



# COSATU

CONGRESS OF SOUTH AFRICAN TRADE UNIONS

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## COSATU President Zingiswa Losi: Message of Support UDF 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

20 August 2023

Programme Director,  
President Cyril Ramaphosa and founding General Secretary of the NUM  
Leadership of the ANC, SACP, COSATU, government and civil society,  
Most importantly our veterans of the United Democratic Front,

COSATU is humbled to join the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations of the UDF. We are proud of the umbilical relationship between COSATU and the UDF, their founding within 2 years of each other and an intertwined leadership was no accident.

The founding call of COSATU, of one country, one federation, one industry, one union is as relevant today as it was then. Karl Marx provided the clarion call to workers of the world to unite. Whilst we have not yet succeeded in fulfilling this mission of Elijah Barayi, and at times we have been pained by the divisions in the labour movement, we are pleased with the increasing unity between the federations at Nedlac and on the ground where unions have worked as one in the mining, clothing, transport and energy sectors. The colours of our t-shirts differ but the challenges facing workers are one.

27% of our workers are unionised, the majority within COSATU, whilst high internationally we cannot afford to be comforted by that. We have revived our recruitment campaigns and are actively engaging unions, especially those in difficult sectors, taxi drivers, actors, musicians, EPWP and domestic workers, to find their home in COSATU.

We are concerned that we have neglected our non-racial vision. We see this when reflecting on how many former union leaders were from minority communities then compared to today. More concerning is the level of unionisation amongst minority workers, but we are pleased that many of our Affiliates continue to ensure their membership reflects South Africa's diversity. SACTWU in particular has led us well.

The Federation has begun a dedicated campaign to recruit young workers as part of a continuous plan to renew and replenish. We need to revive the recruitment

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of students from our universities to see unions as a path for them to contribute to society.

Whilst society has struggled with the vision of a non-sexist society, COSATU has led with the election of women leadership at the level of the Federation, but we must do better at an Affiliate level. We need to intensify our campaigns against gender-based violence and sexual harassment at the workplace, including in unions and to champion the rights of the LGBTQI community and persons with disabilities.

COSATU's number one task is to protect and create jobs. We continuously work with government and business in our bargaining forums, at Nedlac and Parliament, through social compacts to grow our economy, reduce poverty, rebuild the developmental state and our State-Owned Enterprises, tackle obstacles to unlocking growth. South Africa requires all of us to succeed if we are to build that better life for all.

Our struggle enjoyed the support of workers across the world, we must revive that international solidarity with those less fortunate in Palestine, eSwatini, Zimbabwe.

Being a noisy democracy and as we tackle state capture, it's easy to feel despondent, that all has been in vain, and nothing has changed. We are stating here as COSATU that we are proud of the great strides we have made in achieving many of the UDF's noble goals, from a robust democracy, to repealing racist laws, the biggest roll out of public services to working-class communities, providing social grants for 27 million indigent people, and free basic and tertiary education for the poor.

COSATU has not rested on the glories of 1994, but continuously works with government and social partners to fulfil the Freedom Charter's vision, from achieving the National Minimum Wage raising 6 million workers' wages, rolling out the SRD Grant to 8 million unemployed, during COVID-19 we ensured the UIF released R64 billion to help 5.7 million workers who lost wages and the mass vaccination campaign.

The unifying spirit of the UDF and the vision of the Freedom Charter remain as relevant today as they did in 1983. It is critical that not only does the ANC and the Alliance rejuvenate and embrace its call to action, but in fact all South Africans. The struggle to build that South Africa which belongs to all who live in it, is not only the task of the ANC and the Alliance, but one that needs the active involvement of all of us. This is a dream we dare not give up on.

Thank you. Matla!

