SACP, cde. Blade Nzimande. Leadership of COSATU and our unions, and most importantly the workers of our beloved land. Before we begin, allow me first to acknowledge and mourn the loss of our dear comrades, the late General Secretaries of the National Union of Mineworkers, David Sipunzi and Koena Ramatlou of the South African Municipal Workers’ Union and John Dlamini, the former President of SAMWU, amongst many other comrades, friends and families whom we have lost over this past painful year. Their families’ losses are our losses. If we are to honour their lives, let us intensify our struggles on behalf of the working class. We are commemorating Workers’ Day today. As the German-Polish Marxist revolutionary socialist, Rosa Luxemburg concisely put it, “As long as the struggle of the workers against the ruling class continues,
May 12 will be the yearly expression of our demands. Our labour is the source of all wealth and life. We honour the sacrifices, the struggles, the contributions of millions of workers and their families, from the clothing factories of Salt River to the farms of Limpopo. We applaud the nurses of Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital and the teachers in rural schools in Qhibirha where learners lack decent sanitation.

The police and security personnel, who ensure the safety and comfort of all even at the cost of their own lives in KwaMhlabuyalingana, as ordinary workers who do the hard work and sometimes very despicable tasks, without due recognition and fair compensation for it.

This day is the day when we say thank you to workers. When we reflect on our victories and remobilise for our battles. This is the day when we tell government and employers that we as COSATU will continue to fight the struggles of the working class.

Comrades and fellow South Africans, the lives of workers remain tough, but there are also victories that we have achieved.

During the past year, as a result of COSATU’s interventions at Nedlac, Parliament and with government, we have released over R60 billion from the Unemployment Insurance Fund into the pockets of workers who lost wages to make sure they can buy food to feed their families. This has helped more than 5 million workers. It has helped save jobs and keep companies open. It is the single largest injection of cash into the economy. This is the largest contribution of workers to saving this economy.

We have ensured that UIF retrenchment benefits were increased from 8 to 12 months, that maternity and retrenchment benefits were increased saving this economy. It is the single largest injection of workers to collective bargaining.

COSATU played a leading role in developing the Economic Recovery Plan. Key pillars of the Economic Recovery and Reconstruction Plan include:

- The Eskom Social Compact has been agreed to by government and business. At its heart is an agreement that no Eskom worker may be retrenched. Government must clean up the corruption and mismanagement that has brought Eskom to its knees. Those who have looted there must be arrested. Eskom must embrace a Just Transition that will see jobs being created not destroyed. The economy needs reliable and affordable electricity if it is to recover.
- COSATU’s Eskom Social Compact has been agreed to by government and business. At its heart is an agreement that no Eskom worker may be retrenched. Government must clean up the corruption and mismanagement that has brought Eskom to its knees. Those who have looted there must be arrested. Eskom must embrace a Just Transition that will see jobs being created not destroyed. The economy needs reliable and affordable electricity if it is to recover.
- A national buy local campaign. All of us must buy local goods not imports. This will save and create thousands of jobs. This includes us as workers, businesses and government. There are no goods that we cannot produce.
- A massive infrastructure programme that has already secured R1.6 trillion for investments in roads, electricity, rail, ports, water and agriculture. These will spur manufacturing and economic growth and create jobs.
- COSATU overhauled the Public Investment Corporation Act to ensure that the PIC is forced to root out corruption and to account for how it invests workers’ pension and insurance funds. For the first time, workers are now represented on the PIC Board. Comrades whilst we have secured these and many other victories, we cannot afford to rest on our laurels. The challenges facing workers are too many.

President Ramaphosa and the leadership of the ANC, workers in their numbers voted for the ANC. Workers ensured the ANC was returned to office with a clear mandate to create jobs and deal with corruption. Workers are angry, hurt and disappointed. We have seen government impose a 4-year wage freeze on public servants. These are the same very nurses, doctors, police officers and teachers that we praise for serving us during this pandemic. Yet government honours them by abandoning a signed wage agreement and does not even have the courtesy to engage workers.

Private sector employers have taken heart from this and are joining this unholy attack on the constitutional right of workers to collective bargaining. This will cause untold labour market instability. Workers have the right to a living wage. We will not allow government and employers to destroy collective bargaining.

The real reasons why government’s finances are in a crisis is because politicians and their friends have looted it to the point of collapse. It is politicians and their friends and family who have destroyed our State-Owned Enterprises. It is business who have robbed SARS of billions. Now government wants to dump the bill for corruption on nurses earning R186 000 per annum. This is the height of immorality.

If government wants to deal with government’s budget crisis then it must stop the looting of R150 billion every year from the state. It is time that government showed the moral courage and banned politicians, their spouses and children from feasting off public tenders. Those who steal must go to prison.

The National Credit Act was amended by Parliament to protect the essential possessions of workers from repossession. It needs to come into effect now. It is to our eternal shame that millions of women and girls are subjected to horrific violence at home, schools, public transport and work. Where are our men? Parliament must move faster and pass the three Gender Based Violence bills before it. Parliament and government need to ratify Convention 190 on sexual harassment at the workplace by no later than August 9.

The entire world has been held hostage by Covid-19. Great progress has been made in developing vaccines that will save millions of lives. Yet we have not even vaccinated 1% of South Africa. Not only are we far behind the world, we are behind the continent. This threatens to collapse our tourism industry as 95% of the world has placed severe travel restrictions upon South Africa. This is a national tragedy Mr. President, All South Africans must receive their vaccines by December 2021. We are pleased that the majority of the vaccines will be produced eQubetha!

Comrades we will be going to local government elections in October. The unions of COSATU have reaffirmed the decision of our members to endorse the ANC and
call upon workers to vote for it. This is not a blank cheque. Councillors who have looted must be removed. The ANC must fix local government and ensure basic services are delivered. Municipal workers who have been dismissed for exposing corruption must be reinstated. Municipal workers who have not been paid their salaries must receive what is due to them.

Government must pass legislation to ensure that Election, Workers and Freedom Days are non-trading holidays. Workers should not be forced to choose between feeding their families and exercising their right to vote. Workers are disappointed with the behaviour of many ANC leaders. It is up to the ANC if it wants workers to continue to support it. Workers love the ANC but their patience is not indefinite. Clean up your act Luthuli House or face the consequences.

We must be careful not to be seduced by the promises of opposition parties. What is common to the opposition parties is their determination to destroy the hard won rights of workers to a minimum wage, to unionise, to work in safe conditions, to time off.

What is to be done?
Unite the working class - This is a big question that is directed at all employed people in South Africa. Can we do anything about this situation when we are divided and weak as labour? The labour movement needs to first acknowledge that it is weak in South Africa. If we are honest and acknowledge that we are weak, we will know what needs to be done.

To prove that we are weak, we have 205 Trade Unions and 24 Trade Union federations registered with the Department of Labour. Yet all these trade unions only organise about 27% of the workforce. This means that about 73% of all workers in South Africa are unorganised.

We cannot win any battles when we are a divided minority. Comrades- we should be having 73% of the workforce organised and then be talking about organising the remaining 27%.

Let us unite our unions and organise the unorganised. Employers are crushing us, they are reversing our gains and replacing us with machines. Forget about what is written on your union T-shirt. If we do not unite, we will only wear our different T-shirt when we go to UIF to apply for unemployment grants.

If you do not have a 50+1 threshold in a workplace, then you are not organised in that workplace. There are almost 10 million workers that are unorganised in South Africa.

In recruiting, we need to deal with the structural economic changes that are also associated with the changing workplace organisation and mode of work for us to successfully recruit.

The workforce demographic composition has changed, its more youthful and relatively better educated. Some of this workforce has no direct sentimental attachment and experience to popular struggles. Unions should find ways of recruiting those workers.

At home, if you are not a member of a union, you cannot blame anyone, when employers abuse you. Let us stop outsourcing our responsibilities. Join a union and participate or perish.

Fight corruption in the labour movement. Why are our unions fragmenting and splitting? Why are they being put under administration by the Registrar of Labour? The answer is corruption. Corrupt organisations cannot wage and win struggles. Corrupt organisations breed corrupt leaders and corrupt leaders sell-out and compromise with employers. The solution is to fight corruption inside our organisation. If we continue to allow corruption in our unions, then we cannot fault those who are crushing us. We are not victims, but we are enablers then. Do not elect corrupt leaders and do not allow your unions to be divided by corruption.

The labour movement needs to be self-sustaining. We cannot fight employers who are also our funders. If you have to fundraise for a strike, they you are in big trouble. If you depend on your enemy for your existence, you are in big trouble. Unite and fight

Thirdly comrades- As workers, we are on our own. We cannot outsource our responsibilities. What is happening to us is all across the economic sectors is blatant provocation. The solution is to unite and fight.

If the current challenges do not force us to unite and fight back against these austerity measures and the capitalist onslaught, we are doomed as workers and we deserve our misery. Starting with the current deadlock in the public service wage negotiations, unions and social organisations should respond with militancy and programmes of the mass-line. This means embarking on mass picketing; sympathy strikes and solidarity rallies embracing the widest sections of workers both in the public and the private sector.

Trade unions need to unite with a range of mass formations organizing students, women, religious groups, trade unions and youth to build and strengthen working class power in society. Permanent mobilization of the working class and the poor, through variety of their organizations is necessary to build capacity and momentum against this working-class onslaught.

Let us also come out with alternative ideas. If we are unhappy with capitalism, what is an alternative economic model to stand up to and replace Neoliberalism and the “free market”. We agree that its socialism, but in theory what does that mean? Practically, what needs to be done? Our SOEs are collapsing, we agree that they should not be privatised, but how do we fix them. Let us get talking as the working class about alternative ideas.

Local Government Elections-
In October we have the Local Government elections. COSATU in its recent Special CEC has reaffirmed its support for the ANC. It is up to our ally the ANC to determine the success of this upcoming campaign. TheANC government needs to intervene and resolve the issues that workers have raised or else we will have a parallel campaign preparing for a massive strike.

We have also made it clear that we support the right of the ANC to defend itself against ill-discipline on the part of some of its members, who are ill-disciplined. We cannot continue to pander to a small minority of comrades who have long abandoned the principle of collective leadership in favour of crass individualism that continues to harm the image of this glorious movement.

Internationally-On this International worker day COSATU recommits itself to solidarity with our fellow workers under attack in Palestine, Swaziland, Western Sahara, Burma and other parts of the world. We also salute the people of CUBA who continue to showcase what it means to be progressive internationalists.

Amandla!
de Zingiswa Losi, President of COSATU. Cde Blade Nzimande, General Secretary of the SACP.

Comrades and Friends. Workers of our country. This is the second Workers’ Day we commemorate under pandemic conditions. COVID-19 has fundamentally changed the way we live and work.

The people of South Africa have shown tremendous courage in living under the economic and social challenges that are posed by this pandemic. South African workers have sacrificed a lot and have been severely impacted by the pandemic in terms of loss of income with their livelihoods being negatively affected.

Frontline workers, such as medical personnel, police, teachers, other staff members in the public service, workers in the retail sector and other workers put their lives on the line during the height of the pandemic to keep the country going.

We salute these heroes and heroines. This has been the most challenging time that our country and its people have faced since the beginning of the democratic era. The leaders of the Alliance showed the utmost unity throughout the COVID pandemic and have been able to give clear leadership to the country. The alliance coordinated our response together with government and provided the leadership in a multi-pronged and coherent manner. Citizens largely conducted themselves admirably and this behaviour aided our efforts to contain the virus to a considerable extent.

It is in such times of great difficulty that the Alliance must continue to show united leadership. Let us not allow ourselves to be diverted from the challenging tasks at hand; let us deal with the matters that cause strife and division but let us also be clear about addressing the needs of the people. A united Alliance, made of the peoples movement, the vanguard and the fighting force for workers and a vibrant civic organisation is still the best force to drive the National Democratic Revolution.

It is certainly a strong force to lead our campaign against the pandemic. Our people are still being asked to maintain their vigilance and continue adhering to the known protocols of maintaining social distance, wearing a mask and avoiding crowded spaces whilst we now get our vaccine programme underway on a massive scale. Worker leaders must be exemplary in this regard. There have been a number of unforeseen delays to our vaccine programme and we have to do much better going forward.

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We had to pause the Johnson and Johnson/ Sisonke trial due to reports of this vaccine being linked to incidents of blood clotting in the United States. No instances of blood clotting were detected in the South African trial thus far. Our country resumed the Sisonke trial of the Johnson and Johnson vaccine, on Wednesday and with strengthened protocols to screen and monitor for potential blood clots. In the interim, South Africa also increased our supplies of the Pfizer vaccine.

We will soon begin vaccinating people over sixty (60) and certain other, designated categories of people with comorbidities and other high-risk groups in Phase 2 of the vaccine rollout. Now, we have experienced the high degree of vaccine imperialism that exists in the world in that more developed countries have tended to hoard vaccine supplies at the expense of lesser developed countries.

South Africa and India have made a strong call, which is supported by more than a hundred countries, for a temporary waiver of vaccine patents at the World Trade Organisation (WTO). This will allow developing nations more speedy and equitable access to the vaccine.

Alliance leadership at COSATU May Day Celebrations on May 1
The rising number of COVID infections, deaths and ongoing health emergency in India and the looming crisis in Brazil make an urgent and highly visible case for developing countries to be given access to the means to produce vaccines themselves. Many developing countries have the capacity and will be able to manufacture their own vaccines much more quickly and much cheaper. South Africans, in particular, must be alive to the real risk of experiencing a third wave of COVID-19 infections during winter.

Workers of the world must unite to compel developed countries and large pharmaceutical companies to display more social solidarity in addressing this pandemic. We call on COSATU, and the rest of the Mass Democratic Movement, to intensify their efforts to join with progressive forces in our country and throughout the world to advocate for vaccine patents waivers.

The best way in which to fight COVID-19 is to ensure that as many people as possible are vaccinated as fast as possible. This disease cares nothing for borders, economic, military or other prowess.

Developing countries must be made to internalise that hoarding available vaccines and not waiving vaccine patents will lead to immense suffering and tremendous loss of human life. None of us are safe until all of us are safe. It is without a doubt true that COVID-19 put unforeseen and massive pressure on an already strained fiscus. We have had to reprioritise our spending affects expenditure in a wide range of areas in order to fund social, medical and other interventions to mitigate against the worst ravages of the pandemic.

As is well known, South Africa was already in a precarious economic position even before the pandemic. The precarious economic situation that our country finds itself in is having a negative impact on our people as a whole as the re prioritisation of spending affects expenditure in a number of areas that affect our people. The precarious economic situation has also had an impact on our ability to finalise a wage agreement with public servants. The government re-affirms its commitment to protecting collective bargaining and all other labour rights that many sacrificed so much for. This sentiment has been endorsed by comrade Senzo Mchunu as recently as this week.

COSATU a while ago proposed that certain public holidays and election day be declared non-trading holidays. Government has begun the process to amend the Public Holidays Act and will begin a series of public consultations within the next few months. There is absolute agreement that unemployment and the jobs bloodbath, exacerbated by the pandemic, are devastating. We must take drastic action to create sustainable jobs that make a meaningful difference to people’s lives.

Social partners, working mainly through NEDLAC, put together the elements of the Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan. This plan sets out a series of actions aimed at fundamentally changing the economy and the jobs market and making it more inclusive and more equitable. Some of these programmes are beginning to show positive effects, such as:

1. The Presidential Employment Stimulus was established in response to the economic impact of COVID-19, and is the most rapid expansion of public employment in South Africa's history. The stimulus supports a range of programmes, from expanding traditional public employment to protecting existing jobs and providing support for livelihoods.

Over 650,000 opportunities have been supported by the stimulus by March 2021. This includes:

- More than 300,000 education assistants were placed in over 20,000 schools across South Africa. They have supported teachers in the classroom and contributed to COVID-19 safety protocols and maintenance of infrastructure, while learning skills that will help them to succeed in the labour market. Funding has also been provided to protect vulnerable teaching posts.

- Income support is being provided to more than 125,000 workers in the Early Childhood Development sector, whose livelihoods were disrupted by the pandemic.

- More than 50,000 opportunities have been created in public employment programmes in the environment sector, including in natural resource management, fire prevention and the war on waste.

- Almost 2,000 artisans have been hired by the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure to support water and energy efficiency, facilities management and the Weiziswe Rural Bridges Programme.

- The expansion of the Global Business Services incentive has enabled the creation of 8,000 new jobs in the sector.

- More than 100,000 small-scale and subsistence farmers are being provided with input vouchers to expand production. Another pillar of the Recovery Plan is to increase local production and we are developing a number of Master Plans to create conducive conditions for industries to grow. These Master Plans focus on localisation, development of SMMEs and growing the local economy and are found in the following four sectors:

  a. Sugar masterplan: Industrial users and retailers have agreed to minimum off-take of sugar for a period of three years with at least 80% of sugar consumption to be localised, increasing to 90% by 2023.

  b. Poultry masterplan: R1 billion of the R1.7 billion investment that the industry pledged to expand capacity by 2022 has been activated, with 5% more chickens (equivalent to 1 million birds) being produced per week.

  c. Clothing, textiles, footwear and leather masterplan: This has unlocked new investments of R564 million (Pepkor R30 million, The Foschini Group R350 million and Gidina R184 million).

  d. Steel masterplan: The draft masterplan has been finalised and presented to Executive Oversight Committee on 9 February 2021 and the implementation plan being developed.

This COVID-19 pandemic has illustrated the enormous depth of humanity with wonderful stories of solidarity and patriotism. At the same time, it also showed depths of depravity of some of our compatriots. Those people, especially those charged with positions of public trust, who used this pandemic to steal from the people and unjustly enrich themselves must feel the full brunt of the law. Such misdeeds will not go unpunished. In fact, no instance of crime and corruption must go unaddressed. It is only when we adopt an attitude of zero tolerance in our ranks that we will make a lasting difference. Social ills such as substance abuse, gender-based violence and femicide stalk our population. There needs to be further, in-depth study of the socio-economic causes of these ills and refine our responses to go beyond judicial-legal responses.

The scourge of gender-based violence is an indictment on our people. It finds its roots in backwards attitudes of patriarchy and chauvinism and must be eradicated in all its formations.

We call on our structures to develop programmes to educate citizens about rights and resources available to survivors of gender-based violence. Too often people stay in abusive situations as they are not aware of the resources available to them. Communities must be vocal about gender-based violence as silence is often a contributing factor to such abuse. Do not protect perpetrators, whoever they may be.

It is our revolutionary duty to actively work to eradicate gender-based violence from our society. The ANC appreciates the ongoing support of COSATU and especially the renewed support for the forthcoming Local Government Elections in October 2021. We will, as in the past, work together to develop our Manifesto and wage this campaign vigorously in compliance with COVID-regulations. We must all work for a decisive victory in these local government elections.

We have heard the pleas of workers to improve the way the Alliance functions and we are working together to achieve this. Every process of reform is painful and will encounter resistance. In reconfiguring the Alliance, we must put in place structures that will respond to current challenges. Comrades, we have broad agreement on our immediate tasks and the alliance must develop a common platform around these.

1. Unite, renew and build the alliance
2. Promote continued adherence to all COVID-19 health protocols.
3. Mobilise all South Africans to get vaccinated
4. Resolve the impasse with the Public Service Wage Negotiations
5. Mobilise and win the 2021 Local Government Elections

We will not succeed in providing effective leadership on any of these issues unless we unite and work together.
COVID-19 or not, workers are determined to bargain for more during this year’s wage negotiations. They demand face-to-face negotiations with employers! Having attentively listened to mining, energy, construction and metal industry workers during their collective bargaining conference, there is no way that they would sell their intensive labour power to the employer in the benefit of its own membership.

During the recently held national collective bargaining conference, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) members made it clear that they would not succumb to COVID-19 excuses that would be brought forward by arrogant employers.

They argued that given the good dividend performances by most mining companies, they will enter this season of negotiations in high spirit for a good settlement. Workers’ wages, particularly in the mining, construction and metal industries remained very low. A doubled-digit wage increase is a way to go and employers must be prepared for that.

The outlook for minerals in 2021 is looking positive with the exception of iron-ore, and that alone was giving the NUM some space to manoeuvre at the bargaining table. Most companies are likely to hide behind the COVID-19 challenges. It is no longer secret that the NUM will push for salary increases that would take the entry-level wage to R15 000 over the next three years.

Higher wages give workers the power to afford essential services, to buy food products and miscellaneous goods for themselves and their immediate families. Every year workers receive wage increases but inflation reduces their buying powers. Tax is another factor that affects the workers wage increases.

Workers are determined to fight very hard to eradicate this trend of wage inequalities. They are also demanding a face-to-face interaction with the employers during negotiations, not engagements through virtual saying this would bolster moral into the struggle for a decent living wage.

The NUM core demands are as follows:

1. **Salary Increase**
   The NUM Bargaining Conference resolved that our demands be between 15% - 20% or R15 000.00 minimum in a period of three years until 2023.

2. **Severance Package**
   The NUM Bargaining Conference resolved that the minimum
The Economy

3. Medical Aid
The NUM Bargaining Conference resolved that contributions of 60% by employers and 40% by employees.

4. Employee Share Ownership Plan Scheme (Esops)
- NUM Bargaining Conference resolved that dividends to be paid annually.
- NUM Bargaining Conference further resolved that annual allocation must be more than R50 000.00.

5. Rolling Up Lower Band/Categories
NUM Bargaining Conference resolved that A band must be abolished and the minimum category be B.

6. Wage Gap
NUM Bargaining Conference resolved that the wage gap must be closed with 10% difference in between.

7. Incapacity/Ill-Health Agreements
NUM Bargaining Conference resolved that where there is no incapacity or ill-health agreement, we must negotiate such agreements, and where there are agreements, we must review or amend those Incapacity/Ill-health agreements.

8. Maternity Leave
NUM Bargaining Conference resolved that we must negotiate for 6 months maternity leave with full pay.

9. Annual Leave
NUM Bargaining Conference resolved that we must negotiate for not less than 35 paid days.

10. Paternity Leave
NUM Bargaining Conference resolved that we must negotiate for 10 paid days;

11. Housing Allowance
- NUM Bargaining Conference resolved that all Living out Allowance be harmonized to Housing Allowance to R5000 minimum and those above increase with same percentage with wage increase.
- NUM Bargaining Conference further resolved that all employers must comply with mining charter on housing policy.

12. Stand-By Allowance
NUM Bargaining Conference resolved that the minimum stand-by allowance must be R500.00 per month.

13. Call Out Allowance
NUM Bargaining Conference resolved that a call out of R500 per call be paid.

14. Belt Riding Allowance
NUM Bargaining Conference resolved that R2000.00 per month be paid for as a Belt Riding Allowance.

15. Child Care Facilities
NUM Bargaining Conference resolved that where there was Child Care Facilities, they must be revived and where there is none, they must be established.

16. Long Service Awards
NUM Bargaining Conference resolved that Long Service Awards must be paid in five (5) years interval and the minimum must be R10 000.00, meaning that ten (10) years of service will be R20 000.00.

17. Harmonization/Equalization
NUM Bargaining Conference resolved that both the salaries, allowances and benefits of RDO’s should be harmonized/equalized in all the mines.

18. Service Increment
NUM Bargaining Conference resolved that 2% be paid in the quest to implement Equal pay for equal work of same value.

19. Meal Interval
NUM Bargaining Conference resolved that an amount equal to R150.00 per day or R1000 per month for Meal Interval.

20. Underground Allowance
NUM Bargaining Conference resolved that a 10% per month be paid as Underground Allowance.

21. Funeral Benefits
NUM Bargaining Conference resolved that Funeral Benefits must be increased from R40 000.00 to R60 000.00.

22. Health and Safety
Covid-19 Leave
NUM Bargaining Conference resolved that we must negotiate a Health and Safety COVID-19 leave.

Luphert Chilwane is a Media Officer at the National Union of Mineworkers.
The Economy

NURSES need more than thank you messages a frontline workers fighting against Covid-19

In May 12, DENOSA and NEHAWU joined millions of nurses across the globe to celebrate the International Nurses Day on various platforms. The Democratic Nursing Organisation of South Africa (DENOSA) Acting General Secretary, Cassim Lekgoathi said ‘DENOSA is commemorating this special day to the nursing profession, under this year’s theme: “Nurses: A Voice To Lead - A Vision for Future Healthcare.”

‘DENOSA calls on the South African government to put clear strategy to address the gradual disruption that COVID-19 is causing on the country’s healthcare system, which may end up being less responsive to the needs of healthcare services in various critical areas, namely:
- About 70% reduction in community routine vaccination;
- 69% reduction in Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) service;
- 61% reduction in diagnosis for mental health disorders;
- 55% reduction in cancer diagnosis and treatment;
- 46% reduction in malaria diagnosis and treatment;
- 42% reduction in TB detection and treatment; and
- 28 million routine surgeries cancelled.

This drastic reduction in various services is due largely to reprioritization of healthcare operations and redeployment of healthcare workers from these service areas to fighting COVID-19.

DENOSA is concerned that South Africa’s picture is no different to the findings of the ICN Report, and that the country is sitting on a ticking time-bomb as the effects of these reductions will further compound and worsen to a point where healthcare services won’t be able to respond adequately. This will have negative impact on the economy since both economy and health are interlinked.

The Survey Report recommends, for example, that building up an innovative and nurse-led model of care, involvement of Chief Nursing Officers and experienced specialist nurses, including expansion of frontline services, particularly Primary Health Care (PHC), will bring about Universal Health Coverage (UHC).

The report also recommends that sufficient resources will solve about half the battle because nurses account for 80% of contact between patients and healthcare professionals.’

Lekgoathi said ‘South Africa is in a better position to be able to change its dangerous route; there are still nurses who are qualified and young and willing to work in South Africa, but they are sitting at home without jobs. There are nurses who have recently qualified after completing their community service who could be absorbed.

Failure to follow these recommendations, however, will prove that the country has truly abandoned the National Health Insurance ideal as South Africa’s form of Universal Health Coverage. DENOSA believes that South Africa can learn greatly from these recommendations as it is currently in the red zone. Instead of expanding its healthcare staffing with nurses, it is cutting it further down. Instead of increasing its spending on health, it has relegated it to position number 4 in its recent budget allocation from position number 2 over the years.’

Meanwhile, NEHAWU held the International Nurses Day celebrations under the Theme ‘Nurses challenges amidst COVID-19’.

Addressing the seminar, NEHAWU General Secretary, Zola Saphetha said ‘The aim of the seminar is to highlight the challenges faced by nurses during the COVID-19 pandemic and offer some solutions. Furthermore, the seminar will pay homage to all frontline workers more especially nurses who are our primary caregivers for their courage and humane service that they render in detecting, testing, quarantining people who are infected by the Coronavirus, treating patients that are infected with COVID-19 and saving lives across the world.’

The Department of Health in their presentation by Dr. Lesly Bambard alluded to the fact that ‘All health personnel defined in terms of the National Health Act will be expected to be vaccinated and all must be registered as beneficiaries on the Electronic Vaccine Data System. All staff will always be provided information on vaccination at the public health facilities by their facility managers.’

DENOSA Seminar was addressed by the Deputy Minister of Health, Hon Dr. Joe Phahla while NEHAWU Seminar was addressed by the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), the World Health Organisation (WHO) and also the International Labour Organisation (ILO).
t he Southern Africa Trade Union Coordination Council (SATUCC) would like to wish you all Happy Workers Day. We acknowledge the enormous amount of work our affiliates put in to facilitate and organise May Day activities during this difficult time of a crisis. We therefore emphasise that, there is a greater need for solidarity and increased trade union cooperation and coordination in the region as well as at national level because it is during these challenging times that the voices of the unions have become essential and should be heard.

We find ourselves having to meet under extra-ordinary circumstances, and these virtual meetings are becoming the new normal and we have to embrace this as it is only meant to protect us. The outbreak of COVID-19 has caused an unprecedented plight for policymakers, businesses, politicians, ordinary people as well as workers. The pandemic has disrupted the economies as well as people’s livelihoods, thereby causing massive job and income losses across many sectors in SADC countries. However, it is important to stress that COVID-19 pandemic, has merely amplified a number of challenges that workers were already facing before the pandemic emerged such as increase of insecure and informal work, lack of social protection, rising of unemployment.

The need for participation entails that trade unions need to be part of the response and the recovery process both at national and regional levels. SADC governments have mitigated in several ways, with most them opting for quick and decisive ways to curb the potential influx and spread of the COVID-19 virus in line with emerging international experience of lockdowns and offers of stimuli packages to business and households.

Therefore, there is need for trade unions in all our respective countries to stay alert and assess the impact of these measures on the workers, especially the large size of the informal sector where there are precarious jobs and limited coverage of pensions and unemployment insurance schemes.

A human crisis such as the one posed by Corona calls for solidarity and unity of purpose and therefore it is crucial to come up with a coordinated approach and be proactive in coming up with measures of how to mitigate for the most vulnerable in our communities especially women, informal economy and migrants, and most of all health care and frontline workers. These interventions are necessary to safe guide the interests of workers and therefore the unions voices must be amplified through social dialogue structures both as part of the national rapid response teams as well as in bipartite forums in the workplace.

In order to effectively and meaningfully participate in social dialogue and be able to hold our governments and employers accountable, we have to understand as trade unions the various international instruments that are available for us to leverage on.

As trade unions we need to ensure that there is respect for key provisions of ILS relating to safety and health, working arrangements, protection of specific categories of workers, non-discrimination, social security or employment protection is the guarantee that workers, employers and government maintain decent work while adjusting to the COVID-19 pandemic.

A wide range of ILO labour standards on employment, social
In ensuring that decent work becomes a priority, and economic growth is guaranteed as we must actively campaign for the Time for SDG 8, that is talking about decent work and economic growth and therefore we must urge our governments that we cannot as SADC start speaking about economic development without putting an emphasis on issues of employment creation and for us as trade unions it is not about the quantum of employment but it is about the quality of employment that is key in that we would like to see the majority of our population moving out of poverty, as for the majority of our constituents, what we offer is our labour, therefore let us make sure that our sweat equity is not only to develop the nations but also to develop workers and for us to enjoy the benefits of economic development.

It is also quite critical and very key also as a region to start looking at how do we ratify and domesticate ILO Convention 190 and ensure that we eradicate violence and harassment in the world of work. We cannot be speaking today to issues of decent work but still have high levels of violence and harassment in the workplace. Therefore it is prudent that we start speaking to these issues, addressing them and mainstreaming the eradication of violence and harassment in the world of work within the region.

As trade unions we need to speak for the most vulnerable groups and organise them especially Young people who are already struggling to find employment, Women, due to their disproportionate engagement as front-line workers, care economy, service sector. Unprotected workers, such as informal, casual, gig-workers, who are less protected by regulation, limited access to social protection, no paid (sick) leave, such as Migrant workers, whom due to restricted mobility to/from work place and home areas, but also face possible stigma and exposure in host communities. There is therefore need for Trade Unions to lobby for these large scale interventions that are all encompassing and inclusive through national federations and the social dialogue structures in place.

We cannot conclude this by not appealing to our governments that during this time of recovery and building back better they must;

1. Design unified national living wages that allow workers to meet their own as well as dependents’ needs. The living wage must satisfy more than the basic survival threshold in terms of food, housing and clothing needs and also make provision for participation in a country’s social and cultural life.

- Consider social protection mechanism for workers whose employment is suspended, reduced or terminated due to the economic impact of COVID -19 or for health and safety reasons, and offer some to unemployment benefits or assistance to compensate for the loss of earnings incurred as a consequence, in accordance with the Employment Promotion and Protection against Unemployment Convention, 188 of 1968

Ensure that crisis responses respect for all human rights and the rule of law, including respect for fundamental principles and rights at work and for international labour standards (ILS).

We cannot conclude this by not appealing to our governments that during this time of recovery and building back better they must;

1. Urge and legislate that employers take responsibility of ensuring that all practicable preventive and protective measures are taken to minimize occupational risks as per Occupational Safety and Health Convention No. 155 of 1981. Employers are responsible for providing, where necessary and so far as it is reasonably practicable, adequate protective clothing and protective equipment, at no cost to the workers.

Invest in youth employment and digital skills development in order to accelerate and leverage Africa’s digital transformation to effectively respond to the additional challenges posed by COVID-19 and to ensure an inclusive and sustainable long-term recovery.

2. Enact urgent and large-scale policy responses to prevent long-lasting damage to young people in terms of education/training and labour market prospects. In conclusion, we cannot stress enough the importance of social dialogue and we want to highlight that as the SADC region for the past three days this is what has been happening where we had the meeting of governments, employers and workers organization (The annual meeting of Ministers of Employment & Labour and Social Partners) and we hope also as workers, and workers organizations, trade unions that the region will fulfill its mandate and implement policies relating to the achievement of decent work for all, putting in place mechanisms for addressing issues through social dialogue as a way of building back and building back stronger. Continue to remain Safe and adhere to health protocols.

Mavis A. Koogotsite
Executive Secretary
WFTU TUI-PS&A 2021 May Day Commemoration:
Hope Lies in Our Struggles as the Working Class

“Workers of the world unite you have nothing to lose but your chains”

MAY DAY 2021

BUILD INFRASTRUCTURE FOR QUALITY PUBLIC HEALTHCARE

‘Building Workers Unity Towards WFTU 18th Congress’
The World Federation of Trade Union Trade Union International Public Service and Allied (WFTU-TUI-PS&A) sends warmth and revolutionary salutations to millions of its members, friends and public service workers and allies around the globe on this occasion of celebrating workers and the working class struggles in the world. This year’s May Day comes while the world is still confronted by the coronavirus pandemic which has subjected most countries to be under different levels of lockdowns. Indeed, this is a second May Day commemorated and celebrated by workers of the world under devastating and unbearable conditions brought about by the global capitalist crisis and COVID-19 pandemic combined. The current year May Day celebrations are extremely important in the calendar of the class oriented federation of workers the World Federation of Trade Union (WFTU) as it is convening its 18th World Congress of Trade Union in October as a world platform of the working people and working class to reflect on the need to provide an alternative to the barbarism of capitalism across the world.

The Trade Union International Public Service and Allied (TUI PS&A) remembers the clarion call made by the 1848 Communist Manifesto in Chapter 1 on Bourgeoisie and Proletarian: “Workers of the World Unite, you have nothing to lose but your chains” as more relevant than ever and most urgent today given levels of exploitation at the point of production. Certainly, history and recent events have clearly demonstrated and exposed that working people and the working class as a whole are always at the receiving end of capitalism as poverty and misery is the order of the day. The architects and beneficiaries of capitalism, the bourgeoise are living off the sweat, toll, blood and suffering of the working masses of the world.

On this day, workers commemorates the gallant struggles of 1886 where the generation of workers literally refused to submit to the ravages of capitalism and inspired by the commitment of the generation who are still confronting capitalism in the twenty first century as the working class today embodies the best values and principles of humanity and human progress. The negative effects of capitalism on a disproportionately large segment of humanity outweighs its benefits that accrues to only a few in societies across the world. The COVID-19 pandemic only served to expose the already glaring limitations of capitalism that are reflected in the worsening poverty in the world, growing inequality, rising unemployment and the shrinking middle class that is a symptom of the pauperisation of the working class.

Even before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 the world had already entered yet another recession in 2019, so, the COVID-19 crisis only served to exacerbate the already existing crisis. Besides the adverse effects of these multiple crises, the problems arising from them are deepened further by the responses of capital that sought to profit further from the situation it has created while shifting the burden of economic recovery to the working class. It was in this context that we witnessed the hoarding of health supplies and the inflation of prices of these supplies in the early stages of the COVID-19 outbreak. This profiteering was, and is still, accompanied by attacks on workers and trade union rights under the pretext of ‘COVID-19 responses’.

So, it is not surprising to those who understand capitalism that in spite of the lessons learnt earlier with regard to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) supply chains, the development and rollout of COVID-19 vaccines has also fallen victim to profiteering and geopolitical manoeuvres. The first instance of vaccine scepticism resulted from the irresponsible politicisation of vaccine development when the US and its allies sought to vilify the scientific work being done by countries such as Russia, China and Cuba in the development of COVID-19 vaccines. Under the pretext of “health standards” and “health procedures”, the Western imperialist powers have sought to cast doubts on COVID-19 vaccines and medicines developed elsewhere in order to secure the COVID-19 vaccine market for themselves. This is where the seeds of vaccine imperialism originate from.

Having prepaid millions more doses of COVID-19 vaccines from a handful of pharmaceutical companies that produce vaccines, developed countries found themselves competing and fighting to be in line to receive such vaccines. This situation resulted in the pharmaceutical companies that have taken billions of dollars for COVID-19 vaccine pre-orders being unable to meet the demand. The limited production capacity can be directly linked to the prevailing profit-driven Intellectual Property Rights regime of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) which prevents the unlicensed production of these essential drugs. This despite the fact that governments pour billions into the research and development of these drugs that are later licensed and sold at huge costs to the same governments for private profit.

Rather than dealing with the underlying causes that hamper the worldwide production, distribution and rollout of COVID19 vaccines, the rich countries have chosen to engage in vaccine nationalism in order to secure vaccines only for their populations. This strategy leaves much of the world without vaccines and allows the COVID-19 pandemic to continue to spread and mutate, thus prolonging the global pandemic and the economic restrictions that are imposed to counter it. Only a global and not a country or continent specific strategy can bring the COVID-19 pandemic under control, the triumph of solidarity over competition and human needs over profits should be the goal of all class conscious elements in this struggle.

The impact of the COVID19 and the weak responses are also as a result of the fact that the pandemic struck at a time when public health institutions had been hollowed and weakened in many parts of the world. The global neoliberal policy that has been defined by the erosion of free state provided public services such as health in favour of profit as a result poor people lost their lives in millions and endangered the livelihoods of millions of public service workers and workers in general. The COVID-19 pandemic has also demonstrated the importance of the so-called “private healthcare” that is grossly ill-equipped to meet the healthcare needs of all societies on the globe. Private healthcare is built on the premise of profiteering from the health needs of society, while free public healthcare is built on the premise of healthy productive citizens.

The WFTU TUI-PS&A has noted that many employers are using the cover of COVID-19 restrictions to undermine and reverse the historic gains of workers in the workplace. Collective bargaining, health and safety and trade union rights have all come under increasing pressure in different parts of the world. Many trade unionists face victimisation due to their unwavering struggles for fair treatment of workers and decent wages – and many strikes and pickets are not allowed in the name of fighting COVID-19 in some parts of the world.

Given all the challenges confronting workers in the public sector and those who rely on public services, the WFTU TUI-PS&A urges all its affiliates and regions to carry forward the slogan of WFTU “hope lies in our struggles”. As a trade union international, we can only fulfil this slogan by continuing to raise and pursue the following practical demands:

- Free and affordable vaccines for all and call for an end to vaccine Nationalism
- Lifting patent right restrictions to allow poor countries to produce the own vaccines
- Free public healthcare for all
- Respect for the health and safety of workers in the workplace
- The protection of trade union and workers’ rights and respect of all collective agreements reached by workers and employers
- End to Economic and financial Blockade on Cuba by imperialist USA
- Freedom of Palestinian illegally jailed by Apartheid Israel
- End to economic and financial aggression on Venezuela by Imperialist USA

The WFTU TUI-PS&A and the broader progressive trade union movement are waging struggles to attain these demands in different corners of the world under difficult conditions. Our demands need to be understood in the broader context of our opposition to imperialism and its policy of war mongering and domination. The rising tensions among imperialist countries and the proxy wars that accompany those affects workers the most. We therefore need to simultaneously continue our solidarity work in solidarity with the people of Cuba, Venezuela, Western Sahara, Syria, Palestine and Zimbabwe etc. as part of the broader working class struggle against imperialism and capitalism.

Hope Lies in Our Struggles!!!
Satisfaction of Workers Contemporary Needs!!!
Vaccines for All Now!!!

Issued by the Office of the General Secretary of WFTU TUI-PS&A
Zola Saphetha: General Secretary

April/May 2021 • The Shopsteward
On the 3rd May 2021, the workers of South Africa were shocked by the sudden death of another androgogue, a Workers’ Educator and an Activist, Comrade Sonnyboy Ngobeni, who was a Programme Officer at DITSELA which was established on the 29th November 1996.

DITSELA was sorely created to put into practice the labour strategies which were put in place in preparation for a ‘take over’ of government by the African National Congress in the 1980’s and 1990s, which amongst others, were to create an institute that will be funded by the democratise state to reduce reliance on foreign funding for union education, recognize trade union’s role in providing workers’ education and making a contribution in strengthening the movement, enhancing worker’s intellectual capacities and empower them through workers’ education in the labour market.

On his passing many educators were touched by his death and COSATU National Educator, Alfred Mafuleka said ‘This are already trying times for all of us in which we were ravaged by the world-wide pandemic of Covid-19 and it is worse when we now learn of the passing of comrade Sunnyboy Zulu Ngobeni from allegedly heart complications.

DITSELA, the labour Movement at large has suffered another blow in losing the committed, long-serving Educator and Organizer in comrade Zulu. Workers will always remember comrade Zulu for his knowledge, commitment and institutional memory of our struggle for workers’ education, liberation and the working class emancipation from the chains of the employers and their capitalism.

He was never confused as to his identity or where he belonged as the member of the working class.

He was never confused as to his identity or where he belonged as the member of the working class.

He lived through the worse oppression and suppression of human spirit, but his was not dampened by what successive apartheid regimes did.

He was only five [5] years old when Verwoerd and his ilk took South Africa out of the Commonwealth and declared its Independence in 1961. He lived through it all, by observing the ‘Sharpeville Massacre’, the banning of the organizations of the people in 1961, the establishment of the Umkhonto we Sizwe in 1961, saw the Durban Strikes of 1973; he witnessed the 1976 Soweto Uprisings; he was shocked by the 1977 Assassination of Bantu Steve Biko; he marvelled at positive developments of the 1979/80 wherein for the first time South African Black workers were getting ‘bargaining rights’ from the Wiehann Commission Recommendations; he saw the 1983 Tricameral Parliament and the formation of the United Democratic Front; he witnessed the birth of COSATU in 1985 right up to the 1994 very first democratic national elections which ushered in rule of black majority government.’

‘Comrade Sunnyboy had a vivid memory of all these critical events in the history of trade union movement in South Africa. And he interpreted every epoch with its own significance. His revolutionary brilliance in sharing such historical milestones remains unmatchable.

‘He leaves us after twenty-seven [27] years of democracy! ‘Comrade Sunnyboy joined DITSELA around 2005/6 after serving as an Organizer in the Chemical, Paper, Pulp and Allied Workers Union (PPAWU), then he joined the Agricultural Union [SAAAPAWU] from which he joined DITSELA where he served as a Programme Officer.’

Hamba Kahle Sunnyboy Zulu Ngobeni!
**What is vaccination?**

Vaccination is a simple, safe, and effective way of protecting people against harmful diseases before they come into contact with them. Vaccines use your body’s natural defenses to build resistance to infectious diseases and make your immune system stronger.

Vaccines train your immune system to create antibodies, just as it does when it’s exposed to a disease. However, because most vaccines contain only inactivated or weakened forms of germs like viruses or bacteria, they do not cause the disease or put you at risk of disease complications.

Most vaccines are given by injection, but some are given orally (by mouth) or sprayed into the nose.

**Why are vaccines important?**

Vaccination is the most important thing we can do to protect ourselves and our children against ill health.

The COVID-19 vaccine will assist in:

- Preventing more deaths
- Reducing severity of illness
- Achieving herd immunity (also known as population immunity) and preventing ongoing transmission
- Reducing the burden on our healthcare system

Lowering the possibility of the COVID-19 virus circulating in the community protects those who cannot be vaccinated (due to health conditions like allergies).
Workers and communities demand the reopening of Lily Mine

The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) together with COSATU and community structures around Lily Mine marched on the 4th May 2021 to the Nelspruit Magistrate Court to hand over a memorandum of grievances. The NUM, COSATU and Community Structures were demanding the reopening of the Lily Mine and the retrieval of the three workers who are still trapped underground. The federation has planned to oppose delay and press for immediate reopening of the mine due to the following Humanitarian and compelling reasons.

The COSATU Mpumalanga Provincial Secretary, Thabo Mokoena joining the march said, ‘….it is now 5 years since the tragedy had struck and workers condemned to abject poverty and starvation due to the closure of the mining operations, and the families of the 04 victims remain in agony and unbearable pain because of them being denied suitable and proper closure to bury their loved ones with dignity. And further that not only has the tragedy affected workers and the families of the four victims, in addition the communities who live and reside around the vicinity of the area of Louisville and Lily Mine have also been negatively affected because of the closure of the mine and disruption livelihood brought by the disaster. He said the federation has been reliably informed that a credible and competent prospective investor has declared interest to commit to reopen the operations of the mine and that in his business proposal the prospective investor commit to abide by the favourable conditions which will protect the rights of the victims and those adversely affected which will be summarised as follows: -

• That the potential investor commits to the unconditional reinstatement of the previously employed workers with full benefits and reimbursement retrospective.

• That the prospective investor commits to full settlement of the debts owed to the creditors.

• That soon after the reopen of the mining operation the investor will work for the recovery of the trapped container beneath the ground with the remains of the four victims so that the affected families can pay their last respect to their loved ones and find closure.’

Mokoena said ‘The potential investor commits that the retrieval process will last for 06 months soon after the resumption of the operations. The federation and its affiliated union the National Union of Mine Workers will spare no effort to ensure that the immediate reopening of Lily Mine happens without further delay.’

Meanwhile, the NUM fully supported the reopening of the Lily Mine and retrieval of the three workers, who are trapped underground. ‘Those victims’ families need to find closure,’ said NUM President Joseph Montiselse.

NEHAWU holds Provincial Congresses

NEHAWU Provincial Congresses underway across all provinces

The National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union (NEHAWU) commenced with the holding of Provincial Congresses across all provinces, with KwaZulu-Natal having kick-started the workers’ parliaments. All these Provincial Congresses are held under the theme “Strengthen workplace organisation, deepen class consciousness and advance internationalism”. N E H A W U General Secretary, Zola Saphetha reiterated that “The congresses will assess the work of the organisation in the past four years and plan for the next four years including electing a new leadership. Furthermore, the congress will analyse the global balance of forces, the political situation in the country, and the socio-economic realities facing the working class and the poor especially during the COVID-19 pandemic and the crippling effects of austerity measures by the government of the day.”

The confirmed outcomes on leadership elected are as follows; KwaZulu-Natal Newly Elected POBs to the 11th KZN Provincial Congress

• Provincial Chairperson - Cde Siyanda Zungu
• Provincial Deputy Chairperson - Cde Nobuhlosi Xulu
• Provincial Treasurer - Cde Ncebakazi Malima Tindleni
• Provincial Secretary - Cde Ayanda Zulu
• Provincial Deputy Secretary - Cde Ntokozo Ntsh回事
• Provincial Treasurer - Cde Thuso Letsogo
• Provincial Secretary - Cde Thamathane
• Provincial Deputy Secretary - Cde Ignatius Mculo

Limpopo Newly elected Limpopo Provincial Office Bearers:

• Provincial Chairperson - Cde Eric Chauke
• Provincial Deputy Chairperson - Cde Lindah Nthulane
• Provincial Treasurer - Cde Chris Phatatlane
• Provincial Secretary - Cde Moses Matubane
• Provincial Deputy Secretary - Cde Jacob Adams

COSATU has congratulated all the elected Provincial Office Bearers and looks forward to strengthening the organization on the ground as we building vibrant COSATU Locals in 2021.

NEHAWU Provincial Congresses

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SACCAWU affiliated trade unions across all provinces have come strong to support the South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union (SACCAWU) against Massmart (Wal-mart). Massmart Holdings Limited against retrenchments. Massmart has embarked on a programme called Mapping Up which entails restructuring the workplace in Makro stores and Mass Discounters Stores (Game Supermarkets). This Mapping Up programme will inevitably result in outsourcing, redundancies, demotions, and retrenchments. SACCAWU has declared a number of disputes with the company to stop this restructuring which will lead to mass retrenchments.

'The Congress of South African Trade Unions in Limpopo throws its weight in full support of the planned picketing action around April 2021 by the South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union (SACCAWU) against Massmart (Wal-mart). Massmart Holdings Limited is a South African firm that owns brands such as Game, Makro, Builders Warehouse, Cambridge, Jumbo Cash n Carry, said Gerald Twala, COSATU Limpopo Provincial Secretary.

Twala alluded that 'The union has therefore adopted a programme to mobilize workers within the company towards a protected strike, with lunch time pickets planned at the following stores: Game Centre (Polokwane), Game Store (Lebowakgomo), Jumbo Cash n Carry (Nirvana), Builders Warehouse (Nirvana), Builders Traders (Polokwane) and Makro Store (Polokwane).'

UNI Global Union went to pledge solidarity support with Walmart/Massmart workers at Makro Woodmead as workers protest against pending retrenchments at Makro and Game stores.
NUM has an Acting General Secretary until 2022 National Congress

The National Union of Mineworkers has endorsed that current Deputy General Secretary William Makgabo Mabapa as the Acting General Secretary until the next elective Congress in 2022. This decision was taken at the first virtually held National Executive Committee (NEC) meeting for 2021.

This comes after the union lost a General Secretary, Comrade Sipunzi David around the festive break. The union has sent its heartfelt condolences to the family, colleagues and all the membership.

Livhuwani Mammburu, NUM National Spokesperson said, ‘In consolidating leadership and operations of the union the NEC has resolved to formally endorse the current Deputy General Secretary as the Acting General Secretary until the next elective Congress in 2022. Comrade Mabapa has a wealth of experience having worked closely with the late General Secretary. He is the former Regional Secretary of the North East region of NUM in Limpopo for 14 years and he has 21 years as a member of the National Executive Committee of NUM. NUM is confident and proud of itself for having a pool of matured capacitated leaders at times of need. NUM wishes to congratulate the Acting General Secretary with the trust and responsibility bestowed upon him.’

Mammburu said ‘The NEC dealt with the challenges facing members of NUM in Mining, Energy, Construction, and Metal industries pertaining to wages and working conditions. As a result, resolved on the importance of holding a Collective Bargaining Conference to give an in-depth attention to all these areas in pursuit of better working and living conditions for NUM members. This conference will be held on the 25-26th March 2021 and further details on the modality of the conference and venue will be outlined in the near future.

The NEC has welcomed with support and appreciation to all those companies in the country linked to profits declared by a number of mining entities. It is a good precursor to the wage negotiations preparations with the Minerals Council of South Africa and an inspiration to mineworkers who bore the brunt of Covid-19 and other social ills in 2020.’

The NUM NEC has joined all families and citizens across the country and the world to mourn all those who died due to Covid-19 and in this regard extends its condolences. Close to 50 000 people in South Africa have fallen victim and died due to this global pandemic. As the NEC we declare our support and appreciation to all those in the risky front lines of the battle against the pandemic.

NUM has an Acting General Secretary until 2022 National Congress

SACTWU on Covid-19 Vaccine Rollout Campaign Framework Agreement

OSATU affiliated trade unions have played a meaningful role in advocating for safe workplaces at the level of NEDLAC and in bargaining councils and the Southern African Clothing and Textile Workers’ Union (SACTWU) has concluded South Africa’s first ever COVID-19 Vaccine Rollout Campaign Industry Framework Agreement.

André Kriel SACTWU General Secretary said ‘This Framework Agreement was negotiated under the auspices of the National Bargaining Council for the Clothing Manufacturing Industry of South Africa. It was adopted by a Special Council meeting of the clothing bargaining council and it covers the domestic clothing industry. The Framework Agreement commits the employer- and trade union parties to the clothing bargain council to play a supportive role in the rollout campaign.’

Amongst the critical areas of the agreement, all the parties committed to work with all stakeholders, including National Government and the National Department of Health, to:

• encourage industry leadership and employees to take the vaccine;
• help debunk myths about the COVID-19 vaccine;
• to assist all shop stewards, human resource managers, wage clerks and other industry personnel are trained regarding the issues involved in the vaccine rollout campaign;
• develop a customised industry registration application for the vaccine rollout;
• ensure that there is no employment contract discrimination for current or future employees who take the vaccine or decline to do so;
• make available our industry healthcare clinics, as well as workplace clinics, to assist with the vaccine rollout;
• make appropriate practical arrangements to enable all employees who wish to take the vaccine, to enable them to do so;
• set an “industry immunity target” COVID-19 vaccine administration achievement rate of 80% of all employees in the industry;
• set up an information helpline for industry employees, about the vaccine and its related rollout processes;
• develop a customised workplace guideline in how to facilitate the vaccine rollout, and to make it available to all workplaces in the industry;
• co-operate with medical aids operating in our industry to enhance the rollout campaign;
• encourage and assist where we can in the development of a domestic COVID-19 vaccine;

• encourage a target of 80% of our industry panel doctors and industry and workplace healthcare personnel to register and be accredited as vaccinators;
• support initiatives to fast-track the sourcing, quality and quantity of COVID-19 vaccines.

The Framework Agreement was concluded with all of the 5 clothing industry employer associations which are party to the clothing industry bargaining council, and its coverage is national.

Kriel concluded that ‘SACTWU will now turn its attention to secure similar Framework Agreements in the textile, leather, distribution, agriculture and other sectors where we are organised. We are pleased that clothing employers have embraced this campaign and have consented to this Framework Agreement, and have contributed constructively to its finally agreed to terms.’
The newly admitted COSATU affiliate in the farming sector, the Agricultural Food and Allied Democratic Workers Union held its first National Executive Committee in which its leaders and officials resolved to unleash massive recruitment campaigns across all provinces.

AFADWU facing harsh working conditions

Out of the interaction with farm workers in the wine sector face very bad work and living conditions. They are among the lowest-paid of any workers in South Africa. In the workplace, basic labour laws are regularly violated; illegal deductions are made to wages; workers are often not paid overtime and workers are indebted to farms’ stores — which in reality lowers the value of their wages.

Where farm workers and their families remain housed on the farms, the standard of their accommodation is often very bad. Houses sometimes lack ceilings; walls are often cracked; roofs leak; and most houses have broken windows. In some cases, housing and accommodation even lack piped water, and if they do have piped water it could come in the form of unfiltered dam water.

Where workers do stay on the farms, owners and managers have a large degree of control of the workers’ and their families’ lives. They can, and do, withhold transport, access to health care and electricity to punish workers. Farm owners and managers also, at times, threaten to take away housing to ensure that workers are compliant or even to extract extra labour out of them. Farm owners and managers can legally turn out family members of farm workers who are over 18 — and they often do so, breaking up family and support systems in the process.

Farm owners also continue to be paternalistic, treating farm workers as children in order to maintain control.

AFADWU is in its building exercise to enhance and heighten hegemony of the union in all farming areas across the country. Recently, AFADWU has been participating in organizational workshops at Birchwood Hotel around April 2021.

AFADWU has held successful organizational campaigns in various areas as follows:

- General meeting held at Witzenburg to recruit farming workers
- Participated in the Shopsteward Training sessions at Saldanha, in the COSATU West Coast Local
- Facilitate a presentation of Affinity medical scheme to all members at Bella Frutta
- Led farm workers at the Ouma Rusk plant in Molteno in preparation for their arbitration hearing by CCMA held at the employer premises being RCL Foods.

#OrganiseOrStarve
#DeepenUnityOfWorkingClass.
Statement of the Alliance Political Council

The Alliance Political Council comprising the National Office Bearers or top six of the African National Congress (ANC), the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) held a virtual plenary on Friday and Saturday, 4–5 June 2021. The National Officials of the ANC were led by President Cyril Ramaphosa, SACP by the Party General Secretary Dr Blade Nzimande, and COSATU by the President of the federation Zingiswa Losi.

The Alliance Political Council is the strategic leadership organ of the Alliance. Its functioning is based on a consensus-seeking consultation model. It is responsible for developing and giving collective leadership to our shared strategy of struggle, transformation, and development, namely the national democratic revolution.

The Alliance Political Council attached great importance to the need to deepen Alliance ties, work together, and mobilise the broadest possible patriotic national unity to overcome the challenges our people find themselves faced with, the Coronavirus Disease - 2019 (COVID-19), unemployment, poverty, inequality, and unequal development. Therefore, the Alliance Political Council discussed the following issues.

Accelerating COVID-19 vaccination
The COVID-19 pandemic still poses the greatest threat to our society and the economy. It is an immediate challenge that all South Africans need to unite to overcome, among others by observing the COVID-19 preventative measures, while at the same time the government is rolling out vaccination.

The Alliance Political Council welcomed the fact that approximately 1.2 million people have been vaccinated, in part or in whole. The meeting emphasised the importance of accelerating the vaccination rollout. The Alliance Political Council calls on all Alliance structures to mobilise citizens to register to be vaccinated.

The Alliance Political Council reiterated its condemnation of corrupt or unethical practices and called upon the government to enforce due processes and act decisively where such heinous practices are uncovered.

The Alliance Political Council further stressed the importance of working together to intensify national and international mobilisation against vaccine nationalism and imperialism. Certain Global North states have snapped up COVID-19 vaccines, and more than they need for their populations. This denies the Global South or developing countries populations access to immediate vaccination.

With the backing of their national-states or regional blocs, multinational pharmaceutical corporations involved in the research, development, and control of the manufacturing of the COVID-19 vaccines impose conditions for access to the vaccines. The conditions have the effect of undermining democratic national sovereignty and shielding those companies against taking responsibility for the vaccines. These and monopoly pricing practices, underpinned by profiting from the COVID-19 global disaster, are some features of vaccine nationalism and imperialism.

Some Western governments and big pharmaceutical companies refuse to lift intellectual property rights and thus make COVID-19 vaccines public goods in the interests of saving lives. This is one key impediment to the massification of COVID-19 vaccine production and vaccination.

The Alliance will intensify its support for the campaign for the waiver of certain Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights to allow developing countries that have or can develop vaccine productive capacity to produce the vaccines. South Africa and India, with the support of an increasing number of countries, organisations and renowned individuals in Africa, Latin America, and Asia, to name but a few, are playing an important role in driving the campaign.

Economic reconstruction and inclusive growth
The Alliance Political Council expressed concern regarding the rise in the official unemployment rate by 0.1 per cent from 32.5 per cent to 32.6 per cent and the expanded unemployment rate by 0.6 per cent to 43.2 per cent in the first quarter of 2021, compared to the fourth quarter of 2020.

The meeting noted the government’s efforts and stressed the importance of a common Alliance economic and social policy framework and platform to radically reduce unemployment, poverty, and inequality, overcome uneven development, and achieve economic reconstruction, structural transformation, and inclusive growth.

To this end the Alliance Political Council noted the Alliance Secretariat report outlining preparations for the next Alliance Economic Summit. The key objectives of the summit will include a focus on tackling youth and women unemployment, inequality, poverty, and the crisis of social reproduction—in terms of which many households are struggling to support their lives—and associated with all this the scourge of gender-based violence.

State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) remain fundamental public instruments to deliver on our transformation and developmental objectives. The current governance and funding challenges affecting SOEs severely impact South Africa’s progress. The Alliance will critically engage with the proposals put forward by the Presidential SOE Council relating to the future role, developmental mandate, governance, and composition of South Africa’s SOEs sector.

The outcomes of these engagements will be tabled for consideration by the Alliance Economic Summit.

Governance and Labour Matters
A capable and ethical state is a fundamental prerequisite for the accomplishment of the goals of our shared strategy, the national democratic revolution. Thus, the Alliance Political Council reaffirmed our shared determination to the fight against corruption and wrongdoing in the public and private sectors, including in public administration and service.

The Alliance Political Council will further its engagement to develop a political leadership role towards the resolution of the public service and administration collective bargaining agreement wage dispute, while fully safeguarding and upholding the legal standing of the hard-won collective bargaining system and authority of the bargaining partners, the trade unions and the government.

The Alliance’s efforts will include consultation with other relevant stakeholders towards
finding a resolution to the dispute. This will be followed by an evaluation of progress within two weeks. The Alliance Economic Summit will further reflect on the dispute, which creates an unwanted atmosphere affecting collective bargaining across all sectors.

The budget shortfall affecting the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) has created a massive backlog with adverse effects on workers, who continue to face the brunt of retrenchments, loss of wages, unsafe working conditions, and unfair labour practices. The government should make it a priority to solve this problem as a matter of urgency. To this end a report should be tabled for consideration within two weeks.

In addition, research must be conducted to resolve the challenges faced by workers in accessing CCMA services. A more detailed report covering responses should be made available for engagement by social partners. The Alliance at its Economic Summit should also consider that report to contribute to the way forward.

Local government elections
The Alliance Political Council received a report on the state of the local government election preparation process. The report also covered the COVID-19 implications. It is important to protect our democratic gains, including holding regular elections as directed by the constitution and the other relevant laws of the republic. Elections should be postponed only under conditions where a severe health crisis or a disaster makes it completely impossible to hold the affected elections.

Alliance formations expressed support for the investigation to be headed by Judge Dikgang Moseneke mandated to look into the feasibility of holding the 2021 local government elections in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and against the background of the fact that South Africa has thus far been successfully holding local government by-elections.

The Alliance Political Council noted the work in progress to develop the local government manifesto. The Alliance will continue to work together in this regard. The scope of the work will cover an evaluation of progress on the implementation of the previous election manifesto. This should be completed by the time the Alliance Economic Summit takes place.

The Alliance as led by the ANC reaffirmed its commitment to ensure an inclusive candidate selection process reflecting the spirit of the Alliance and the integrity of community participation throughout the process and in its outcome. The Alliance Political Council has tasked the Alliance Secretariat to engage with organisational structures towards safeguarding the integrity of the process and the achievement of inclusivity.

This is also a key part towards the reconfiguration of the Alliance, a task the Alliance has resolved to continue and complete as part of the organisational renewal and unity of the Alliance, its formations, and the motive forces of the national democratic revolution. Municipalities that dismissed workers or have not paid workers their wages, and intervention to ensure continuity of basic services.

The Alliance Political Council noted with concern situations involving the dismissal of workers by certain municipalities or certain municipalities that have not paid workers their wages. These situations should be resolved as a matter of urgency. The Alliance will follow up on these situations through its organisational processes. The Alliance Political Council agreed on the necessity of intervention in various municipalities to restore basic services where the provision of these services has been interrupted or stopped.

International situation
The Alliance Political Council discussed various international situations, including Mozambique, Swaziland, Palestine, Western Sahara, Cuba, and other Latin American countries.

Mozambique
Where possible South Africa should support the initiatives of the double troika of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to restore stability to Mozambique and prevent an escalation of the destabilisation of Mozambique in the region.

Swaziland
The Alliance Political Council noted with concern the dire situation in Swaziland and the conditions the people of Swaziland are subjected to in their quest for democracy. The Alliance reiterates its unwavering call for the right of all prisoners of conscience to fair trial and humane treatment, freedom of conscience and political views and the right to offer solidarity to all who suffer oppression or who are fighting for their dignity. The Alliance Political Council called on the government of Swaziland to release Amos Mbedzi and grant him access to medical care unconditionally with immediate effect.

Palestine
The Alliance Political Council expressed solidarity with the people of Palestine against expropriation, occupation and apartheid segregation and oppression by the Israeli regime. The Alliance supports the just struggle of the people of Palestine to democratic national sovereignty and self-determination, peace, and development.

The meeting reiterated the shared resolution to "give practical support to the oppressed people of Palestine and an immediate and unconditional downgrade of the SA (South African) embassy in Israel to a Liaison Office" as resolved by the 54th National Conference of the ANC in December 2017.

Western Sahara
The Alliance reaffirmed its support to the right of the last remaining colony on the African continent and the brave struggles, for self-determination, of the people of Western Sahara, known as the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic.

The meeting expressed concern about the danger of Moroccan expansionism and its dollar diplomacy on the continent and beyond and resolved that something must be done to deal with this problem. Further engagements will outline the content of the programme. The Alliance Political Council congratulated the Department of International Relations and Co-operation (DIRCO) and the SADC region for hosting a very successful Solidarity Conference with the people of Western Sahara and encouraged them to intensify the implementation of its outcomes.

Solidarity with Cuba, Nicaragua, Venezuela, and other countries
The Alliance Political Council noted the recent positive developments in some parts of Latin America that are fighting back against the United States imperialism. The meeting reaffirmed the Alliance’s support to the people of Cuba and Venezuela in the face of the US-driven blockade and sanctions, as well as other fighting peoples who are facing US interference, Nicaragua, Bolivia and other Latin American countries, as well as in the Middle East, in Syria, Iran, Kurdish people, and elsewhere.
What is the COVID-19 vaccine?

The vaccine has been developed to provide immunity against COVID-19. In general, vaccines contain weakened or inactive parts of a particular organism that triggers an immune response within the body.

This weakened version will not cause the disease in the person receiving the vaccine, but it will prompt their immune system to respond. Some vaccines require multiple doses, given weeks or months apart. This is sometimes needed to allow for the production of long-lived antibodies and the development of memory cells. In this way, the body is trained to fight the specific disease-causing organism, building up memory against the virus so it can fight it in the future.

What is herd immunity?

When a lot of people in a community are vaccinated, the virus cannot circulate easily, because most of the people it encounters are immune. If most people are vaccinated, those who are not protected by vaccines are less likely to contract or be exposed to the harmful virus. This is called herd immunity.

No single vaccine provides 100% protection, and herd immunity does not provide full protection to those who cannot safely be vaccinated. But, with herd immunity, these people will have substantial protection, thanks to those around them being vaccinated. Vaccinating not only protects yourself but also protects those in the community who are unable to be vaccinated.

What process is followed before a vaccine is given to the public?

Before COVID-19 vaccines can be administrated:

1. The vaccine must be proven safe and effective in large clinical trials.
2. A series of independent clinical reviews of the efficacy and safety of the vaccine is required.
3. This evidence must also be reviewed for policy recommendations on how the vaccine should be used.
4. An external panel of experts convened by the World Health Organization (WHO), called the Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization (SAGE), analyses the results from clinical trials.
5. The panel then recommends whether and how the vaccines should be used.
6. Officials in individual countries decide whether to approve the vaccine for national use and develop policies for how to use it in their country based on the WHO recommendations.
GENERAL QUESTIONS

WHAT

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TAKING THE VACCINE

Should I be vaccinated even if I’ve already been infected with the COVID-19 virus?

Getting COVID-19 might offer some natural protection or immunity from reinfection with the virus that causes COVID-19. But it’s not clear how long this protection lasts. Since reinfection is possible and COVID-19 can cause severe medical complications, it is recommended that people who have already had COVID-19 get the COVID-19 vaccine.

Can a COVID-19 vaccine infect me with the COVID-19 virus?

No. In most cases, vaccines contain weakened or inactive parts of a particular organism that triggers an immune response within the body. This weakened version will not cause the disease or virus in the person receiving the vaccine, but it will prompt their immune system to respond.

If I am currently infected with the COVID-19 virus, have any flu-like symptoms or have previously had the virus and recovered – how long should I wait until being vaccinated?

If you have or have had the COVID-19 virus, you can get vaccinated, assuming you don’t still have symptoms or an active infection. If you are feeling ill or have any concerns, you must consult with your doctor before being vaccinated.

Is there a risk of an allergic reaction if I am vaccinated?

It is possible that an allergic reaction might occur, as with any medication or vaccine. Everyone who gets a vaccination must be monitored for at least 15 minutes after the vaccine has been administered. The medications and equipment needed to manage allergic reactions will be available at every vaccination site.

Anyone who has previously had any allergic reaction should advise the vaccination team beforehand to be monitored for a longer time after being vaccinated.

Can I be vaccinated against other illness, such as flu and receive the COVID-19 vaccination at the same time?

If you are vaccinated against the COVID-19 virus first, it is recommended that you wait at least 14 days before getting any other vaccine, including a flu vaccine.
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<td>R80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companies</td>
<td>R90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airmail</td>
<td>R290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Africa</td>
<td>R310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other countries</td>
<td>R180</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Payment options
- Cheque Enclosed, payable to COSATU
- Direct transfer:
  - Name of Account: COSATU CEC
  - Bank: First National Bank
  - Branch code: 255005
  - Account number: 62345348644
  - Account type: Current
  - Please put in reference: SSJ & Your name

Name of credit card [ ] Visa [ ] Mastercard

Card Number

CVC (Last 3 digits on the reverse side)

Expiry date ............./ ............

Signature ................................ Date ........................

Please post, fax or email proof of payment to
COSATU House, 110 Jorissen Street, Braamfontein
P.O. Box 1019, Johannesburg, 2000 or
Fax to +27 (0) 11 339 5080/6940
OR Email: nthabiseng@cosatu.org.za