



**MESSAGE BY PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA TO THE 10TH NATIONAL CONGRESS
OF THE POLICE AND PRISONS CIVIL RIGHTS UNION (POPCRU)**

**INKOSI ALBERT LUTHULI INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTRE
6 NOVEMBER 2023**

Comrade Zizamele Cebekhulu, POPCRU President
Comrade Jeffrey Dladla, POPCRU General Secretary
Comrade Zingiswa Losi, COSATU President,
Comrade Solly Mapaila, General Secretary of the SACP
Comrade Nomusa Dube-Ncube, Premier of KwaZulu-Natal,

Delegates to the Congress,

I greet you in the name of the African National Congress.

The ties that bind the ANC and the revolutionary trade union movement was best described by Isithwalandwe Chief Albert Luthuli, who said that SACTU is the spear and the ANC is the shield.

This means that COSATU, as the successor to SACTU, and the national liberation movement are both integral to the struggles of the workers of this country.

Working together becomes especially important in times when we face severe challenges.

South Africans have always shown that we are a people of great courage and determination, especially in the face of adversity.

We have most recently seen the fighting spirit of South Africans displayed on the sports field, but this spirit runs far deeper and has endured far longer in the struggles of our people.

We can trace this back to the slave revolts in the Cape and the wars of resistance against colonial occupation. This fighting spirit was evident in the formation of the ANC, the Communist Party of South Africa, the ICU, SACTU, Umkhonto we Sizwe and COSATU.

Driven by this determination, we overcame the hated system of apartheid, we brought an end to the political violence that was meant to derail our democratic transition, we adopted a democratic Constitution and entrenched the rights of workers in our Bill of Rights and progressive legislation.

Now, we must harness that fighting spirit to overcome the legacy of centuries of deprivation and oppression of the majority of the people of this country.

When one truly and objectively considers the extent and depth of the challenges we encountered in 1994, what has been achieved is impressive.

Millions of South Africans have been raised out of absolute poverty and now have housing and access to electricity, water, sanitation and other basic needs. Access to health care and education have been greatly expanded.

Even over the last 10 years, we have been able to make significant strides.

For example, the percentage of households in formal dwellings rose from 78 percent in 2011 to 89 percent in 2022. Many more of our people have houses.

This is evidence of concrete progress, and should give us encouragement as we confront the challenges of the present.

However, much more needs to be done.

The creation of a capable developmental state is fundamental to the transformation of our society and to further improve the lives of our people.

And integral to a developmental state is a capable criminal justice system that can effectively deal with crime and corruption.

Under difficult conditions, our ANC government is working to build such a criminal justice system.

Tackling crime is fundamentally about people's well-being and sense of security. But it is also important for economic and social development. Creating a safe environment for people to fully participate in economic and social life is non-negotiable.

Our ANC government will therefore continue to expend the necessary human and other resources to ensure people are safe and feel safe.

In the State of the Nation Address last year, we announced that we would embark on the recruitment and training of additional police personnel. In December last year, these new recruits graduated from various police academies.

Ten thousand trainees will be recruited annually for the next two financial years, bringing the total number in the current three-year period to 30,000. Of these, close to 3,000 will be allocated to the SAPS detective services.

We must acknowledge that we still have some way to go before we have a satisfactory ratio between police personnel and the population.

As we work to increase the number of police on the ground, we must work to strengthen specialised police units and ensure that we train more detectives to investigate incidents of criminality.

POPCRU has a vital role in ensuring that South Africa is a safe place free of crime. The union and its members must be part of refining the country's approach and philosophy to fighting crime.

The people of South Africa expect the members of POPCRU, as with all members of the police and correctional services, to be fully committed and focused on combating criminals. The people look to the members of this union to defend them and to serve them.

Members of the police service are among the most prominent frontline workers that interface with the South African people. The ability of our police to fight crime is for many people a measure of the capability of the state as a whole.

The police need to heed the concerns of members of the public about instances when the police have not been responsive or, worse, when they seem to be complicit in criminal activity.

Where the police fall short of what is required of them, we must correct the problem. And if any police are involved in criminal activity, we must act quickly and decisively and ensure that they feel the full force of the law.

The police must work to strengthen community policy forums. It is through these forums that the police can forge greater cooperation with communities in fighting crime.

We welcome the firm stance that POPCRU has taken against gender-based violence and femicide.

Our priority must be to prevent the violence that men perpetrate against women. We must work together to forever end such violence.

A critical part of our response to this scourge is to improve the ability of our criminal justice system to investigate these crimes and to effectively prosecute them. We have therefore dedicated resources and effort to equipping police stations and training police personnel to support and assist survivors of gender-based violence. We must all work together to ensure that survivors get the support they need from the police and that perpetrators get the lengthy prison sentences they deserve.

We have heard what COSATU and several of its affiliates have said, that more must be spent to employ more workers in frontline services in the police, correctional services, the NPA, SARS and other services. While we may have very limited resources at present, and while we must manage our public finances carefully, we will ensure that we do not compromise the provision of services to those South Africans who need them most.

We agree that the conditions of employment of the police must be improved, particularly when it comes to housing challenges. We need to promote and enhance collective bargaining in the interests of both workers and employers.

While things are difficult, we have made important progress in several areas.

Though it has been slow, we are steadily bringing those allegedly responsible for state capture to justice. As I said in my address to the nation last Monday, over the last four years, the NPA has taken 34 state capture and other corruption cases to court, involving 205 accused persons.

Freezing orders of R14 billion have now been granted to the Asset Forfeiture Unit for state capture related cases. Around R5.4 billion has to date been recovered and returned to the state.

Illegal mining is a burden on our mining communities and the SAPS is beginning to make inroads and shut down several illegal mines, unregulated coal yards and unregistered second hand dealers. We urge communities to work closely with law enforcement agencies to make an even bigger dent in this area.

While we work to tackle crime, we must work with equal vigour to tackle the social and economic factors that cause crime.

The ANC government will continue with its efforts to address poverty and provide relief to millions of South Africans.

We have announced an extension to the SRD grant, which provides poverty relief and allows recipients to look for jobs and engage in other economic activity. The ANC government continues to support millions of South Africans through social grants, public employment programmes and other means of social support.

We will soon be embarking on an election campaign that will be fought in our local communities.

Our municipalities must therefore function and serve the people properly. All of us, live in and engage with local government and can do more to make local councils function better.

As the ANC, we have for example noted an improvement in electricity supply. While the power grid has not yet stabilised sufficiently, we can see some of the benefits of the work that we have been doing.

As worker leaders, you must lead in establishing community policing forums and other community safety forums. When progressive leadership is absent in these bodies, we leave space for reactionary voices to dominate in these bodies.

As the Alliance, we must become more focused as we move closer to the elections. We have travelled a difficult road towards the renewal of our movement and the rebuilding of our society. We have come far, but we still have much to do.

We will approach the election next year to seek a mandate to complete the process of renewal and rebuilding.

As the ANC, as the Alliance and as the broader democratic movement, we must go out with a clear determination to win the elections.

We have seen that coalitions do not serve the people. Coalitions have given rise to great instability in municipalities, affecting service delivery and infrastructure investment. It is the residents of these municipalities and working-class people in particular who suffer the consequences.

Our task is to secure a clear mandate for renewal and rebuilding. That is our historic mission as a revolutionary alliance. And it is well within our means.

But it does mean that we need to work hard. We need to campaign hard. We need to remain united, we need to humble and we need to be honest with the people.

The words of Chief Albert Luthuli remain as true today as they were 70 years ago. Together we are the spear and the shield of the South African people.

Let us safeguard the rights of the South African people and let us fight for their interests, for their development and for their prosperity.

I thank you.