The Shopsteward

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COSATU 15TH NATIONAL CONGRESS

Online Edition

DIGITAL CONNECT

Another Cosatu Initiation

WHY JOIN A LABOUR UNION

A labour union is an organized group of workers who come together to collectively bargain with employers in order to protect and advance their rights, interests, and working conditions. Unions represent workers across various industries and sectors and work to ensure fair treatment for employees. Here are some key reasons why joining a union can be important:

- Improved Wages and Benefits
- Job Security
- Workplace Safety
- Stronger Voice in the Workplace

Just to name a few...



Img:Application form by Cosatu Media

Labor unions can also engage in political and legislative activities to advocate for policies that benefit workers, such as fair wages, improved labor laws, and protections against discrimination or exploitation.

COSATU DOCUMENTS

COSATU NATIONAL CONGRESS RESOLUTIONS

UNIONS CONTACT DETAIS

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Editor in Chief

Zingiswa Losi

Our 15th National Congress concluded, and we emerged with a renewed mandate, a clear programme of action and a responsibility to strengthen COSATU as the voice and champion of the working class.

Attended by 1 840 delegates representing 1.5 million organised workers, the Congress reaffirmed our historical mission to organise, mobilise and politically educate workers to achieve a more equal, democratic and prosperous South Africa.

I am deeply honoured by the confidence placed in me to serve as COSATU's General Secretary. This responsibility carries a big obligation to workers, our affiliates and trade unionists before us, who sacrificed a lot to build this Federation.

Our newly elected National Office Bearers collective is committed to working together to advance the mandate of Congress.

The election of four women out of our six National Office Bearers, including the first woman General Secretary in COSATU's 40-year history, is also an critical milestone in advancing gender equality and women's leadership.

However, leadership positions are not an end in themselves. Our success will ultimately be measured by whether we improve the lives of workers, defend their rights and strengthen their collective power.

The renewal of COSATU must begin in our workplaces. We must rebuild and strengthen our workplace structures, revive shop steward councils and locals, recruit unorganised workers and reach sectors that are notorious for outsourcing, labour broking, precarious employment and the growing platform economy. We cannot claim to represent the working class when millions of workers remain unorganised.

We must also intensify worker education, develop the next layer of shop stewards and leaders, and ensure that our structures are accountable, responsive and firmly rooted in the struggles of workers.

Our fight for decent work and a better life must be strengthened. Workers face unemployment, retrenchments, poverty, inequality and an escalating cost of living. We will continue campaigning for a living wage, stronger collective bargaining, safer workplaces, social protection and an end to exploitative employment practices. We will oppose austerity, privatisation and policies that shift the burden of economic hardship to workers and the poor.

We must fight for an economy that creates decent and sustainable jobs, accelerates industrialisation and invests in public infrastructure and quality public services.

Politically, COSATU remains committed to advancing the National Democratic Revolution as the foundation for meaningful transformation and the struggle towards socialism.

We will continue engaging our Alliance partners to strengthen the Alliance, advance working-class interests and ensure that government policies respond to the needs of workers and poor communities. Our political engagement must always be guided by the interests of the working class and our commitment to building working -class power.

Comrades, unity remains our greatest strength. We must guard against divisions and anything that weakens our capacity to fight exploitation. We must not allow anything to undermine the struggle for workers' rights.

As we move forward, we call on every affiliate, shop steward, organiser and member to embrace the resolutions of our 15th National Congress and translate them into concrete action.

The work ahead of us is to organise the unorganised, defend workers' gains, strengthen working-class unity and build a militant, campaigning and politically conscious Federation.

Together, let us renew COSATU, strengthen our movement and advance the struggle for economic liberation towards socialism.

Amandla!



Editor

Norman Mampane

Welcome to another marvellous edition of the worker's magazine, for workers.

The biggest Federation of workers in South Africa, COSATU is fresh from the Reconvened 15th National Congress held at Emperors Palace, Kempton Park.

Congratulations to the leadership collective that emerged as part the mandate as per the organisational principle of worker control.

It's back to the execution of the Congress resolutions.

COSATU 15th National Congress resolved on organisational building, amongst others, that organisational renewal must be the central task of the Federation for the coming period, rebuild workplace structures, strengthen Locals, recruit and organise unorganised workers, defend collective bargaining and ensure that Congress resolutions are translated into measurable Programmes of Action (PoA).

COSATU must and should do more than anything to educate and unite the masses of the revolutionary proletariat.

Worker's Parliament outcomes provide fresh material basis for the development of the class-consciousness of members and society at large.

Few COSATU affiliates celebrated their anniversaries recently; SAMWU celebrated its 39th anniversary; SADTU celebrated its 36th anniversary; PAWUSA celebrated its 59th anniversary; POPCRU celebrated its 37th anniversary.

We wish NUM and DENOSA successful celebrations as they are due to celebrate their 44th and 30th anniversaries respectively.

Heartfelt condolences to family and the members of SACCAWU after they lost their general secretary, Comrade Mduduzi Mbongwe and also COSATU lost its former Deputy President, Comrade Joseph Muzi Nkosi.

May their souls rest in revolutionary peace!

There are many reactions since the US announced withdrawal of South Africa and Rwanda from the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), with effect from January, 2027.

The blame-game is underway, especially from political circles.

Some argues that being struck off from AGOA is an opportune moment to invest in the poultry industry within the BRICS+ countries and accelerate having zero-rated tariffs with China which relies on our beef and maize as a primary feed product.

South Africa's trade policies must not be based on antagonist views but rather on fair trade agreements wherein both parties benefit equitably.

Obviously, the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition must indeed implement mitigation measures while supporting exporters and protecting jobs.

COSATU and its affiliates are alive to the reality that the climate crisis is

wiping away not only our tomorrow, but our yesterday; it is transforming the home we were born in and every memory of the past.

The recent interesting workshop held was in partnership the Alternative Information and Development Centre (AIDC) wherein social movements met to discuss the unfolding liberalisation of South Africa's energy sector and how it fits into broader global processes aimed at intensifying neoliberalism.

The workshop unpacked how a shift to a competitive energy market affects energy security, jobs, and energy poverty. The workshop discusses ongoing resistance to unbundling and privatisation, and the shift toward alternatives that advance a public pathway for energy as a public good.

It's quite clear: bringing together evidence from research and policy analysis is the only route to empower the class to push forward class interests, to lead campaigns for better jobs and improved working lives.

Lots of these workshops are coming to empower trade unions to negotiate at the social dialogue platforms.

Drought, rising temperatures, shifting rainfall patterns and growing climate risks, and heat stress are becoming a 'new headache' to citizens.

Our future depends on the peace we make with nature!



"The strength of the working class lies in organisation. Unless the masses are organised, the proletariat is nothing. Organised—it is everything. Organisation means unity of action, unity in practical operations." - Lenin

On the International front

Countries are preparing for the United Nations Climate Change Conference at Antalya, Türkiye from the 9th–20th of November 2026, commonly known as COP31 wherein global leaders and decision -makers are scheduled to embark on negotiations on climate funding, reduction of carbon emissions and further climate action needed to promote economic growth, green jobs and sustainable livelihoods.

UN Climate Change have argued as part of attaining of Sustainable Goals that: we need to work with nature and not against it.

Nature-based solutions harness the power of natural systems to help people and the planet thrive.

They offer cost-effective ways to tackle Climate Change, biodiversity loss, and pollution.

Nature isn't just around us it's part of the solution. From restoring forests to protecting ecosystems, working with nature can help us build a healthier, more resilient future for both people and our planet. Global citizens need to protect nature: restore balance. build a sustainable future.

***"Elections belong to the people. It's their decision."-* Abraham Lincoln**

The historic local government elections were here.

Campaigning has been fierce. Though violet crimes must be condemned. Lives were lost. Houses torched. But thanks to millions who went out to cast their votes.

It was about exercising the right to vote by citizens, as enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic.

Key questions are: will the vote of every citizen enhance accountability by elected councillors; will municipalities accelerate quality, municipal services to all citizens and will local government invest in delivering jobs where the masses live to stimulate local economic growth and development?

Free, fair and peaceful local government elections is a must!

Best wishes to elected councillors!

Aluta Continua!

COSATU is dismayed by the 2026 salary increase for politicians



10 November 2025

The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) is dismayed by the gazetted 2026 3.5% salary increase for Members of Parliament, Provincial Legislatures and Municipal Councils.

This follows the initial recommendation by the Independent Commission for the Remuneration of Public Office Bearers for a 4.1% salary increase for public representatives, members of various commissions and the Judiciary.

Whilst COSATU is irritated by this generous increase for politicians, we do support the 4% adjustment for Magistrates given that they are a skilled profession and measures are needed to retain them and avoid a brain drain upon an already overwhelmed judicial system.

COSATU appreciates that government reduced the proposed salary increase for politicians from 4.1% to 3.5%.

We believe, however, that this hike for public representatives remains excessive and sends an ill-considered message to an increasingly frustrated public of a political elite that is dangerously out of touch with the lived realities of ordinary South Africans.

No clearer indication of society's anger and frustrations was confirmed with the recent local government election results.

It defies logic that at a time when the state does not have money to fulfill many of its constitutional mandates, government has endorsed this tone-deaf proposal.

It is beyond shameful that whilst government has consistently refused to provide any inflationary relief for the 8 million unemployed and destitute SRD Grant recipients, government has found an additional R536 million to fund the salaries of politicians, commissioners and judges.

Most galling is the inclusion of the 9 331 local government Councillors under whose watch the state of municipal finances and services has deteriorated at an alarming rate, with numerous municipalities failing to pay their employees' salaries, pensions, medical aids and taxes, and many on the verge of collapse.

If government has spare funds, then it must hire the doctors, nurses, teachers, police officers and other frontline workers needed to provide essential services to working class communities and the economy.

Public representatives need to lead by example with humility, and when government has motivated for tax increases, including previously failing to adjust income tax brackets for lower and middle income earners for inflation for two years or being so miserly as not to not even adjust the SRD Grant for inflation for five out of its six years or whilst Post Office and SABC employees did not see increases for several years and thousands of their colleagues were retrenched, then there can be no justification for politicians to receive an increase.

It is long overdue that the Remuneration Commission be compelled to submit its proposals for public comment before tabling them to the President for approval.

Public funds are workers' hard-earned taxes, and they deserve to be afforded the courtesy of being allowed to make their views heard.

Government must amend the terms of reference for such increases to be linked to the performance of public representatives and the institutions they are required to oversee.

Issued by COSATU

COSATU's Newly Elected NATIONAL OFFICE BEARERS

Commit to Organisational Renewal, Working-Class Unity and a Renewed Campaigning Federation



The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU)'s successful 15th National Congress exemplified the spirit of unity and militancy, much to the disappointment of detractors, who had written the Federation off.

Convened under the theme, ***"Building a militant, Revolutionary Labour Movement and Strengthening Anti-imperialist Working-class Unity to Defend Jobs and Advance Socialism,"*** the 15th National Congress was held from 12 to 14 October and attended by 1 840 delegates, representing 1.5 million organised workers across South Africa.

The National Congress elected new National Office Bearers (NOBs) as follows:

1. **President -** Michael Madala Shingange - Male
2. **First Deputy President -** Susan Khumalo - Female
3. **Second Deputy President -** Cde Mbali Blose - Female
4. **National Treasurer -** Kgomotso Makhopula - Female
5. **General Secretary -** Zingiswa Losi - Female
6. **Deputy General Secretary -** Gerald Mkhomazi Twala - Male

This outcome represents an important milestone and achievement by the 15th National Congress as women now constitutes 67% of the elected National Office Bearers of COSATU. Another important milestone is the election of the first female General Secretary in the entire 40 years history of the Federation.

This is a clear demonstration and a commitment by COSATU in advancing the struggle against patriarchy and underrepresentation of women in positions of responsibility.

The newly elected leadership assumes its responsibilities at a critical juncture in South Africa's political, economic and social development. Workers continue to confront unemployment, poverty, inequality, job insecurity, the rising cost of living and the erosion of public services. These challenges demand a united, militant, politically conscious and campaigning trade union movement capable of defending workers' immediate interests while advancing the historic struggle for economic emancipation and socialism.

The 15th National Congress reaffirmed COSATU's historic mission to organise, mobilise and politically educate the working class. It further reaffirmed the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) as the minimum programme of democratic transformation and the path towards socialism.

The newly elected NOBs are entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring that these commitments are not reduced to declarations on paper, but become measurable programmes that improve workers' lives, strengthen workplace organisation and rebuild the power of the Federation.

As Karl Marx wrote in Theses on Feuerbach (1845):

"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it."

This principle underscores the responsibility of the newly elected leadership to translate the Congress mandate into practical action that changes the material conditions of workers and their communities. COSATU congratulates its sister federation, FEDUSA, on a successful 8th National Congress and wish its newly elected leadership well in their term of office.

Implementing the Resolutions and Declaration of the 15th National Congress

The newly elected leadership will prioritise the implementation of the political, organisational, socio-economic and international solidarity resolutions adopted by the 15th National Congress.

Politically, COSATU will continue to champion the interests of workers and the poor, strengthen working-class political independence and advance the struggle for socialism. The Federation will pursue the reconfiguration and renewal of the Tripartite Alliance through structured political engagement, an Alliance Political Council, an Alliance Summit and the broader process towards a Conference of the Left.

The 15th National Congress Super resolution is a historic game changer that reflects COSATU's dynamism in pursuit of the NDR and workers power under the present conditions. Our goal is Preserving unity, ensuring organisational cohesion and advancing strategic and ideological clarity.

COSATU represents all workers and encourage unity in diversity but remain firmly focused on building workers power in all sites of struggle. COSATU will also advance a working-class electoral strategy that places the material interests of workers at its centre. In the context of the 2026 Local Government Elections, the Federation's Congress mandate calls for principled support for the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP), with the objective of strengthening working-class unity and advancing a programme that responds to workers' demands.

Organisationally, the NOBs will prioritise rebuilding COSATU as a strong, united, militant and campaigning Federation. This includes strengthening workplace structures, recruiting and organising unorganised workers, revitalising locals and shop-steward councils, defending collective bargaining, improving affiliate participation and ensuring accountability for the implementation of Congress resolutions such as, rebuilding private-sector organisation by directing the Federation and its affiliates to accelerate organising in fragmented sectors of the economy, including outsourced, precarious, platform and other non-standard forms of employment.

Where appropriate, consolidation of unions in related sectors must be pursued to overcome fragmentation, strengthen bargaining power and organise workers across value chains.

The Federation will also intensify its campaigns for a living wage, decent work, employment creation, social protection, safe workplaces, gender equality and the elimination of gender-based violence and femicide.

Worker education, political education, shop-steward development and the development of a new generation of working-class leaders will remain central to organisational renewal.

The NOBs will work with affiliates to establish clear responsibilities, implementation timelines and monitoring mechanisms so that the decisions of Congress translate into practical outcomes including rejecting austerity as a class programme that shifts the burden of capitalist crisis onto workers and the poor.

COSATU demands progressive taxation of wealth and finance, a strengthened SARS, expanded social protection and increased public investment in energy, rail, water, municipal infrastructure and reindustrialisation.

Congress also declared to escalate cost of living as one of the central challenges facing working-class households.

COSATU shall intensify the campaign for the regulation of administered prices, expansion of the zero-rated food basket and opposition to above-inflation increases in electricity, transport and municipal tariffs.

The Federation shall pursue the development of a workers' cost-of-living index to strengthen collective bargaining and inform public policy.

Launch of the Election Campaign — 4 November 2026

COSATU is intensifying its election campaign and mobilisation in preparation for the 4 November 2026 Local Government Elections. The campaign is guided by the resolutions of the 15th National Congress to support both the ANC and the SACP, and the Federation's responsibility to ensure that workers' voices are heard in determining the direction of local government and the broader development path of the country.

COSATU calls on its affiliates, shop stewards, organisers and members to mobilise workers and communities around a programme that prioritises employment creation, reliable public services, accountable municipalities, affordable basic services, infrastructure development and the protection of workers' rights.

The campaign will emphasise that elections must serve as an instrument for advancing the interests of workers and poor communities. Political support must be principled and linked to a clear working-class programme rather than treated as an unconditional mandate for any political formation.

COSATU believes that electoral participation must contribute to building working-class power and advancing meaningful social and economic transformation. The Federation will continue to engage workers and communities on the importance of holding elected representatives accountable for delivering services, creating conditions for decent work and improving the lives of working-class people.

COSATU's 41st Anniversary — 1 December 2026

COSATU will commemorate its 41st anniversary on 1 December 2026, celebrating more than four decades of struggle, sacrifice and working-class organisation. Since its formation, the Federation has played a historic role in confronting apartheid, defending workers' rights, advancing collective bargaining and championing the broader struggle for democratic, social and economic transformation.

This anniversary will provide an opportunity to reflect on the achievements of the labour movement, acknowledge the sacrifices of generations of workers and trade union activists, and assess the challenges confronting organised labour in the current period. The anniversary must also serve as a moment of organisational renewal.

COSATU will use this milestone to strengthen recruitment, rebuild workplace structures, organise unorganised workers and reaffirm its commitment to a united, militant and campaigning Federation.

As COSATU enters its 41st year, the central task remains to defend workers against exploitation, strengthen collective power and advance the struggle for a society in which the wealth created by workers benefits the people as a whole.

The Federation calls on its affiliates, shop stewards and members to use this anniversary to renew their commitment to working-class solidarity, organisational discipline and the struggle for economic liberation towards socialism.

COSATU 3rd Annual Charity Golf Challenge — 3 December 2026

COSATU will host its 3rd Annual Charity Golf Challenge 3 December 2026 as part of its efforts to strengthen relationships with stakeholders, mobilise support for the Federation's work and contribute to the sustainability of its programmes. The event will provide an opportunity for engagement with partners and supporters who share an interest in workers' development, organisational renewal and the broader objectives of the Federation.

COSATU encourages stakeholders, partners and supporters to participate in the Annual Golf Day and to support initiatives that strengthen the capacity of the labour movement to advance workers' interests.

The Federation remains committed to ensuring that its activities and partnerships contribute to the broader objectives of solidarity and social transformation.

Elijah Barayi Commemoration — 24 January 2027

COSATU will commemorate the life, contribution and legacy of our founding President, Comrade Elijah Barayi through wreath laying at his grave in Carletonville on the 24 January 2027. Comrade Barayi remains an important figure in the history of the South African trade union movement and the struggle for workers' emancipation.

His contribution reminds us of the courage, discipline and determination required to build a powerful working-class movement capable of confronting exploitation and injustice.

The commemoration will provide an opportunity to educate younger generations about the history of the labour movement and the sacrifices made to secure workers' rights and democratic freedoms. COSATU will use this occasion to reaffirm the importance of shop-steward leadership, political education, worker solidarity and the building of a militant trade union movement rooted in workplaces and communities.

The best tribute to the pioneers of our movement is to continue the struggle for decent work, social justice, economic transformation and socialism.

International Solidarity and Lula's Victory

COSATU celebrates the victory of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva as an important moment for working class in Brazil, the global south and the BRICS bloc. President Lula da Silva's historic fourth term victory signals hope for multilateralism, climate action and has profound geopolitical implications for global sovereignty.

The Federation recognises the significance of international solidarity among workers and the struggles of progressive movements to defend democracy, improve the living conditions of the working class and challenge inequality.

For COSATU, international solidarity is inseparable from the domestic struggle for decent work, social protection, economic justice and working-class power. The challenges confronting workers in South Africa are connected to wider global struggles against exploitation, austerity, imperialism and the concentration of economic power.

COSATU will continue to strengthen relations with progressive trade unions and working-class organisations internationally, share experiences and advance common campaigns in defence of workers' rights and social justice.

COSATU congratulates the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) on a successful 10th Ordinary Congress. Held in Harare from 30 to 31 October, the Congress elected new office bearers as follows:
President: Valentine Chikosi
1st Vice President: Cuthbert Chikwekwete
2nd Vice President: Douglas Chiradza
3rd VIce President: Enock Dongo
Secretary General: Trivanhu Marimo
1st Deputy Secretary General: Nhamo Bepete
2nd Deputy Secretary General: Runesu Dzimiri
Treasurer General : Constantine Rutsate

Trustees
Austin Muswere
Fozert Mugabe
Enos Mwerenga

COSATU wishes the leadership collective well as they take ZTUC to new heights. The Federation also wishes the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) well following a successful 43rd National Congress.

The Federation remains committed to international working-class unity and cooperation among progressive forces in pursuit of a more just, equal and democratic world.

> COSATU will remain a principled and independent voice of the working class

A Renewed Commitment to Workers

The newly elected NOBs recognise that the credibility of COSATU will be measured by its ability to organise workers, defend their rights, improve their material conditions and provide clear leadership during a period of profound political and economic challenges.

The leadership will work collectively with affiliates, provincial structures, shop stewards and members to strengthen the Federation's unity, organisational capacity and capacity for mass mobilisation.

COSATU will remain a principled and independent voice of the working class. It will engage political formations and government on the basis of workers' interests, while opposing policies that undermine collective bargaining, decent work, public services and social protection.

The newly elected NOBs call on all affiliates and members to unite behind the mandate of the 15th National Congress, strengthen the implementation of its resolutions and build a Federation that is active in every workplace and community.

The Federation must emerge stronger, more united, more responsive to its members and better equipped to confront the challenges facing workers. This requires sustained mobilisation, political education, organisational discipline and a shared commitment to advancing the interests of the working class.

The task before us is clear: **organise the unorganised, defend workers' gains, build working-class unity and advance the struggle for economic liberation towards socialism.**



The Economy

WORKERS CANNOT AFFORD
a Just Transition that stays on paper

by Moliehi Mafantiri, Institute for Economic Justice (IEJ)

Every year, governments gather under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to make commitments to climate action and a just transition. Workers in South Africa's coal communities, steel towns, and informal economy are still waiting to feel those commitments in their lives.

Between 8 and 18 June 2026, another such moment arrived in Bonn, Germany, where country negotiators spent two weeks drafting the terms of reference for the review of the Just Transition Work Programme (JTWP) which had been agreed at COP30.

The mechanism exists, and the policy language is progressive.

What is missing is the money to improve workers' and communities' lives, and any real plan to unlock it from where it actually sits.

Under Article 9 of the Paris Agreement and other longstanding commitments, wealthier, developed countries owe this finance to developing countries. They have, however, failed to honour these obligations at anything close to the scale required. These transfers could be complemented by domestic resource mobilisation strategies that secure policy sovereignty and ensure that the transformational dues required by workers, the unemployed, and affected communities, are met.

Much of the money needed by South Africa, is in fact, already within reach: the IEJ and COSATU have set out a financing framework showing how reforms to monetary policy, fiscal policy, and our development banks could raise hundreds of billions of rands for a worker-centred transition.

We therefore call on the parties meeting at COP31 to recognise this kind of domestic resource mobilisation as a legitimate way to both fulfil extraterritorial obligations, as well as support a homegrown just transition.

The gap between pledge and delivery

At COP29 (2024) in Baku, developed countries agreed to mobilise USD 300bn a year by 2035, as part of a broader call for at least USD 1.3trn a year

from all public and private sources. South Africa's own Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP), first announced at COP26 with an initial pledge of USD 8.5bn, is the reference case for how this is meant to work. Yet, even the COP29 targets fall short of what is needed on the ground.

The 2025 South African Climate Finance Landscape, prepared for the Presidential Climate Commission (PCC), finds that meeting the country's climate targets will require climate finance to at least double, or even triple, to as much as 499bn rands a year, compared with the R188.3 billion tracked in 2022 and 2023.

The Just Energy Transition Investment Plan (JET-IP) alone, is costed at 1.5trn rands for the energy sector over five years, yet JETP pledges to date only total USD 14.4bn (about R236 billion) - a fraction of what is required.

Additionally, how the money is packaged matters as much as the headline figure. Labour unions have documented delayed payments and resources that are not reaching the Mpumalanga communities facing coal-plant closures. Pledges have risen 65% since 2021, but only about 42% have been committed to actual projects, and grants only make up around 6%, roughly USD 864mn.

The rest is in the form of loans, commercial debt, equity, and guarantees - all money that must be repaid. Labour unions have documented delayed payments and resources that are not reaching the Mpumalanga communities facing coal-plant closures.

This is the predictable result of how climate finance is currently designed. Under the dominant model, which the economist Daniela Gabor calls "the Wall Street Consensus", the state spends public money in order to make private inveastments safe enough to attract global investors, while the benefits that matter to workers are treated as a hoped-for by-product. Protecting investors' balance sheets is not the same as protecting jobs, retraining workers, or sustaining the towns that once supplied the coal.

Left unchanged, this model will continue to prioritise commercial profitability over the tangible needs of coal-belt communities.

What COSATU and IEJ propose: a worker-centred financing framework

In 2023, the IEJ in collaboration with the Climate Finance for Equitable Transitions (CLiFT) project, and COSATU, separately submitted critiques of the JET-IP to the PCC. All warned that the plan's heavy reliance on private finance and de-risking, that is, using public money to lower private investors' risk, would fail to raise enough capital, would push up the cost of energy and of doing business, and would fall short on jobs, and fail to sufficiently support workers.

The IEJ and COSATU then convened a symposium in September 2024 that informed a series of working papers, brought together in "A Worker-Centred Framework for Financing the Just Transition", published in August 2025.

The framework builds on the 2022 COSATU Blueprint for a Just Transition for Workers and its core principle: Workers and communities must be at the centre of the move to a low-carbon economy.

The Framework draws a simple but important distinction: A shallow transition swaps the technology without changing the underlying economy; replacing coal with renewables while leaving inequality, unemployment, and Mpumalanga's dependence on a single industry in place.

A deeper, worker-centred transition, however, is characterised by labour absorbing economic diversification, social protection floors, and decent work.

This deeper transition requires a different set of financing tools, found in monetary policy, fiscal policy, and the development finance institutions (DFIs), and which are largely absent from the current JET-IP.

The missing instrument: A reserve bank that backs the transition

The first set of tools sits with the South African Reserve Bank (SARB). South Africa runs an inflation-targeting policy, in which the SARB's main priority is to keep prices stable, largely by setting interest rates. In practice this keeps interest rates high, which makes borrowing to invest in the transition expensive.

The IEJ and COSATU framework calls for a move away from this narrow approach toward a broader SARB mandate, and one that looks beyond protecting the value of the currency to supporting jobs and a green transformation of the economy.

The Constitution already frames the SARB's mandate as protecting the value of the currency "in the interest of balanced and sustainable economic growth", which is wider than the SARB's myopic focus on price-stability.

A broader mandate would allow the SARB to reach beyond interest rates as their primary monetary policy tool and use its authority over banks to lower the cost of lending to renewable-energy and job-creating sectors while making high-carbon finance dearer.

Moreover, the SARB Act, which currently bars the SARB from lending directly to the state and the development banks, could be

changed so that, in defined cases, the SARB can help fund the National Treasury and the DFIs to meet developmental goals. Few central banks anywhere have sustainability mandates, but many, including the SARB, already hold mandates broad enough to act.

A central bank with a sustainability mandate is one formally tasked with supporting climate and environmental goals, alongside its other core functions. At the moment, the SARB stays on the sidelines of the transition, not because it is barred from acting, but because it reads its mandate narrowly, and treats the transition as a non-priority.

An estimated R600 billion could be freed up for investment at home by reducing the share of retirement savings allowed offshore, and a further R52 billion by shifting just 10% of bank lending toward development.

None of this waits on foreign donors.

Fiscal policy and the Climate Response Fund

Monetary reform must be matched by a more assertive fiscal policy, that is, how the government raises and spends money. The Framework proposes a Climate Response Fund (CRF): A dedicated pot to pay for adaptation, emissions cuts, and disaster relief over the next 30 to 50 years, including income support and retraining for coal-belt communities and affected workers. It estimates the CRF could raise roughly R100 billion a year using tools the public already understands.

Some options include: Raising the carbon tax's effective rate toward the level needed to meet our Paris climate commitments (it sits at about R7 a tonne of CO2 today, against a Paris-aligned rate closer to R1,000); ring-fencing 30% of the fuel levy; channelling mining royalties into the Fund; lowering the cap on tax-deductible retirement contributions; and redirecting savings from cutting wasteful government spending.

This is a call for consistency. South Africa cannot credibly ask international partners to fund a worker-centred transition while its own budget still props up the very industries the transition is meant to move beyond, and while its carbon tax remains, by the International Monetary Fund's own assessment, too low to change behaviour.

An estimated R600 billion could be freed up for investment at home by reducing the share of retirement savings allowed offshore

DFIs as institutions of delivery

The third set of tools lie with our DFIs, the national development banks meant to fund projects that commercial banks find too risky. The Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) and the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) are the main institutions. In principle they are well placed to back the projects a just transition needs - projects that deliver high social benefit but that are long-term and look too risky to private lenders.

These could include projects in community energy, social housing, green industry in job-rich sectors, and infrastructure in coal-belt towns. In practice, the DBSA and IDC are expected to fund themselves.

This has led to these DFIs becoming profit-driven, and risk-averse. In the case of the IDC, IEJ research shows a Board of Directors still dominated by mining, energy, and finance interests, which has helped retain a concentration of economic activity in these sectors.

The framework proposes changing the IDC's self-financing status, recapitalising it through the budget and monetary policy tools above, opening

its governance to trade unions and civil society, and resetting its risk rules so it clearly prioritises decent work, green industry, and investment in affected communities - acting as a delivery institution for the transition, rather than another vehicle for protecting private investors.

What we should call for at COP31

The upcoming UN climate meetings in Antalya, Turkiye for COP31 are a key technical staging post.

The terms of reference for the JTWP review, mandated at COP30, will shape what evidence can be formally submitted, which solutions are treated as legitimate, and what the Belém Action Mechanism is actually required to do.

Social dialogue, the tripartite model embodied by the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC), is explicitly named in the JTWP text as central to a just transition.

The International Labour Organization has called that recognition historic, insisting that workers and their unions be part of every stage of planning and delivery. This gives labour a clear stake in what is decided.

We therefore call on the Parties negotiating in the UNFCCC processes, and in the Trade Union constituency (TUNGO) that carries labour's voice into these talks, to push for three things before COP31:

- **Recognise domestic resource mobilisation in the JTWP's scope.** The terms of reference should treat domestic tools, monetary policy reform, public finance, and stronger development banks, as part of the mechanism's work, not only international finance and capacity-building.
  The de-risking model that runs through the JET-IP and most country platforms asks developing countries to reorganise their economies to make them safe for private capital, and then calls it a just transition.

  This is what loads countries with debt rather than grants, and is what pushes middle-income countries to use scarce public funds to underwrite private returns. Recognising domestic resource mobilisation within the JTWP scope is about reclaiming policy space over central banks, development banks and budgets, so that the climate finance received serves our workers, rather than the other way round.

- **Hold wealthier countries to their obligations, and treat domestic effort as a complement, not a substitute.** The Baku-to-Belém Roadmap to USD 1.3trn should affirm that developed countries provide public, grant-based, and concessional finance, in line with Article 9 of the Paris Agreement and their greater historical responsibility for emissions. Domestic mobilisation by developing countries should be recognised as additional to that obligation, and never as an excuse to reduce it. Private finance is not the enemy, it is part of the pool, but it needs regulation and cannot be the only source. The Roadmap must not reduce developing countries role to merely making private investment safe.

- **Treat monetary and fiscal reform as a legitimate path, not an afterthought.** In the finance negotiations on the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG), Parties should accept that reforming monetary policy, including broader central bank mandates, where appropriate, international financial regulations, and the role of public development banks as genuine delivery institutions, are real ways to mobilise climate finance, and not second-order issues to be addressed only once international de-risking instruments are exhausted.

The African Group of Negotiators delegates are well placed to carry this argument, with the support of TUNGO.

Workers built this economy, and they should shape its just transition

South Africa's move away from coal is not optional.

The real questions are: Who controls it, who pays for it, and who does it serve. A transition designed around investor returns will not be just.

One anchored in a central bank that backs the transition, assertive fiscal policy, reformed development banks, and the voice of workers through NEDLAC, has a chance to be.

Reforming the SARB, creating the CRF, and remaking the DFIs may read as abstract policy. In practice, they are the means by which the roughly 200,000 workers who depend directly on coal, and the communities built around them, could be carried through a transition that creates decent work.

Workers built the energy system that powers this economy; they should not be asked to absorb the costs of moving beyond it. COP31 in November 2026 is a window to press this case.



The Economy

UNBUNDLING OR NOT TO

UNBUNDLE; IT'S A FORM OF PRIVATISATION

of public goods, argues NUM

Electricity is not a luxury. It is essential for cooking, studying, working, communicating and living with dignity. As households face rising food, transport and living costs, many are being forced to choose between electricity and food. That is not energy justice.

Eskom over the years has been riddled with inadequate maintenance of power stations, political interference, corruption, state capture scandals, and ageing infrastructure which eroded public confidence to deliver electricity generation and connect the poor working-class communities.

And unbundling has eroded by confidence again.

The Electricity Supply Commission (Eskom) claims that 'the unbundling represents a structural shift intended to modernise South Africa's electricity sector and support long term energy security.'

The electricity utility has reiterated that 'Eskom's unbundling is a government approved restructuring plan that separates the utility into distinct entities — GenerationCo, Eskom Green, NEDCSA, and the National Transmission Company South Africa — while creating a fully independent Transmission System Operator (TSO) outside Eskom to enable competition and a new wholesale electricity market.' Eskom Board has come out on public platforms alluding that' the purpose of unbundling was geared towards increase competition in electricity generation and trading, improve transparency and efficiency

Attract private investment into the grid and generation capacity and supporting long term expansion from 66 GW (2024) to 107 GW (2034). '

'This restructuring is mandated by the Electricity Regulation Amendment Act (ERAA) and supported by the Minister of Electricity and Energy.

On the other hand, the Minister of Electricity and Energy, Kgosientsho Ramokgopa has recently confirmed on Dr Mteto Nyati as Eskom Board Chairperson and shareholder expectations for Eskom 2.0. Minister Ramokgopa alluded that Eskom must be able to fulfil its mandate without relying on repeated fiscal support or sustained double-digit tariff increases as its business model. And further argued that 'Dr Nyati's continued leadership provides continuity as

Eskom moves from the immediate work of restoring generation performance to the longer-term task of securing the utility's place in South Africa's changing electricity market. His continued service will help carry that work into Eskom's next phase, where the measure of success will be sustained energy security, a financially sound utility and better service to South Africans.

The Portfolio Committee on Electricity and Energy has called on Eskom 'to provide clearer details on its unbundling strategy and to communicate the process more transparently to key stakeholders, particularly business, amid concerns about the independence of the proposed new entities in the electricity sector. At the centre of the committee's concerns is the establishment of an independent transmission system operator (TSO), which is expected to play a critical role in managing South Africa's electricity grid.

Business stakeholders have raised questions about whether the TSO can truly operate independently if the grid remains owned by Eskom's transmission subsidiary, the National Transmission Company of South Africa. According to Eskom, the passage of the necessary legislation and the full operationalisation of the TSO are expected to be completed by April 2029.

The Portfolio committee also took note of timelines presented by Eskom for other entities arising from the unbundling process. Eskom told MPs that the establishment of a green energy company is expected to take approximately two years, while the formation of a standalone generation company could take up to four years.

In addition, Eskom indicated that the creation of the National Electricity Distribution Company of South Africa, targeted for 2030, will depend primarily on progress in stabilising municipal debt. This will be pursued through the implementation of distribution agency agreements with municipalities, as approved by Cabinet.

However, the National Union of Mineworkers rejects such an assertion.

Khangela Baloyi, NUM's Energy Coordinator calls for a total rejection of the liberalisation or unbundling of the energy sector in South Africa.

Baloyi argues that the unbundling of the energy utility involves separating a vertically integrated monopoly into distinct generation, transmission and distribution entities. Such a restructuring is aimed to create a competitive electricity market, to enable private investment and improve efficiency by separating system operations from generation.'

'It is a form of privatisation of the energy utility', argues Baloyi.

The process of unbundling of Eskom has invited public concerns related the privatisation of p public goods in the past such as ISCOR, Telkom, etc.

Organised labour has registered deep concerns about potential job losses and issues related to 'genuine consultation' with workers and the working-class communities who are consumers about unbundling.

Baloyi unpacks further that 'a privatised energy sector will undermine the accessibility and affordability of electricity by users. The main objective of the private sector is to maximise profit. The private sector will no electrify villages that are in remote areas as it is not profitable, while a state-owned utility has been and will continue to provide electricity to everyone, regardless of whether it is profitable or not. A liberalised energy sector, anchored on Renewable Energy Independent Power Producers (REIPP) will undermine the need for base-load energy. Without base-load energy, the energy grid will be unstable. The country will be forced to load-shed. This phenomenon was demonstrated during the leadership of Andrew De Ruyter as the Eskom's Chief Executive Officer.

The country was faced with the unavailability of electricity and was forced to stage six (6) loadshedding phases.

This was because of neglecting the base-load coal power plants while promoting the non-dispatchable solar and wind energy.

The liberalised energy will be more costly than energy provided by state-owned utility.

Neoliberalism is about profit maximisation.

It does not care about the workers and the poor if it is making maximum profit.

In his 2026 State of the Nation Address delivered on February 12, 2026, President Cyril Ramaphosa announced a significant intervention in South Africa's energy sector,



The reconvened COSATU 15th National Congress vehemently expressed its opposition to the unbundling of Eskom.

directing that the Transmission System Operator (TSO) will be a fully independent state-owned entity, owning and controlling the country's transmission assets.

The impact of this announcement is that it will create serious threats to the national energy security of supply and also the job security of Eskom workers in all divisions, including the National Transmission Company of South Africa (NTCSA).

The establishment of the Independent Transmission Operator, which will own the NTCSA assets, will undermine Eskom's financial viability and could accelerate its demise.

The demise of Eskom will lead to energy poverty.

The obsession of the government to implement the liberalisation of the energy sector is unpatriotic.

It is formed by institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

This decision will further undermine economic growth.

The NUM calls for Eskom, which is vertically integrated, to continue to be state-owned, and for unbundling to be stopped at all costs.

The NUM further noted the call by the government to develop 14 000 km of transmission lines to cater for the Independent Power Producers (IPPs).

Eskom does not need these transmission lines.

The NUM calls on the government not to use taxpayer's money to benefit private companies.

The NUM calls on the NEDCOM Task Team to convene urgent, structured consultations with all recognised trade unions, representing Eskom Holdings SOC LTD and the National Transmission Company of South Africa (NTCSA) employees within the first month of the three months declared by the President, to be consulted and/or discuss in good faith, amongst other things:

- Associated risk of transferring ownership of transmission assets to independent TSO, on Eskom Holdings SOC LTD and NTCSA.
- Written guarantees preserving all employment terms, conditions, and benefits, including EPPF membership, beyond the ones conferred in terms of Section 197 of the Labour Relations Act.
- Transparent and definite plan addressing financial risks, cross-default mitigation, and compensation arrangements.

The NUM is capable of uniting COSATU, ANC, progressive Non-Governmental Organisations and the broader society.

We have the responsibility to protect the state-owned enterprises, as a revolutionary trade union.

The future of South Africa is in our hands, because the failure of Eskom is a failure of South Africa.



The Economy

DID THE FINANCE MINISTER
Enoch Godongwana's Medium Term Budget
Policy Statement meet your expectations?

The Minister of Finance, Mr Enoch Godongwana, tabled the 2026 Medium Term Budget Policy Statement (MTBPS) in Parliament on the 21st of October 2026 at Cape Town, Western Cape.

The Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana delivered the Mid-Term Budget Speech by announcing key economic reviews, including the cuts to the fuel levy.

The National Treasury has allocated R34 billion to tackle the gender-based violence and femicide by increasing more social workers by 3,500, increasing forensic and investigative capacity, and increasing sexual offences courts.

Organised labour maintains that South Africa does not need economic stability that leaves the majority behind. It needs an economy that works for its people, a public service equipped to serve them, and a budget that invests in their future.

For the past three years, the MTBPS has been structured around fiscal consolidation and debt stabilisation. National Treasury has consistently argued that containing public expenditure, generating primary budget surpluses and stabilising the debt-to-Gross Domestic Product ratio will restore investor confidence, reduce borrowing costs and create the conditions necessary for higher economic growth rate. However, South Africa continues to experience persistent economic stagnation, high unemployment, poverty and inequality.

This raises an important question about whether the government's fiscal strategy is sufficiently responsive to the country's developmental challenges or whether the continued expenditure restraint risks undermining the foundations required for inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

COSATU Parliamentary Coordinator, Matthew Parks unpacks the Federation's reaction to Godongwana's Medium Term Budget Policy Statement.

Parks argued that 'the government should invest more into Eskom to reduce the price of electricity.

The Federation argued that the government has failed to address the cost-of-living crisis and deep economic problems. The silence on the Presidential Youth Initiative meant to deal with high levels of youth unemployment and providing them with work experience, is disappointing.

The Economy

COSATU notes Government's Medium-Term Budget Policy Statement (MTBPS). Whilst appreciating the many competing demands facing the state, we remain deeply disappointed that once again Treasury and government collectively missed the opportunity to table a bold package of interventions that would tackle the fundamental crises of a staggeringly high 43.8% unemployment rate, weak economic growth averaging 1% for over a decade, entrenched levels of poverty and inequality, high rates of crime and corruption, embattled public and municipal services', said Parks

Whilst it is important to place the budget's debt and deficit on a sustainable trajectory, this cannot be at the expense of stimulating the very economic growth and job creation essential to South Africa's long-term recovery.

An unhealthy obsession with neo-liberal austerity budget cuts or in the case of the MTBPS, prioritising early retirement packages, is not a sustainable path to unlocking economic growth and slashing unemployment.

The fact that the MTBPS forecasts only reaching the 3% economic growth needed to see unemployment fall in 2034 is beyond depressing. Unemployment has risen 2.2% this year alone.

We do however welcome efforts that have secured R18 billion worth of investments in industrial projects and R1 billion to boost local pharmaceutical and vaccine manufacturing, helping to create over 5200 jobs. R217 billion approved allocations for 32 infrastructure projects will have a massive impact.

COSATU appreciates government's heeding its call for badly needed relief to the working class and the economy with a R10 billion Fuel Levy holiday for November and December. This will ease the burden on commuters, inject money in the economy, lower inflation and hopefully prevent a November repo rate hike.

An overhaul of the fuel taxes and levy is needed, including fixing the Road Accident Fund.

It is extremely disappointing that no further allocations have been made to boost the Public Employment Programmes to give hope to 12 million unemployed. It is beyond shameful that despite R13 billion worth of savings in social grants, yet again there is no inflationary relief for the 8 million destitute SRD Grant recipients.

Whilst COSATU remains worried about the loss of skills with the early retirement packages offered to public servants, we welcome government's commitment to utilise these savings to hire young recruits and fill an additional 7 101 frontline service posts.

R3,8 billion to fund 3 500 social workers will make a positive difference towards protecting the most vulnerable.

We are however, extremely disappointed that despite President Cyril Ramaphosa's 2026 State of the Nation Address commitment to appoint 10 000 labour inspectors, Treasury and the Department of Employment and Labour have failed once again to allocate a single cent to this.

Additional allocations of R556 million for HIV/AIDS, R3,8 billion for District Health Programmes plus R1,6 billion for pregnancy and child nutrition are welcome. We are, however, worried that the Department of Health has only met 56 of its 500 health facilities' maintenance and refurbishment targets for the year.

Similar concern must be raised that the Department of Human Settlements has only achieved 13 000 out of its 62 000 new houses and 20 000 out of its 83 000 serviced sites annual targets.

The state of local government remains extremely worrying and is worsening each year. The R28 billion interventions to restore billing capacity in the metros, R3,5 billion to roll out 250 000 electricity smart meters, R60 billion investments in water infrastructure and R21 billion for free basic services are important interventions.

However, these do not go far enough.

Debt owed to municipalities has passed R480 billion with local government owing Eskom over R120 billion. Much bolder actions are needed to stablise and rebuild local government.

The R6,2 billion towards infrastructure repairs including R1,46 billion for roads and R3,5 billion for municipal infrastructure are positive. It is dismal that no new electricity sub-stations have been built and only 741 out of an annual target of 15 000 new household connections to the grid have been achieved.

COSATU is encouraged by additional funding to boost the war against crime and corruption with R810 million allocated to provide the Police with working vehicles, R823 million to deploy the SANDF in support of SAPS, R186 million for forensics and investigations, an injection of R2,2 billion to the judiciary, nearly doubling sexual offences courts to 101, and over R1,25 billion to boost Border Management, including R305 million for deportations.

The Economy

We are pleased that Treasury intervened to provide R560 million to stablise the Regular Force Medical Continuation Fund covering former SANDF members.

We are very worried by the impact underfunding is having on the SANDF's ability to maintain its capacity to fulfill its constitutional mandates. It is equally concerning that SAPS are not being provided with the necessary funds to employ additional personnel, in particular detectives and forensic investigators.

Additional guarantees of R1 billion each for Denel and SAA to enable them to continue on their path to recovery are supported. The turnaround of the Land and Agricultural Development Bank must be commended. The recovery of Metro Rail and the doubling of passenger numbers is encouraging.

More support must be given to rebuilding and expanding passenger rail.

It is deeply disturbing that yet again no support is being provided to help the Post Office and Postbank recover and effect their turnaround strategies.

We are encouraged by the efforts of SARS' employees who have done well to continue cracking down on tax evasion and customs fraud, especially by the wealthy and illicit networks.

We welcome the additional R4,5 billion allocation to SARS. Government must now begin to reduce the increasingly suffocating tax burden upon the working class.

Whilst there are positive parts to the MTBPS, including matters that COSATU fought for, as an overall package it fails to respond decisively to the dire crises facing the working class and the economy; our 43.8% unemployment rate and stagnant economic growth.

Reducing the debt and the deficit is not a path to growth.

COSATU will be seeking urgent engagements with government to ensure that a bold and progressive Budget that will invest in public and municipal services, stimulate economic growth and jobs, tackle crime and corruption, and provide relief and hope for the poor is tabled at Parliament in February.





The Economy

JOBS ON THE LINE AS

Trump kicks South Africa and Rwanda out

of AGOA effective 1 January 2027!

The US has announced it will remove South Africa from the African Growth and Opportunity Act from January 2027.

The US move to end the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) has raised concerns across the country. The agricultural and manufacturing sectors will be hugely affected, ending preferential access to the American market in the new year.

The US cited, amongst others, trade barriers, human rights issue, and security related matters. Responding to the announcement, the South African Minister of Trade Minister Parks Tau alluded that 'South Africa will no longer receive beneficial trade tariffs and can no longer export to the US tax-free, but government is already moving fast to push trade deals with China, India, Europe, and other African nations to protect local jobs.

'Government recognises the concern that this decision may create for workers, exporters, businesses and communities linked to AGOA supported value chains.

The impact will differ across sectors, and government is working closely with affected industries to assess the implications and will continue to provide appropriate support, on a company to company basis. As a responsible Government, South Africa has proactively retained measures that were availed as a response to the Reciprocal Tariffs.'

Government will undertake further engagements with social partners to optimise the support measures aimed at improving resilience and sustainability of the productive sectors whilst diversifying exports and protecting jobs.

Government has put extensive efforts to constructively respond to the US concerns and has tabled beyond the 2015 concessions, additional concessions through the appropriate channels.

These concessions respect due process, safeguard South Africa's biosecurity and constitutional imperatives and its obligations under World Trade Organisation rules. It is however unfortunate that the US is now raising new issues that have not been the basis for discussions as part of the negotiations process that commenced in 2025.

AGOA remains important to South Africa, but it does not constitute the totality of the economic relationship between South Africa and the United States.

In 2025, approximately 89% of South African exports to the United States entered under ordinary World Trade Organisation most favoured nation terms, while approximately 10% entered under AGOA, down from 28% in 2024.

AGOA exports were valued at approximately US$1.7 billion in 2025, down from $4 billion in 2024. AGOA exports represented about 1% of South Africa's total global exports.

Bilateral trade reached US$28.8 billion in 2025, while more than 600 American companies operate in South Africa, supporting approximately 134 600 jobs.

Trade relations are complementary and mutually beneficial. South Africa supplies 12 of the 50 minerals regarded as critical by the United States, 70% of US isotopes used among others in cancer treatments, sources inputs from the US on goods manufactured for exports to the US under AGOA such as autos and boat building.

South African companies are also invested in the US economy and the loss of AGOA will undermine these investments and negatively affect existing value chains.

Government will continue to accelerate the diversification of South Africa's export markets. Through its Cabinet-approved Industrial Development Strategy and Butterfly Strategy, South Africa is pursuing market opportunities across the African Continental Free Trade Area, India, SADC, the European Union, the United Kingdom, ASEAN, MERCOSUR and China.

New market opportunities have also been secured for South African citrus, avocados, grapes and apples.

Minister Parks Tau said: "This decision does not define the broader relationship between South Africa and the United States, however a solution depends on the willingness of both Parties to find solutions.

At the same time, government will support affected sectors, protect South Africa's national interests and continue pursuing trade, investment and shared economic opportunities with the United States."

Tau elaborated that 'The United States remains an important trade and investment partner. South Africa remains committed to a balanced and mutually beneficial partnership with the US that enables preferential trade that supports beneficiation of critical minerals at source and promotes investment. As a sovereign constitutional democracy, South Africa will continue to uphold its constitutional responsibilities, transformation objectives and international obligations while pursuing practical solutions that expand trade and investment.

Matthew Parks, COSATU Parliamentary Coordinator noted the negative economic development on South Africa's removal from the African Growth and Opportunities Act (AGOA).

Over the years, organized labour have argued that 'What is required for us to see the full potential of AGOA requires investment not only in trade, but also in people and decent jobs.

Parks unpacked that the agricultural and manufacturing sectors, for example will be hugely affected. We have already seen many jobs lost at factories and companies in Cape Town, Atlantis, Malmesbury and Tulbagh.

AGOA has provided lower tariff access to various African exports to the US's market, currently the world's largest economy.

It has played an important role in boosting South African and many other African countries' exports to the US. It has helped nurture intra-African trade, e.g. South African vehicle exports to the US include many components made in neighbouring states.

It has benefited the US not only with the supply of African goods, including critical minerals, but has also helped create an estimated 200 000 direct jobs in the US.

The US, like all other nations, has the right to determine which goods can enter its market and at what tariff level. Other African countries have previously been removed from AGOA, and some were later reinstated.

COSATU is deeply concerned by the impact South Africa's exit from AGOA, due to take effect from January 2027, will have on thousands of agricultural and manufacturing jobs linked to it.

We have already seen many jobs lost at factories and companies in Cape Town, Atlantis, Malmesbury and Tulbagh, amongst others. We have seen the devastation it threatens to these workers and farmers' abilities to take care of their families.

Given South Africa's already dangerously high 43.8% unemployment rate and weak economic growth, it is important that South Africa's government utilise the next 60 days before this exit comes into effect, to negotiate a favourable set of solutions to avert this potential blow to the South African economy and jobs.

These engagements must be based upon facts, not fiction. They must be anchored upon mutual respect, including the recognition and appreciation of South Africa as a constitutional democracy and a sovereign member of the international community.

Negotiations for South Africa's continued membership of AGOA and a reset of bilateral relations with the US, too must be based upon what is in the interests of South Africa's people and respect for its own transformation journey.

It is critical that the Departments of Trade, Industry and Competition; Employment and Labour; National Treasury; and Agriculture; put in place an urgent package of support for at risk workers, companies, industries and communities.

This must include subsidies and incentives, tax rebates and holidays, and support from the Unemployment Insurance Fund's Temporary Employment Relief Scheme.

We cannot afford to abandon a single worker, business, industry or community.

Efforts to boost and diversify South African exports to other markets from Canada to Brazil, from Europe to Asia, and most importantly across the African continent must be accelerated and provided with the necessary support from the state and the private sector.

It is long overdue that AfriForum, Solidarity and other proponents of the white persecution myths, appreciate the very real damage that their endless lobbying of and antics in the US have done to bilateral relations.

South Africa's removal from AGOA is in no small part a direct result of their tireless efforts to decampaign South Africa.

They must now explain to white farmers from the vineyards of the Cape to the citrus farms in Limpopo; to White, Coloured, Indian and African workers from the clothing factories in Cape Town to the motor manufacturing plants in the Eastern Cape, Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal why their livelihoods will now be lost.

This is AfriForum, Solidarity et al's legacy.

They must own it.

COSATU will continue to work closely with government and industry to ensure these interventions take place, as well as to work closely with the US labour movement to protect the jobs of ordinary workers.

South Africa is a resilient nation. It has overcome some of humanity's darkest moments.

We will navigate these turbulent times too.



The Economy

BOTH SACCAWU AND THE MINISTER of Employment and Labour agree that workplace violence is unacceptable

Organised labour calls for revamping of Boxer Store's workplace violence prevention policies to curb violent crimes at the shopfloor.

The retail trade union, SACCAWU came out gun blazing following a fatal incident that took place at Boxer Superstore in Eshowe, KwaZulu-Natal, wherein three female managers were fatally shot and wounded, following what is believed to be an internal disciplinary process.

The South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union (SACCAWU) Deputy General Secretary, Jerry Mmoneri alluded that 'SACCAWU extends its heartfelt condolences to the families, relatives and loved ones of the three deceased women.

We also extend our deepest sympathies to their colleagues, fellow workers and the entire Boxer workforce, who have been left traumatised by this devastating incident.'

The loss of three women who went to work to earn a living and provide for their families is an unspeakable tragedy.

No employee should lose their life while performing their duties. Every worker has the fundamental right to work in an environment where their life, dignity and safety are protected, said Mmoneri.

SACCAWU demand that Boxer Store need to consider the following concrete proposals to curb such incidents happening again:

A comprehensive workplace violence prevention policy

- Boxer must develop, implement and regularly

review a clear policy addressing workplace violence, threats, intimidation, harassment and other safety risks. The policy must include risk assessments, reporting mechanisms, emergency response procedures and appropriate protection for employees who raise safety concerns.

Strengthened employee mental health and wellness programmes

- Boxer must ensure that employees have access to confidential counselling, psychological support and professional mental health services. Employee wellness programmes must be accessible, properly resourced and supported by management, rather than existing merely as a formal policy.

Training for managers and supervisors

- Managers and supervisors must receive appropriate training to recognise signs of distress, respond constructively to workplace conflict, communicate respectfully and refer employees to qualified professionals when necessary.

  Such training must not turn managers into mental health diagnosticians. Its purpose should be to promote early support, respectful engagement and appropriate referral.

Fair and constructive grievance and disciplinary procedures

- Disciplinary hearings, performance management and workplace grievances must be conducted fairly, consistently and in accordance with applicable labour law and collective agreements. Workers must be able to raise concerns without intimidation or fear of victimisation.

  Where a particular process presents a credible safety risk, appropriate protective measures must be considered without compromising procedural fairness or the rights of any party.

Immediate psychosocial support for affected employees

- Boxer must make professional trauma counselling and other appropriate support available to employees who witnessed the shooting, were directly affected or are experiencing distress following the incident. Support should also be available to employees at the affected store and other workplaces where the incident has caused significant anxiety.

A review of workplace security and emergency preparedness

- Boxer must urgently review access controls, emergency response arrangements, communication systems and procedures for dealing with threats from current or former employees. Any measures introduced must be proportionate, lawful and developed with meaningful worker participation.

Meaningful consultation with organised labour

- SACCAWU must be involved in reviewing and strengthening workplace safety, employee wellness and violence prevention measures. Employee representatives must have a meaningful role in identifying risks, monitoring implementation and evaluating whether these policies are effective.

Minister of Employment and Labour condemned the workplace violence that reportedly took place at Boxer Supermarket, Eshowe.

Minister of Employment and Labour, Nomakhosazana Meth said 'The Department of Employment and Labour encourages continuous open dialogue between management, Labour representatives and employees to foster positive and conducive workplace relationships and resolve grievances constructively.

Employers are urged to strengthen Employee Wellness Programmes to ensure adequate mental health support. We call upon Employees to utilise the Programme to help navigate stress, conflict and personal struggles.'

Meanwhile, members of SACCAWU in the North West recently led a picket at the Taung Magistrate Court after a worker was allegedly raped while at work at Boxer Stores. The matter is still in the court roll for justice to prevail.



The Economy

BUY LOCAL-OFFSHORE retail platforms are destroying local jobs!

Delegates from SACTWU demonstrated in a moving manner how the clothing, leather and foot sector is affected by new online shops such as Shein and Temu.

The Economy

Delegates at COSATU Congress received a moving demonstration by members of the textile, leather, and clothing union, SACTWU challenging newly introduced platform shopping online services such as Shain and Temu.

SACTWU members wore red and yellow outfits, holding placards written, 'RIP Jobs' to signify millions of local jobs lost over the last years or so

They argued that the local market is hugely affected by online shops as more imports come into the country, thus eroding local jobs.



SACTWU calls for a global campaign against shedding of jobs in the manufacturing sector.

SACTWU pursued all affiliates to lead a massive campaign against erosion of local jobs, especially in the manufacturing sector.

Online shopping is eroding retail jobs - Online shopping is a growing sector

SACTWU argues that global competition in the clothing, leather in the recent years has been worsened by the fast-fashion giants like Shein and Temu, which have altered the competitive landscape and introduced new business models such as fast couriers.

However, organised labour and clients are concerned by various factors such as respect for the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA), on specific areas related to usage of personal data, emails, phone numbers, or payment details in processing online purchases.

Adherence to the legal framework regulating online shopping has caused countless cases of fraudulent activities. Protection of consumers is crucial.

Most of the online are executed by consumers at their comfort zones, using their mobile devices with an estimated 78% of traffic.

Worsened economic crisis

According to the Statistics South Africa (STATSA) South Africa's unemployment rate has risen to 33.6%, with 8.5 million people unemployed.

South Africa lost 345 000 jobs in the first quarter of 2026, the job market currently facing a significant downturn, with various sectors such as construction, transport, community and social services experiencing job losses.

Manufacturing has added 38,000 jobs, mining has increased by 32,000, and agriculture has grown by 10,000. However, these gains are not enough to offset the broader losses, particularly in labour-intensive industries.

Over the years, the impact of cheap clothing from China in South Africa has significantly impacted the South African textile and clothing industry.

Challenges facing COSATU's new leaders and their vision for the future.



SACTWU sponsored a motion to revitalise the textile and clothing industry, including government initiatives aimed at supporting local producers and addressing the negative impacts of cheap imports.

Meanwhile, commentators have noted the radical shift by COSATU to have the National Office Bearers (NOB) collective comprising four women, marking a significant milestone in advancing women's leadership.

The adjourned Congress has damaged the reputation of the Federation in so many ways, however they have every opportunity to redeem themselves, said one analyst.

Progressive Economists are arguing it's time for the Federation to unleash a radical programme of genuine unity with other trade union Federations capable of confronting the logic of capital and the state.

The working class must move beyond fragmented struggles towards a common, militant programme that challenges the capitalist system at its roots and advances the struggle for a socialist society in which workers, not capital, determine the conditions of their lives and labour.

Organised labour must take a stand on the issues related to the influence of Artificial Intelligence and digitalisation in the labour market.

'This is a critical conversation in which workers voice has been muted for way too long. The space is still dominated by pro-capital techno-optimistic, however workers cannot be left in the debate that is transforming their work and society.

Labour analysts are concerned about the future of work!

The big question which is critical in setting the direction is: Technology for what and for who?

COSATU Congress resolved to COSATU shall intensify the Living Wage Campaign, defend and expand collective bargaining, close loopholes that undermine the National Minimum Wage and oppose retrenchments, labour broking and outsourcing.

IN MEMORIAM

MDUDUZI MBONGWE



SEPT 1965 - OCT 2026

Comrade Mduduzi served SACCAWU as a General Secretary.

Delegates at the Reconvened COSATU 15th National Congress were shocked to hear the sad news of the passing on of Comrade Mduduzi Mbongwe, the General Secretary of the South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union (SACCAWU).

A moment of silence to remember his life and times was observed.

Various organisations described Comrade Mdu as a dependable trade unionist, good negotiator, an excellent organiser, a dedicated and patient educator, and communist till the end.

Before ascending to the position of General Secretary, he served the union as the union's Organiser, thereafter as Regional Secretary at Wits Region, and joined the National Secretariat in 1999 as the Deputy General Secretary until 2025 when he was elected as General Secretary. He will be remembered by workers as a revolutionary, an organic negotiator at Nedlac, a true workers' advocate and internationalist.

"SACCAWU conveys its heartfelt condolences to the family of Comrade Mdu Mbongwe, his relatives, colleagues, members of SACCAWU, the Congress Movement, Mass Democratic Mass structures and working class communities," said Jerry Mmoneri, SACCAWU Deputy General Secretary.

Message of condolences

"NEHAWU conveys its deepest and heartfelt condolences to the family, comrades, friends and members of the South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union [SACCAWU] following the untimely passing of its General Secretary, Comrade Mduduzi Mbongwe," said Zola Sapetha, NEHAWU General Secretary.

"SAMATU mourns the passing on of SACCAWU General Secretary, Comrade Mdu Mbongwe," alluded Dr Cedric Sihlangu.
SACP expressed its message of heartfelt condolences to the family of Comrade Mduduzi Mbongwe, the General Secretary of the South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union (SACCAWU) and member of the SACP Central Committee.

"The SACP conveys its message of solidarity to the membership and leadership of SACCAWU and the entire membership of COSATU, as well as to the membership of our Party, for the devastating loss.

Comrade Mdu was a dedicated communist who served the working class and the Party with distinction.

'He was a humble and highly disciplined servant of the people who wholeheartedly threw himself into relentless battles against capitalist exploitation of workers and selflessly provided excellent service to workers," said Solly Mapaila.

Comrade Mdu's work as a member of the SACP Gauteng Provincial Executive Committee contributed in no small measure to the stabilising of the Party in the province. Having proved his dedication as a member and leader in the Party, he was later co-opted into the SACP Central Committee, where he served till he breathed his last.

In paying tribute to Comrade Mduduzi Mbongwe, the SACP calls for the unity of the working class in the fight towards socialism. His untiring service to the trade union movement and the working class should also inspire his federation, COSATU, to strengthen itself as it comes out of its 15th National Congress and not allow itself to be divided by short-term battles.

Our collective response to exploitation and imperialism must be international working-class solidarity, national sovereignty and a just peaceful world order.

May his soul rest in peace

#HambaKahleMduMbongwe

IN MEMORIAM

MZIKAYIFANI "JOE" NKOSI



MAR 1961 - AUG 2026

Comrade Joseph Muzi Nkosi is the former National Union of Mineworkers and COSATU 1st Deputy President

Workers in South Africa were stunned at the sad news of the passing on of the former National Union of Mineworkers and COSATU 1st Deputy President, Mzikayifani Khehla Joseph "Joe" Nkosi.

Comrade Joseph Muzi Nkosi was a stalwart of the labour movement in South Africa and proactively participated in the struggle for liberation in the country, under the most brutal system of apartheid.

He cut his teeth in the unions and assumed national leadership during the unbanning until South Africa was declared a democratic state after the 1994 dispensation.

Comrade Nkosi became politically active as a student at Hlalanathi High School. After five years of struggling to find a job, he studied Administration via correspondence at the University of South Africa. On completing, he joined Kilbarchan Mine and later transferred to Optimum Colliery in Middelburg in 1986.

Cde Nkosi became a prominent leader in the NUM, playing a leading role during the historic 1987 miners' strike as Activities Coordinator.

Cde Nkosi was active in the United Democratic Front and COSATU structures, serving as Chairperson of the COSATU Middelburg Local and later Vice Chairperson and Chairperson of the COSATU Highveld Region.

Following the unbanning of political organisations in 1990, he became active in the ANC and played a leading role in establishing an SACP branch at Pullenshope. He later served as Chairperson of the SACP in Mpumalanga from 1992 to 1996. His commitment to COSATU remained unwavering.

Cde Nkosi later served South Africa as a diplomat. In April 2018, he presented his letters to Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and served as South Africa's Ambassador to Venezuela until 30 March 2022, when he was reassigned to Chad.

'Ambassador Nkosi demonstrated exemplary commitment to South Africa through his steadfast representation of the country's national interests, promoting its economic strengths, diversity and industrial capabilities, thereby reinforcing bilateral relations in the nations where he served', reiterated the Department of International Relations and Cooperation, Minister Ronald Lamola, Deputy Minister Alvin Botes, Deputy Minister Thandi Moraka, Director-General Zane Dangor and colleagues.

Throughout his life, Comrade Joseph on his journey from the mines to senior leadership in the trade union movement, the democratic movement and diplomatic service reflected a life dedicated to serving the people.

Former COSATU Deputy President, Ambassador Comrade Joseph 'Joe' Nkosi will be solemnly remembered for his teachings; a straight talker and remained committed to the struggle for workers' rights, democracy, social justice and international solidarity.

'We will remember Comrade Joe for his forthrightness, his sharpness and his commitment to the advancement of our struggle. He was a true representation of the South African revolution, the Alliance, a worker, an activist of our national liberation movement, and a cadre of the Party', declared COSATU and the SACP.

President Joe was buried on the weekend of the 5th of September 2026 at Madadeni, KwaZulu-Natal.

Hamba Kahle President Joe Nkosi!



EDUCATION

WORKER EDUCATION gets a facelift after the conclusion of GLU ENGAGE Labour University course at WITS, South Africa

Trade unionists graduating at the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

African trade unionists graduated in Johannesburg after enrolling for a 2026 short course at the Global Labour University (GLU) Engage South Africa with 18 trade unionists participating from all over Africa in countries such as Botswana, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Niger, Uganda, Pakistan, Ghana, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Namibia, and Mauritius.

Professor Lorena Nunez Carrasco acknowledged the importance of worker's education in trade unions.

Simiao Simbine from SASK Regional Office for Africa alluded on the critical importance of promoting labour rights in the continent, fair wages and decent work.

He argued about erosion of worker education funding across the continent and called for a collaboration with like-minded organisation to support worker education.

'This programme empowers workers on empowering themselves to defend class interests and the graduates must feed their organizations with knowledge, insights and wisdom to tackle continental challenges. Let's share the learning experience acquired with all workers,' said Simbine.

Alexander Geiger from FES delivered a message of acknowledgement to the graduates for the sterling discipline, commitment and cooperation during the course.

'FES is committed to expand its working relationship with organised labour across the continent'.

GLU ENGAGE South Africa dealt with six modules about 1) Labour and Development, 2) Organizing Strategies for Labour, 3) Worker Solidarity and the International Political Economy of Labour in the Age of Resurgent Nationalism, 4) Digital Technologies and the World of Work in Africa, 5) Global Governance and 6) Research Methodology and Research Project.

The trade unionists presented various research projects on tackling precarity in the labour market, focusing on organising petrol attendants, security guards, E-Hailing delivery riders and waiters at cafes and restaurant.

Majority of these workers are performing non-standard or temporary employment that may be poorly paid, insecure, unprotected, and unable to support a household. The trade unionists presented alternatives to tackle precarity in the African continent.

An interesting component of the course was a participation in a webinar with Emeritus Professor Dr Hansjörg Herr of the Berlin School of Economics and Law presenting on economic ideological foundations, indicators and wage bargaining structures. The objectives of the webinar were to discuss and promote collective wage bargaining strategies, informed by the African and Asian realities.

Professor Devan Pillay delivered a vote of thanks on behalf of lectures and Dr Christine Bischoff wished all graduates success.

The ENGAGE South Africa at the Global Labour University (Wits University), was held in partnership with SASK - Suomen Ammattiliittojen Solidaarisuuskeskus and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Trade Union Competence Centre for Sub -Saharan Africa.

COSATU National Educator, Alfred Mafuleka congratulated the graduates for investing their time and space to re-skill themselves to serve workers better to deliver organisational programmes in the interest of the working class.



Trade unionists from Botswana, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Niger, Uganda, Pakistan, Ghana, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Namibia, Mauritius elated after the graduation at WITS, Johannesburg, South Africa.



GENDER AGENDA

"Wathint' Abafazi, Wathint' Imbokodo"

Gender activists and women organisations marched on the footsteps of the 1956 Women's March protestors in Pretoria on August 9, 2026.

COSATU Gender Coordinators and gender activists participated in the commemorative event of the 70th anniversary of the 1956 Women's March at the Union Buildings, Pretoria, under the Theme: ***"Empowered Women-Empower the Nation: Women are shaping South Africa's Future."***

Multitudes of women across the country gathered in Tshwane Metro from all walks of life to salute the bravery of women leaders such as Lilian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph, Rahima Moosa, Sophia Williams-De Bruyn, Winnie Mandela, Albertina Sisulu, Ray Alexander, Rahima Moosa, Ruth Mompati, Adelaide Tambo, Ida Fiyo Mntwana, Rita, Ndlanga, Mary Moodley, Ray Alexander, Helen Joseph, Vesta Smith and countless others who were upfront to oppose apartheid segregation and its pass laws.

Justice and gender justice are deeply connected

The Department of Youth, Women and Persons Living with Disabilities 'recognises that inclusive and sustainable economies are built when women have equal opportunities to lead, participate and thrive. It also reminds us of our shared responsibility to end gender-based violence, protect the rights of women and girls, and create communities where everyone can live with dignity and safety.'

Today, we continue to commend these women for their steadfastness to render the apartheid regime unworkable and fiercelessly fought for human rights, gender equality and social justice.

"The cause of women's emancipation is part of our national struggle against outdated practices and prejudices. It is a struggle that demands equal effort from both men and women alike." – Nelson Mandela

The 70th anniversary celebrations highlighted the challenges confronting women, while advancing women's empowerment and gender equality.

70 Years of Women's Power

President Cyril Ramaphosa honoured the enduring legacy of the women of 1956, whose courage helped pave the way for women to take their rightful place in all spheres of South African society.

"Seventy years later, that legacy lives on in the women who are leading, innovating, building businesses, caring for communities and contributing to our country's development," argued President Ramaphosa addressing the multitudes at the lawns of Pretoria.

President Ramaphosa said, "Government remains committed to advancing women's rights, expanding opportunities and removing the barriers that continue to limit the full participation of women in society and the economy."

"Since South Africa declare gender-based violence a national emergency, there was a commitment to augment resources to fight against the scourge in working-class communities. The police officers are receiving proactive and reactive training to tackle gender-based violence and femicide. Plans are ahead to install GBV Victim Friendly Rooms in all police stations", elaborated President Ramaphosa.

"In the three decades into democracy, South African women have witnessed gains in education, political representation and workplace opportunities, however many women still face gender-based violence, unemployment, inequality and suffer the rising cost of living."

Trade unionists such as Emma Mashinini, Lydia Komape, Mary Moodley and Many working women exposed the severe apartheid crimes perpetrated against women in general.

Women continue to make up a sizable proportion of workers in the food manufacturing, hospitality, retail, agriculture, and beverage industries. They are concentrated in lower-paid occupations, continue to undertake unpaid care tasks after lengthy working days, and are disproportionately affected by labour brokering, casualization, and retrenchments.

President Ramaphosa reiterated that 'The 1956 march opposed the apartheid government's decision to extend urban pass laws to women, and was a precursor to major political changes over coming decades that led to the demise of the racist regime in South Africa. It demonstrated that women were not merely supporters of the struggle. They were its leaders, its organisers and its authors.

It demonstrated that women were not merely supporters of the struggle. They were its leaders, its organisers and its authors. Today, women serve as Chief Justice, Speaker of the National Assembly, Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces, Public Protector and Auditor-General.'

"Women are ministers, mayors, judges, traditional leaders, diplomats, police officers, soldiers, entrepreneurs, farmers, scientists, engineers, academics, artists and athletes. Women have made significant gains in higher education and continue to break barriers in fields once closed to them."

"These gains matter. They were fought for. They must be defended."

Civil society and women organisations are calling for greater inclusion of women living with disabilities, equal access to economic opportunities, stronger political representation and an end to gender -based violence.

However, the struggle for women's freedom is far from over. Gender-based violence, economic inequality, and the persistent gap between the rights enshrined in the Constitution and the daily realities of women's lives mean that the spirit of 9 August 1956 remains as urgent today as it was then.

Meanwhile, the 70th anniversary celebration was addressed by the Global Champion for Girls Education and Youngest Nobel Laureate, Ms Malala Yousafzai.

Ms Malala Yousafzai, a delegation of Afghan women leaders and President Cyril Ramaphosa held bilateral meeting with the Global Champion for Girls Education and Youngest Nobel on the sidelines of the celebration of Women's Day held at the Union Buildings South Lawns.

Malala and the Afghan women leaders underscored 'the urgency of confronting the Taliban's system of gender apartheid and ensuring Afghan women's voices are at the center of international efforts for justice and accountability.'

Malibongwe!



Politics

LAST PUSH

ANC and SACP hold rallies across the country

COSATU 2nd Deputy President Mblai Blose participating in the Siyanqoba rally at the Curries Fountain Stadium, Durban.

The components of the revolutionary Alliance, the African National Congress and the South African Communist Party rounded their local government election campaigns on the 31st of October and the 1st of November 2026 by convening Siyanqoba, Ri ḍo kunda; Re tla fenya, Hi ta hlula rallies across the country.

COSATU leaders participated in door to door, motor blitz, and engaging with potential voters in working-class communities.

COSATU Reconvened 15th National Congress took a resolution to support both the ANC and the SACP in what was termed the 'Super Resolution'.

Residents raised various municipal service delivery challenges, such as water shortages, electricity outages, potholes, lack of decent local jobs, outsourcing, financial instability, unreliable traffic lights, poor waste management, collapsing sewer and sanitation infrastructure, corruption, state capture, allegations of water tankers destroying water infrastructure, untidy environment and unsafe parks and also high levels of crime.

The rising cost of living remains a major challenge for South Africans, with everyday essentials such as food, water, fuel, transport becoming increasingly unaffordable.

The local government elections are the first biggest contest since the 1994 democratic dispensation, the first election in the post-government of national unity coalitions at the national level, with 546 parties and nearly 137 000 candidates lobbying citizens in their wards to opt for them to become their councillor.

According to the Independent Electoral Commission, more than 29.9 million people are

eligible to cast their votes on November 4.

Over 2 655 067 million voters were enlisted to cast their special votes on the 2nd and 3rd of November.

ANC prefers an outright majority in all wards The leadership of the ANC have been on the ground campaigning for a decisive victory, raising issues such as the historical injustices, spatial planning and the challenges such as the damage done as result of coalition to deliver quality municipal services facing communities



COSATU President Mike Shingange urged workers and their families to come out on November 4 to cast their votes in East London.

Various ANC leaders argued that 'the ANC's coalition framework is premised on rendering quality municipal services, addressing residents' primary concerns such as water shortage, sanitation, moveable roads and respect for the Constitution.'

ANC President Cyril Ramaphosa said, 'the government is investing R1-trillion on water and roads infrastructure to drive economic growth.'

'The ANC is gaining momentum despite claims that the party is on a downward spiral. The party will continue to govern across all municipalities', President Ramaphosa said.

President Ramaphosa said, 'the party has introduced minimum qualification requirements to ensure prospective municipal leaders have the capacity to address local government challenge.'



COSATU Deputy General Secretary Gerald Twala participating in the SACP Rally at Mbuyiselo Ngwenda District Ward 52, Nelson Mandela Metro, Eastern Cape.

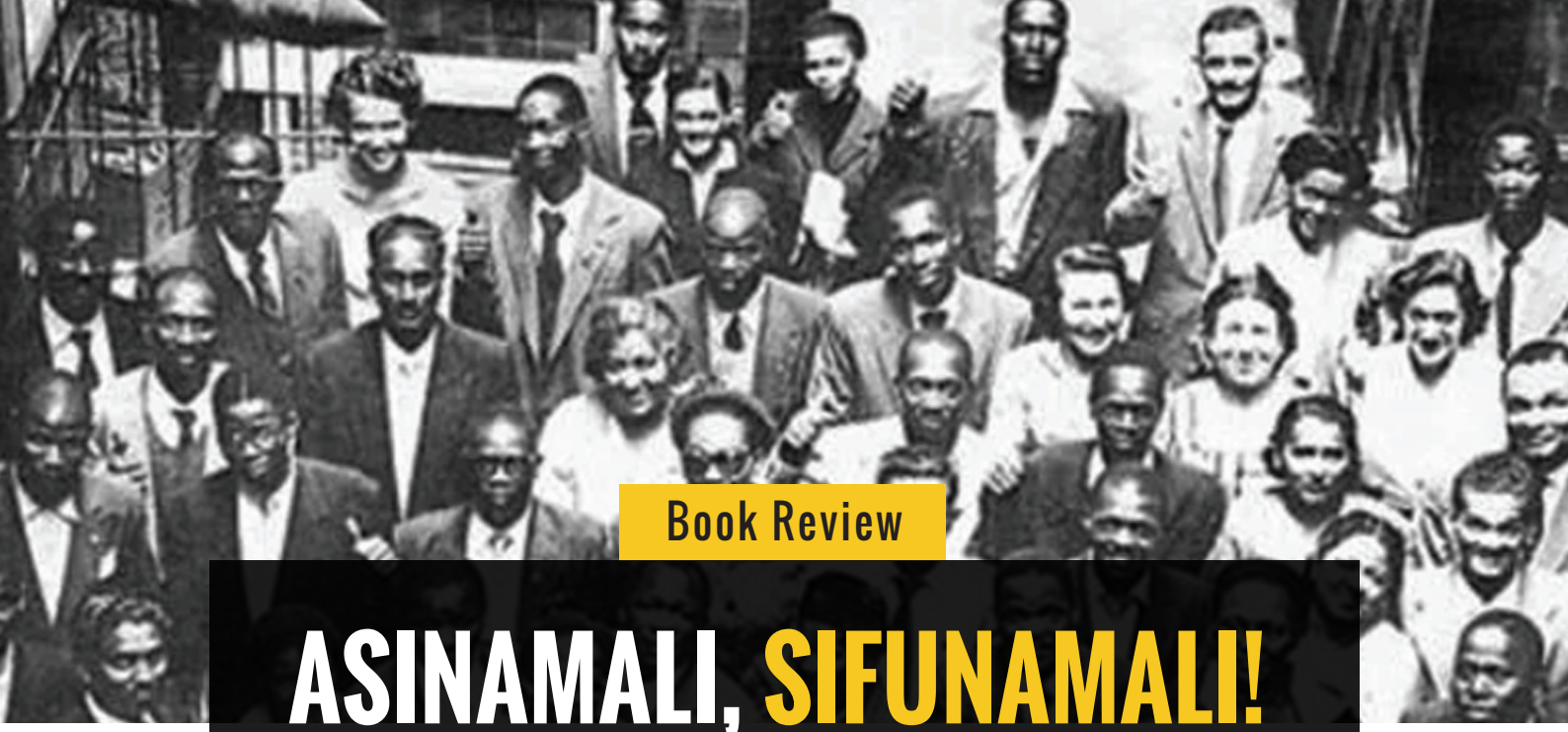
SACP campaigned on building people's power on all fronts

The SACP anchored their local government election campaign around the launch of the Red October Campaign by reasserting that 'the SACP is contesting independently and directly under its own banner for the first time since the democratic breakthrough of 1994.'

The SACP said their campaign is seeking to deploy councillors who would prioritise to build people's power where voters live: for the right to work, provision of clean water, provision of free electricity, built safe roads and promoting community safety for all citizens.

Solly Mapaila addressing potential voters said, 'South Africa remains a country of immense wealth, including minerals, arable land, biodiversity and marine resources, to name but a few, alongside mass unemployment, deep poverty and extreme inequality.'

Meanwhile, the Independent Electoral Commission and the law enforcement agencies have assured citizens of free and fair elections taking place in safe working-class communities.



Book Review

ASINAMALI, SIFUNAMALI!

SACTU leaders were instrumental in laying the foundation for COSATU to fight against racial exploitation and separate development in South Africa.

One interesting book to peruse it's about the former SACTU leader, Communist Party activist and a revolutionary.

The book titled, 'Back to the Front: A Memoir,' resonates with a distinguished individual who contributed immensely to the liberation struggle in South Africa.

All class struggle, party politics and revolutionary ideas were fermented when Comrade Levy became a young worker at the age of twenty-four, and he became active on shop floor activities, fighting against a system of exploitation.

It is record that Comrade Levy became one of the pioneers on the formation of Cosatu's predecessor, the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) in 1955.

In the mid-1950s, he was part of a small group of progressive trade unionists who pushed for the formation of the first non-racial trade union federation in South Africa. Comrade Levy became the inaugural president of SACTU.

He served with comrades with John Nkadimeng, Marks Rammitloa, Shope Williams, Christmas Tinto, Vogel Piet, Frances Baard, Phyllis Altman, Edmund Cindi, Lily Diedrichs, Eddie Davoren, Mabel Balfour, John Gaetsewe, Harry Gwala Hashe, Lawrence Ndzanga, Aaron Mosata, Graham Morodi, Viola Hashe, Melville Fletcher and countless others. Comrade Leon Levy was an organic Organiser for the labour movement, leading workers who demanded an end to poverty wages.

"We have no money, we want money", argues Comrade Levy.

Trade Unions embarked on radical worker education programs which empowered the toiling classes about the atrocities of the capitalist system of exploitation and oppression of the Africans at the point of production.

Lev articulates the successes of the Defiance Campaign of 1952, the women's March to the Union buildings in Pretoria in 1956, the national minimum wage demand of €1-a-day ten shilling or half a pound sterling.

Trade Unions were well organised and soundly supported and their actions and zeal was regarded as a principled opposition to the apartheid regime, argues Levy.

The apartheid regime tried to eliminate trade unionism which in their view threatened the policy of racial segregation but failed.'When I became an active trade union official in 1954, registered trade unions comprising of white, coloured, Indian and blacks workers, were already

well established. African workers had become a significant part of the Labour market, although they were increasingly deprived of conventional worker's rights.

The established unions had rich and significant traditions of facing up to employers: as negotiators for changes to pay and working conditions- and when necessary, taking industrial action which included strikes. They would react swiftly to unjust acts that threatened their collective agreements and solidarity with fellow unions at home and abroad,' elaborates Levy.

'Trade union officials were meticulous in their efforts to set up organisations which would endure, even under the strains of government and employer reaction. They set out to increase trade union interest in factory organisation, health and personal safety. They established transport to and from the workplace and other practical arrangements, such as care for very young children whose mothers worked in factories.'

Comrade Levy in the book acknowledged the revolutionary collegiality with trade unionists, organisers and worker leaders such as Ben Turok, Greenwood Ngotyana, Nimrod Sejake, John Nkadimeng, Billy Nair, Moses Mabhida, Kesval Moonsammy, Steven Dlamini, Archie Sibeko, Mary Turok, Don Mateman, Ronnie Press, Becky Lan, Stella Damons, Chrissie Jason, Gert Sibande, Ruth First, Bettie du Toit, Govan Mbeki, Florence Matomela, Frances Baard, JB Marks, Dan Tloome, Issie Wolfson, Eli Weinberg, Ray Alexander, Gus Coe, Mike Muller, Bill Andrews, Jack Simmons, James Phillips, Frank Marquard, Gus Coe, Solly Sacks, Julia Kruger.

Comrade Levy articulated that 'by 1954, the trade union movement was severely divided, along racial lines. There was a small but relatively strong group of trade unions with mixed membership, of white and black workers, who refused to embrace the ideology and practice of racial segregation.'

'Communists in the trade unions made a huge difference such as Lawrence Ndzanga, Rita Ndzanga, Leslie Massina, Max Gordon, William Ballinger, Margaret Ballinger, Mark Shope, Morris Kagan, Mabel Balfour, Mary Moodley, Metha Wall, Christine Matthews, Joe Slovo, Archie Sibeko, Pieter Beyleveldt, Cleopas Sibande, Ray Alexander and countless others.'

In the book, Levy articulates how party structures were built by 'Ma Ray'.

'Those trade unionists, who were deemed communists and' named' by the liquidator under the Suppression of Communism Act, were veterans who left a rich legacy of organisational, intellectual content and practice. The communists were charismatic leaders who served as role models in their organisations, workplaces, shops, offices and factories. They were imaginative in their arguments for improvement of wages, hours of work, overtime pay, late-night working and other substantive changes in the labour market.'

Comrade Levy unpacks the emergence of SACTU by alluding that 'I worked with former Trade Union Coordinating Committee whose members believed in creating a new trade union organisation based on the principle of non-discrimination on the grounds of race, colour or creed.

I served with Piet Beyleveld, Leslie Massina, John Nkadimeng, Don Mateman, Cleopas Sibande and J. Ohlson to prepare for the national conference, comprising of the 19 trade unions. Our terms of reference were clearly marked:

We were building a strong trade union movement that can fulfil its task of defending and advancing the worker's interests.

Comrade Levy concentrated on the preparations by issuing pamphlets to inform workers, arranged meetings with non-affiliated African unions. SACTU inaugural conference was held at Trades Hall in Johannesburg on 5 and 6 March 1955.

The comrades listed above were some of the foot soldiers highly regarded for setting a political tone for COSATU later in the years by organising workers against apartheid draconian laws, advocating for political unionism and working-class solidarity against exploitation.

More significantly, aligning SACTU with the liberation movement, the African National Congress which was facing repression from the state.

SACTU stood for equal treatment for African, coloured and Indian workers, sharper and wider class struggle which would embrace all the people and multi-racial trade unionism,' argues Comrade Levy.

SACTU was all about the deliverance of the masses from social, political and economic exploitation and pursuance of national liberation of all people of colour.

The amended Industrial Conciliation Act which only

recognised white, coloured and Indian registered trade unions became an important item on SACTU's agenda.

The future of the people of South Africa is in the hands of its workers, pronounced SACTU.

Only the working class, in alliance with other progressive minded sections of the community can build a happy life for all South Africans, a life free from unemployment, insecurity and poverty, free from racial hatred and oppression, a life of vast opportunities for all the people. SACTU universal slogan became popular:' An injury to one is an injury to all.

Piet Beyleveld was elected president, Leslie Massina elected as general secretary and Leon Levy as the national treasurer. Other executives were John Nkadimeng, Stella Damons, Chrissie Jason, and Ronnie Press.

SACTU broke new grounds by re-defining new rules of engagement in the class struggle, the fight for human rights and legitimacy.

SACTU became a reliable actor in the struggle against apartheid. And it insisted that the demands for better wages and working conditions were part and parcel of the wider political struggle for national liberation.

SACTU mobilised working class communities against unpalatable restrictions, relentless police harassment, incessant arrests, banishment of thousands of men to rural areas or farm jails, bulldozers destroying homes in Sophiatown, Newclare, Soweto and many others.



Former COSATU Vice President, Dr Connie September and SACP Western Cape Provincial Secretary, Benson Ngqentsu paid a courtesy visit to Comrade Levy few days before he passed on.

Book Review

Many of the trade unionists became political activists and freedom fighters. Comrade Levy was present at Kliptown when the Freedom Charter was adopted in 1955 – and as SACTU president, he was one of the five original signatories of the Freedom Charter.

Comrade Levy stood for equal wages, shorter working hours, abolition of forced labour, and protection for workers, including miners, domestic workers, and farm labourers.

Alliance partners unanimously honoured Comrade Levy by praising him for 'his lifelong commitment to the rights of workers, the liberation of the working class and for shaping the vision of a free, democratic, non-racial, non-sexist, united South Africa.'

The history of progressive trade unionism in South Africa is incomplete without the mention of the vital role played by the unsung founding leaders of SACTU. Many will remember Comrade Levy when he was with the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) as a commissioner about the public seminars unleashed such as the 2014 CCMA Commissioner's Indaba under the Theme: ***"The Equitable Workplace, A Pipedream or the Next Wave."***

Comrade Levy was a highly family-oriented person. He endured the struggle for liberation alongside his beloved wife, Lorna Levy – an activist and author of Radical Engagements: A Life in Exile.

May their souls rest in peace!

Please grab the book for more insights o how trade union movement was built.





WFTU UNLEASHES MARCHES
and pickets on October 3

NEHAWU leaders addressed workers on the picket line on October 3, 2026.

The World Federation of Trade Unions led massive marches, pickets and demonstrations on International Day of Action across the country on October 3 part of the celebrations of the founding of the class-oriented organisation and also the International Day of Action against monopolies and the oligarchy of wealth, exploiting the toiling classes.

WFTU President Mzwandile Makwayiba alluded that 'WFTU is totally rejecting the unregulated forms of employment as yet another method of intensifying the exploitation of cheap, unprotected labour.'

Its Affiliate in South Africa, NEHAWU organised marches, pickets and demonstrations at various employer's premises to demand decent work for all and safe working spaces for employees.

In Gauteng, workers at Johannesburg and Sedibeng led lunch hour pickets to demand safe work spaces and insourcing of public services.

In Mpumalanga, workers at KwaMhlanga, Government Complex, Mkhondo Hospital, Matibidi hospital and MaAfrika Clinics demanded filling of vacant funded posts to eradicate overworking current employees who are overstretched as a result of austerity measures, budget cuts and freezing of posts in the public service.

In KwaZulu-Natal, workers led pickets at the doorsteps of employer's premises such as at UThukela Health District, Grey's hospital, and Benedictive hospital, demanding provision of tools of trade and safe workplaces.

Other demands table by the WFTU were:

- An economy for progress and not for war and destruction.
- Science and technology in the service of humanity and not of monopolies and the oligarchy of wealth.
- Employee-friendly form of work to curb increasing work-related stress and feelings of isolation.
- Reject negative impact of automation through displacing of human labour, the deskilling work, and creating of job insecurity, threat on workers' jobs and erosion of wages.

WFTU called for secured workers' basic rights, such as stable working hours and wages, paid vacation, unemployment benefits, and social security.

'Let's use this day of action to send the message that workers are resisting and fighting for their rights, that we will not allow them to put their profits before our lives, and that we will not tolerate their wars and exploitation', concluded Makwayiba.

WFTU celebrates its 81st anniversary since it was founded as a shield of toiling classes across the globe.



COMRADE MDUDUZI IS NO MORE

The funeral of SACCAWU General Secretary Mduduzi Mbongwe took place at Germiston City Hall, Ekurhuleni. He was buried at Thomas Nkobi Heroes Acre, Boksburg.

Mourners from across Mass Democratic Movement structures gathered at Germiston City Hall, on 24th October 2026 to pay their respect to the fallen SACCAWU General Secretary, Mduduzi Mbongwe who served the trade union for more than thirty-two years.

Comrade Mdu joined martyrs of the liberation struggle and unsung heroes and heroines who fought for the recognition of worker's rights such as Emma Mashinini, Alina Rantsoalasi, Stina Kgaile, Frans Nkosi, Duma Nkosi, Amos Mothapo, Lee Modiga, Themba Mvandaba, Lorna Khatlane, Peter Malefane, Martha Bogacwi and countless others.

Comrade Mdu passed when COSATU reconvened 15th National Congress was in session at the Emperors Palace, in Kempton Park while the country is preparing for the most difficult local government election pencilled for November 4.

The mourners included former COSATU Central Executive Committee members, founding leaders of COSATU such as Makhulu Ledwaba, Bones Skulu, Zwelinzima Vavi, Abbey Witbooi, Rubber Mcaba, Norman . Addressing the mourners, COSATU General Secretary, Zingiswa Losi said 'The Congress of South African Trade Unions bows its head in sorrow following the tragic passing away of Cde. Mduduzi "Mdu" Noel Mbongwe, the General Secretary of our affiliate, the South Africa Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union (SACCAWU). The Federation conveys its heartfelt condolences to Cde. Mdu's family, friends, the leadership and membership of SACCAWU and the wider COSATU and the Alliance family. Our beloved General Secretary had been ill for some time, we have missed his smile, his humble demeanor and his ability to always make us laugh and to speak sense at all times. He led SACCAWU ably through victories and trying times including Massmart's naked attempt at union bashing, when it sued SACCAWU for damages to the tune of R9.4 million. Massmart falsely claimed it had lost revenue and its property damaged during a legally protected strike by its workers – members of the union.'

Losi elaborated that 'Comrade Mdu was a

memberofCOSATU'sCentral Executive Committee for many years and a source of wisdom that the Federation depended upon. Mdu was respected across the CEC and in fact the entire labour movement for his wealth of experience, his fountain of wisdom, his modest demeanor and his ability to forge consensus across the Federation, even amongst the most difficult of issues.'

Whilst Mdu could not attend the reconvened COSATU 15th National Congress, we know even in his weakened moments, he reached out to comrades to push the cause of unity. It was a painful moment for all when Cde. Mike Shingange, our newly elected President of COSATU, informed delegates of comrade Mdu's tragic passing. Whilst we mourned his passing, we were comforted knowing that we could report to cde. Mdu, that we did not disappoint him, that we heeded his call and we ensured a united, militant Federation emerged from Congress.'

On his efforts as the Federation's negotiator at Nedlac, Losi said 'The package of Labour Laws Amendment Bills will soon be tabled before Parliament. We can assure Cde. Mdu, that the years he spent leading us at Nedlac will not be in vain. That his tireless efforts to protect workers' hard-won rights and to prevent the weakening of our labour laws will prevail.

It was no small measure for Cde. Mdu to ensure in those difficult negotiations at Nedlac that not only did we block attempts by business to gut our labour laws, but in fact severance payments to workers will be doubled in future, that the National Minimum Wage will be protected from deductions by callous employers and that labour rights, protections and collective bargaining will be extended to the most vulnerable workers, including artists, actors and eplatform workers.'

'Mdu left us to carry on the struggles he led so ably. We recently met the President of the Republic, cde. Matamela Ramaphosa, to demand that Unemployment Insurance Fund and the Compensation Fund be overhauled, modernised and fixed so that they fulfill their mandates to protect workers and their families in their moment of need. We must win this battle in honour of Mdu.'

The African National Congress Deputy Secretary-General, Nomvula Mokonyane alluded that she knew Comrade Mdu while she was an organizer at SACCAWU and have been part of her family in Kagiso.

'Comrade Mdu was a steadfast voice of the working class. His passing deprives the labour movement and the Alliance of a principled leader whose commitment to workers was expressed through decades of tireless service. Cde Mdu understood that the strength of the worker's movement rests on its capacity to organise, unite and defend those whose labour sustains our economy. From his work as an organiser and regional secretary in the WITS Region to his service as Deputy General Secretary and later General Secretary, he carried this responsibility with humility, discipline and determination.

Dr Alex Mashilo representing the South African Communist Party said 'Comrade Mduduzi Mbongwe will be remembered as a humble servant of the people, a true Revolutionary, an excellent



Alliance partners saluted the revolutionary collegiality shared by Comrade Mdu with workers and working-class communities at Germiston City Hall.



‘Hamba Kahle Comrade Mduduzi Mbongwe’, declares workers in South Africa

negotiator, an Organiser, and a Communist to the End’.

‘The SACP calls on the working class to build maximum unity not only to reject austerity and neo-liberal structural reforms but also to build working-class power in pursuit of a better vision’, concluded Mashilo.

SACCAWU General Secretary Mduduzi Mbongwe will be greatly remembered as a trade union organiser, an accessible worker leader, a shrewd negotiator, a committed revolutionary, and a living trade union movement legend.

Hamba Kahle uMkhonto we Sizwe.

The Spear has fallen
Combatant for Life
Patriot to the End
Mogale wa Bagale
Qawe la Maqawe

Meanwhile, a message from Comrade Mdu Mbongwe’s life partner and beloved wife was delivered in a letter read to the mourners.

“When you were admitted in March 2026, I thought you would come back. Your son says he wants to go to heaven with. You will be in my heart. Till death do us apart. I’m really proud to have been your wife. Rest well Sthanda sam.”

Comrade Mduduzi Mbongwe kids and grandkids paid tribute to their father on the stage.

‘My father was a funny human being. We had many funny moments with him. He was our friend in the family. My father was very calm at all times. He dedicated his time to the Union, SACCAWU.’



‘Hamba Kahle Comrade Mduduzi Mbongwe’, declares workers in South Africa



Commentary

BEFORE WE BAIL OUT another SOE, save Healthcare

by Dr Bandile Masuku

'Everyone has the right of equal access to quality and affordable healthcare. Fundamental changes are required to create a strengthened healthcare system capable of providing this level of service', argues Dr Masuku.

South Africa has repeatedly stepped in to rescue state institutions deemed too important to fail. Eskom received debt relief.

South African Airways was bailed out. Other struggling state entities have received extraordinary government support because their collapse would carry severe economic and social consequences.

Yet the institution responsible for saving lives and protecting the nation's health continues to battle prolonged austerity, staff shortages, ageing infrastructure, rising medico-legal claims and persistent corruption, without any comparable national rescue plan.

If there is one institution that is truly too important to fail, it is healthcare.

For more than a decade, the public health sector has been expected to do more with less. Hospitals and clinics face rising demand while budgets fail to keep pace with population growth, inflation, technological advances, and the burden of disease. The result is a system under immense strain; one in which healthcare workers are overworked and patients endure long waiting times and inconsistent quality of care.

What makes this situation even more troubling is that thousands of qualified healthcare workers remain unemployed, while facilities operate with critical vacancies. Doctors, nurses, pharmacists, therapists, and many other professionals are available and willing to serve, yet budget constraints prevent their absorption into

the system. The contradiction is difficult to justify. At a time when communities face growing healthcare needs, the country is unable to absorb the very professionals required to meet them.

South Africa should adopt a Healthcare Recovery and Bailout Plan, linked to the objectives of the National Health Compact. While legal challenges to the NHI Act continue before the courts, there is much we can do immediately to strengthen the healthcare system.

The first priority must be workforce expansion.

Every healthcare worker who can be employed should be employed. From porters and cleaners, to nurses, doctors, specialists, and professors, every category of health worker contributes to patient care. Investing in healthcare personnel is not merely an expenditure; it is an investment in economic growth, human capital and improved service delivery.

Organised labour, particularly COSATU and its affiliated unions, has an important role to play in this process. Historically, trade unions have fought for better wages and working conditions, but they must also become champions of healthcare reform and service excellence.

Healthcare workers are more than employees. They are the frontline drivers of health system reform and improved patient outcomes.

COSATU can help mobilise and conscientise workers around a national programme to improve patient care, support workforce expansion, reform overtime systems, lift staff morale, combat corruption, and strengthen accountability throughout the sector.

No successful healthcare reform can occur without healthcare workers at its centre.

At the same time, government must confront corruption and mismanagement decisively. Every stolen healthcare rand is money taken from patients. Every corrupt contract means fewer medicines, delayed infrastructure projects and compromised services. Any health sector bailout must therefore be accompanied by stronger governance, professional management, transparent procurement systems and strict consequence management.

Another critical reform is the strengthening of public-private collaboration. South Africa possesses world-class expertise and infrastructure in both sectors. Rather than treating the public and private systems as competitors, we should pursue practical partnerships that expand access to care, reduce waiting times, strengthen training and improve patient outcomes.

Equally important is shifting our healthcare model from one focused largely on treatment to one centred on prevention. South Africa must gradually shift from a healthcare model that primarily treats illness to one that actively prevents it. Prevention is not only better for health outcomes; it is also more sustainable and cost-effective than managing advanced disease.

Community healthcare workers should therefore become the backbone of this strategy. Through household outreach, health promotion, screening programmes, vaccination campaigns and chronic disease management, they can help keep people healthy and ease pressure on hospitals.

We must also begin rewarding healthy behaviour. Government should explore innovative approaches that incentivise citizens to participate in wellness programmes, attend health screenings, adhere to treatment and adopt healthier lifestyles. Tax rebates, targeted incentives and grant-linked rewards could help drive positive behavioural change while reducing long-term healthcare costs.

The private healthcare sector is also under pressure. Rising costs continue to strain medical schemes, many of which are operating under increasing financial pressure. A weakened public sector places additional burdens on the private sector, while escalating private healthcare costs push more people into the public system.

The reality is that the entire healthcare ecosystem is under strain.

This is why the national conversation should move beyond ideological debates and focus on practical solutions.

Ultimately, NHI should not be viewed as an end in itself. The debate on National Health Insurance should not become a distraction from the urgent reforms that are needed today. Whatever the outcome of the ongoing legal challenges, the ultimate measure of any healthcare reform must be whether it expands access to quality care and improves health outcomes for all South Africans.

We can employ healthcare workers. We can strengthen primary healthcare. We can forge public-private partnerships. We can tackle corruption. We can invest in prevention.

Most importantly, we can make health a national priority worthy of the same commitment shown to struggling state-owned enterprises.

South Africa has bailed out companies. It is now time to bail out healthcare.

Because when a business fails, profits are lost.

When a healthcare system fails, lives are lost.

And when people suffer unnecessarily, the nation itself pays the price.

Dr Bandile Masuku is the Convener of the Education, Health, Science and Technology and a member of the ANC Gauteng PTT Subcommittee.



Commentary

DECONSTRUCTION OF LOCAL manufacturing sector must embrace the decent work agenda, local procurement, amongst others

COSATU affiliates participated in the discussions which ensued at the Making Africa's Energy Transition Work: Local Manufacturing, Decent Work, and Sustainable Livelihoods conference held in Johannesburg on the 8th and 9th October 2026.

The conference brought together researchers, organised labour, manufacturers, policymakers and civil society from South Africa, Ghana and Kenya, indulging on alternatives to fix the hamstrung renewable energy sectors in South Africa, Ghana and Kenya.

Seutame Maimele, Basani Baloyi, Charles Ofori and Joan Atenga reveal all the intricacies in the renewable energy sector in the three countries. They argued vividly about the potential of the renewable energy sectors in these countries; however, these countries are being held back by unstable demand, limited localisation enforcement, deficits in decent job creation and persistent gender biases.

Far too few countries on our continent have seized the opportunity to leverage the growth in renewable energy demand to develop a robust renewables manufacturing sector that has the potential to create decent work.

A series of research reports published by the Institute for Economic Justice and partners, in a four-year, three-country study, show that in countries such as South Africa, Kenya and Ghana, unstable demand coupled with limited localisation enforcement have hampered the potential of these sectors. They also reveal deficits in decent work creation, while gender biases persist, care burdens limit entry, and women remain marginalised.

One of the biggest obstacles is the nature of demand itself. Public procurement has played a central role in stimulating the renewable energy sector in the three countries through the Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Procurement Programme in South Africa, the Energy Act of 2019 in Kenya and Ghana's 2021 National Energy Policy as well as the Renewable Energy Act of 2011, as amended in 2020. These programmes, policies and legislation have led to substantial growth in capacity, reaching more than 7GW in South Africa, 5.3GW in Ghana and 2.6GW in Kenya.

However, intermittent procurement cycles have created uncertainty for investment, expansion and worker retention. An industry that relies on irregular procurement cycles struggles to provide the certainty required for long-term industrial investment.

Localisation appears to be crowded out by imports of renewable energy technologies, which increased substantially across all three countries.

Established manufacturing hubs, particularly China, benefit from mature value chains, large-scale production, technological capabilities and extensive supplier networks. In China, these firms have been supported by robust industrial policies that allow firms to produce at scale and at competitive prices.

The absence of this in South Africa means local manufacturers face higher production costs and intense competition. In Ghana and Kenya, which have nascent renewable energy assembly sectors, these sectors have struggled to develop a strong manufacturing base.

Local content policies that require a proportion of certain designated products to be sourced from local producers can play a central role in boosting demand for local renewable energy manufacturing products. However, these have suffered from implementation challenges across all three countries. In all three countries, weaknesses in the monitoring and enforcement frameworks, capacities and capabilities, and legislative gaps converge to make these policies ineffective at boosting demand for locally produced products.

The apparent price advantage of imported products can also be amplified through tariff misclassification. For instance, "staged consignment" in South Africa leads to large equipment being imported as components using component tariffs that attract lower duties. Staged consignment loopholes have been used to circumvent local content requirements and other regulatory measures.

Ghana has not yet developed a significant domestic manufacturing base for solar PV technologies, although local assembly is beginning to emerge. Firm interview evidence suggests, however, a mismatch in the incentive structure for this segment. Finished PV products can benefit from import duty exemptions, but some inputs and components used for local assembly do not receive such comparable treatment.

Therefore, tariff misclassification in South Africa and the mismatch in the incentive structure in Ghana undermine both countries' localisation objectives and weaken efforts to build domestic manufacturing capacity. Although steps are being taken by South Africa's policymakers to correct these through the influence of business associations and labour organisations, in Ghana a lot more needs to be done in this area. Other constraints include weak testing and standards capabilities, which reduce domestic competitiveness and contribute to a preference for imported products.

Employment outcomes across the renewable energy production network reveal the limitations of current localisation efforts. While the sector has created jobs, many of these are concentrated in downstream activities (non-manufacturing activities like construction) and are often precarious in nature across all three countries. In South Africa's renewable energy manufacturing sector particularly, facing unabated competitive pressures and weak domestic demand, firms employ a range of strategies to keep afloat or face closure. The result is that employment is frequently characterised by short-term contracts lasting up to three months, limited job security and inadequate social protection.

In Ghana, employment is similarly concentrated in downstream activities, particularly installation and after-sales services. Firms often maintain a relatively small core of permanent technical and managerial staff while relying on short-term labour for installation and on-site work as projects arise. Interview evidence suggests that this pattern is shaped not only by Ghana's limited participation in higher-value segments of the renewable energy production network, but also by the irregular and uncertain pipeline of projects, which makes long-term workforce retention difficult. In some cases, skills gaps and uneven enforcement of labour standards further affect the quality and progression pathways associated with these jobs.

Gendered job segregation

The challenge of inclusion is equally important. Women remain underrepresented across renewable energy production networks, and gendered job segregation is rife in all three countries. The research shows that women's roles tend to be in sales, administration and assembly lines, while they are hardly to be found in the technical jobs that tend to earn more income. Sexist sociocultural norms at the workplace, mixed with women's unpaid labour burdens in the household, limit their progression in the sector.

In Kenya, a woman could hold the same technical qualifications as her male colleague and still get steered into sales or administration roles. Renewable energy workers engaged in Kenya reported that customers questioned a woman's ability to carry out solar installations, and some spouses discouraged women from going into the field due to cultural perceptions that portray the installation of solar panels or working on wind turbines as a "man's job".

Additionally, unpaid labour adds another barrier whereby caring for children and the elderly or performing household duties limits women's ability to travel to remote project sites, work irregular hours or attend training, thus narrowing their opportunities to get into and progress in technical roles.

Ultimately, the success of the renewable energy sector in contributing to industrial development and decent work creation rests on the implementation of robust industrial policies. These include the effective enforcement of local content measures, strategic trade policies, strengthening testing and standards agencies or bodies in alignment with renewable energy localisation, industrial financing and technological transfer and development.

To ensure that the jobs created are decent, there ought to be a quid pro quo between industrial incentives and support and decent work commitments. Crucially, these policies need to be gender-forward so that the benefits of transformation are across the demographic spectrum.

Seutame Maimele and Basani Baloyi are from the Institute for Economic Justice (IEJ) in South Africa, Charles Ofori is from the Africa Centre for Energy Policy (ACEP) in Ghana and Joan Atenga is from the African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS) in Kenya.

They collaborated on Advancing a Just Energy Transition: Localisation, Decent Work, and Sustainable Livelihoods, a research project examining how renewable energy can support local manufacturing, decent work, gender equity and sustainable livelihoods across the three countries.

Poem

RED OCTOBER

The days of Russian, Red October, People
making their own history,
The country, the new people becoming
the subject of history,
The masses of Russian working class,
overthrowing the exploiting classes,
Dictatorship of the Proletariat was on course.

Lenin defined the April Thesis for
the Bolsheviks roadmap,
Lenin defined the role of the vanguard
party of the working class,
Lenin defined the role of communists in
construction of scientific Socialism.

The alliance of the workers and Peasants
built the People's Power,
Soviet power became the road to Socialism,

In these hard times!
Where is Red Flag?

Is left washed out and left hanging dry?
Where are the red flags of Paris Commune?
Where are the red flags of Russian
great Revolution?

No more heads held high,
No more fists clenched and held high,
Now the hammer and circle become
meaningless.
So, the story goes,
Old left has failed,
New left has failed,

The next left, how left is it,
Why this next left is so dismissive
of the last left,

Shifting from class struggle to declass
citizenship politics,
Further evaporating the class
consciousness.

These are hard times!
Where are the hammer and circle?

They close their eyes on exploitation,
They idealise capitalism from its core base,
Masses look from east to west to take
worst of the world,

What was this for?
Men and women gave their sweat, blood.
Tears and their lives?
What was this for?

They endured prison, exile,
Hanged and buried their massacred
loved ones, What was this for?

They have marched so many times,
Risking their lives and limbs to be
shot in streets,
Yes of course!

So many have fallen by the wayside,
Those on the left, are left with hard questions,
The world has moved on, but what exactly
has changed?

Capitalism still prevailing, still kicking but
decaying on death bed!
Let us retrace where we come from,
Red October lessons are reminder,
Where do we come from?

by Thobile Maso