

**Speech Delivered by COSATU President, Comrade Sidumo Dlamini at the 8<sup>th</sup> POPCRU National Congress held in Durban ICC, on 16 June 2015**

16 June 2015

The President of POPCRU Comrade, Zizamele Cebekhulu

The entire leadership of POPCRU from all levels of the organisation

Invited guests

Delegates from across the length and breadth of our country

Please accept warm greetings from your federation, COSATU

As COSATU, we are pleased to have been invited to come and address 8<sup>th</sup> POPCRU's National Congress.

We would like to thank POPCRU members and leaders from all levels of the organisation for building.

POPCRU into a strong and united Trade Union.

We want to thank you for choosing to rebuild the trust of members towards their union and their leaders when there was a clear plan to factionalise and divide the union by some who came under the guise of working for unity when their real intention was to sow disunity.

POPCRU was amongst the first unions to stand up in our meetings and pointed to a plan which was intended to steal COSATU away from its course as a trade union.

This union was amongst those unions who stood firm and said COSATU shall not be turned into a political organisation.

You were amongst the first unions to reject those who planned to divide unions in the name of helping them to deal with internal leadership challenges.

POPCRU came out and said we have the capacity to help ourselves if those who claim to be helping us have other intentions other than to build the union.

This was a lesson for all of us that we should never bow to compromise on our principles even when we are under pressure.

POPCRU taught us that trade unionism is about being honourable.

It is about choosing workers over anything.

It is about speaking truth even when such truth will make you to be unpopular.

It is about acting decisively when it comes to defending the interests of workers.

It is about understanding that the first task of any trade union is to defend the very trade union which is the only instrument of fighting against employers in the hands of workers.

As a union, you remain exemplary with your forthrightness, frankness and the ability to tell us where we are wrong without intending to destroy us.

POPCRU is a living example of what happens when members say enough is enough about divisions.

This union is a living testimony to the fact that a strong organisation is build by the presence of a united and decisive leadership who have a clear sense of where the organisation should go.

This Union of Pretty Shuping is a living example of how to rebuild an organisation from the ruins of divisions into one of the most stable and active unions which has a close contact with membership.

Comrades, I want to report to you something that you already know and it is the fact that your federation is under attack.

We therefore come to this congress with high hopes that you will spend some time discussing strategies and tactics on how to defend our Federation from the heightened attacks directed at it.

We cannot go to courts to defend ourselves, because we have no money for courts.

The little resources we have are rather directed at doing the work of the federation.

Those who have more money which is not used for workers programme continues to take us to courts about the most obvious constitutional matters such as the convening of the Special National Congress, a matter which was resolved at the 2014 November CEC.

Workers money was used to take us to court only to resolve the matter in an out of court settlement, which endorsed an existing decision of COSATU.

As if that was enough workers money was used again, when we were taken to court to have the COSATU Special National Congress listen to an appeal against the expulsion of NUMSA.

The court said there was no need for the wastage of workers money.

Those who took us to court lost the case with costs.

Again it is workers money which was used for this unnecessary and wasteful expenditure.

It is even more worrying that those who are at the forefront of this have arrogated to themselves a status of being super communists and super revolutionaries.

The plan has been to keep the federation in court battles, so that we can direct all our resources to something else other than the pursuing battles against employers and monopoly capital.

We now know that the plan to steal away COSATU has failed and the next big attempt is to target affiliates and to divide them.

The overall plan is to use COSATU's organisational infrastructure to build a new federation and a new political party.

Both of these plans will fail.

Those who are the exponents of these plans must learn lessons from COPE and all those who tried to form new political organisations and new federations.

People don't follow names; they follow the work of their organisations.

We are warning our members not to follow individuals but to follow organisations.

In his closing remarks to the 1969 Morogoro Conference comrade Oliver Tambo gave a warning when he said "Be vigilant comrades, the enemy is vigilant, Defend the revolution against enemy propaganda, whatever form it takes... *'Beware of the wedge-driver, the man who creeps from ear to ear, carrying a bag full of wedges, driving them in between you and the next man, between a group and another, a man who goes round creating splits and divisions. Beware of the wedge-driver, comrades. Watch his poisonous tongue'*".

Those unions which are still remaining outside of COSATU Central Executive Committee [CEC] must now tell their members as to why they are not in the COSATU CEC, why are they not attending preparatory meetings towards the Special National Congress because they are the ones who asked for it.

Now that they Special National Congress have been called they are planning to boycott it.

They must tell their members as to where did they get the mandate to form a united Front.

We will defend those unions who are being attacked for coming back to the COSATU CEC.

COSATU is their home and they are allowed to raise all their issues inside COSATU.

Comrades, your meeting at this congress must be about asserting the authority of our trade unions against employers.

We want to call on POPCRU and all public service unions under COSATU, including those which are outside COSATU never to go soft on the democratic state as an employer.

Never compromise workers interests at the altar of political expediency, instead our politics must teach you that we expect those of our own who are in charge of levers of state power to use their authority at the service of workers and the working class as a whole.

Public Sector unions must never be soft against an employer who undermines the very agreements in which they appended their signature to.

In fact, we should now ask a very straight forward question as to who exactly is in power?

Is it the ANC that we voted for or the minister who gets deployed by the ANC or is it the bureaucrats in government.

There are things which we must never accept and these include the fact that we go to elections on the platform of a uniting manifesto to which we make many compromises.

We work and mobilise for an ANC victory.

But when the manifesto has to be implemented we then have a minister or a state bureaucrat arguing against the very manifesto they have been deployed to implement.

The manifesto said that committed “the state to become a model employer and an employer of choice for all those committed to serving our people”.

Did this mean undermining public service workers to a point of refusing to implement an agreement which in itself is a product of a compromise?

The manifesto said that “through appropriate legislation, a publicly funded and publicly administered National Health Insurance Fund will be established to drive the roll-out of the NHI programme to achieve universal health coverage.

We should openly ask as to where is the National Health Insurance [NHI] and why it is not being implemented.

We don't want another presentation from the minister; all we want is implementation and implementation now!

In the manifesto we said that we should “urgently finalise policy discussions on proposals for a comprehensive social protection policy”, which ensures that no needy South African falls through the social security net.

We must ask as to where is the discussion paper which we have been asking to get for many, many years.

In each of the policy areas where there is no implementation you will find that there is a hand of the National Treasury, blocking every policy implementation which favour the working class.

The question we are asking is who is in power?

We are going to the Alliance Summit scheduled from the 25th – June – 1st July and we will be asking this question as to who exactly is in Power.

There are even government bureaucrats, who are hell bent at working to destroy our affiliates this include some in the Department of Labour who have been working to get COSATU unions being deregistered.

Whilst we have been telling our unions to ensure compliance but we are aware that some bureaucrats in the Department of labour have been openly working to get specific COSATU unions being deregistered by demanding impossible submissions such as phone numbers, addresses of all members of a union.

We have had a discussion with the minister of Labour about this matter and we are observing if there is progress on addressing all these issues.

We want to remind our comrades deployed in government about something they already know that one of the documents at the ANC 1985 2nd consultative Conference held at Morogoro made the following starting observations *that ".....it is conceivable in a capitalist country, as happens in France, Britain, Sweden, etc, that a party of the working class may win the elections and assume political office - that is, it is given control over the ministries - without that in any way altering the fact that political power remains in the hands of the capitalist class. What happens in such instances is that a party of the working class is allowed to administer the capitalist state, introduce ameliorative reforms, even impose certain controls on the activities of the capitalists just as long as it does not tamper with the central sphere of capitalist political power. Forming the government, therefore, is not the same thing as acquiring political power".*

This is what is at the centre of what should inform the second more radical phase of our transition.

The liberation movement must use its control of the levers of state power to give effect to economic freedom.

Our comrades know the freedom like the palm of their hands and it is the Freedom charter that must be implemented.

We are very conscious that all these cannot happen if we do not build a strong ANC and a strong functional Alliance.

The task we have is to implement the COSATU's 2015 Plan which on amongst others prioritises the building of the ANC-led movement as a people's movement in a manner that asserts its character as a disciplined force of the left which drives radical economic transformation in line with the Freedom Charter.

We need to win back the confidence of the masses that our organisations are the true representatives of the people and that those of us who are serving them have no other interest except to serve the people and that we are ready to sacrifice so that their tears of centuries of colonialism and apartheid brutality can be washed away through the transfer and redistribution of wealth back to the hands of the majority of our people who in the main is the working class.

We have a responsibility to build an ANC branch into a real people's branch whose meeting attracts various sections of the community including those who are not members of the ANC.

This must come with a conscious effort to ensure that All COSATU members made but not forced to see the ANC and the SACP as their obvious political fortification.

We will have to defeat the use of dirty money in our organisation which has become so central in the life of our organisations.

Let us return the culture of electing leaders on the basis of their work and not on the basis of money which gets circulated during elections campaigns.

We have a responsibility to force our movement as a whole to focus on nothing else but the core tasks of our revolution which is the transfer of political and economic power to the people as whole expressed in the Freedom Charter as *"the People shall govern"*,

The people shall share in the country's wealth: The national wealth of our country, the heritage of South Africans, shall be restored to the people; The mineral wealth beneath the soil, the Banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole; all other industry and trade shall be controlled to assist the wellbeing of the people.

The Freedom Charter did not say the state or government bureaucrats shall govern.

Some if not many of them have interests which stands diametrically opposed to those of the liberation and some are even working to discredit this very government.

Neither did the freedom charter said that the ministers shall govern based on common sense.

There is a policy which included the Alliance decisions and the manifesto which forms the basis of government programme which all must work to implement or if they can't implement leave government to retire at home or do other work elsewhere away from policy implementation.

Our main focus as COSATU should be about matters of policy formulation and implementation which must benefit workers and we must refuse as an organisation to be drawn into ANC conference politics but instead should work to keep the ANC united at all times.

Any COSATU affiliate any structure or any leader that is associated to COSATU that have made a pronouncement about ANC elections is wrong and is acting outside of COSATU decisions and existing policy.

We will soon be meeting with the NUM leadership to discuss some of the utterances made by one of its structures and one of its leaders who is also our own leader and our own structure as COSATU.

Anyone who wants to influence the ANC direction must join an ANC branch or should prepare thoroughly and give a clear mandate to COSATU delegates who will be attending the forthcoming Alliance Summit where we will be opening up to each other as forces of the revolution.

Let us speak truth to each other without an intention to destroy each or to destroy our organisations.

The first preference is to engage using internal organisational platforms.

But it should be known that at some stage things that are being said publicly against us will have to be corrected publicly. Comrades, the task before us is too big.

Whilst we are defending COSATU from being stolen and turned into a political organisation we must not only talk about what we don't like but we should be open about the COSATU we want.

This we should do so by asserting the presence of all our unions in the workplace side by side with workers in their daily struggles against employers.

When people say that COSATU is weak, in essence they are saying that all our affiliates are weak.

The task confronting us is to practically put into practice the organisational tasks given by our various congresses and amongst others these include building a federation with the following features:

We should build a powerful organisation in all workplaces and sectors, able to defend workers rights, bargain for better wages and benefits, improve working conditions and the quality of working life, struggle for workplace democracy and service the needs of workers and shop stewards effectively.

We should build the federation and its affiliates as fighting organisations with efficient structures, led by effective, assertive and coherent leadership, who remain guided by the policies of our organisation at all material times.

We should build dynamic, democratic, vibrant organisation which empowers its members to be active as workers, as trade unions members, and as citizens.

COSATU and affiliates should become a home for working women, with many women leaders and staff, demonstrating in practice its ability to improve the working life of women.

COSATU should continue asserting its goals of broader social justice - the delivery of services to all citizens, the construction of a social welfare system, ending the wealth and income gaps produced by apartheid, a Living Wage for all, helping to end crime, corruption and violence, etc.

This means that COSATU must be repositioned in a manner that makes it to be continuously visible on the ground taking such campaigns as a campaign against racism in the work place, Campaign against E-tolls, Campaign against Labour Brokers, Solidarity with the workers involved in the public sector negotiations and other workers in the Post office, Telkom, etc who are engaged in struggle against employers.

We do need to have a special focus on Social Security for Workers in the entertainment sector such as football players, those in other sports codes and artists: Requesting a meeting with a cluster of ministries which include the ministries of Sport, Arts and Culture, Social Development and the National Treasury to discuss Social Security measures and a new tax regime as part of the measures aimed at addressing the plight of workers in the entertainment and in sports.

We need to undertake a campaign focusing on the freedom of association and the protection of the right to strike.

This year we need to heighten our Living Wage Campaign – taking forward the campaign for the National Minimum Wage: A task team of principals constituted by the COSATU National Office Bearers [NOB's] and a Technical Task team has been constituted.

The terms of reference were adopted by the meeting of NEDLAC principals held on 21 February 2015.

We need a very clear campaign focusing on energy security dealing with the Energy Crisis.

NERSA cannot be allowed to increased electricity tariffs as they wish without taking into consideration the cost of living.

We need to work with the CCMA to pursue joint Training Programmes on the new labour Laws amendments so that shop stewards can understand the benefits of the new labour laws amendments.

We therefore expect this Congress to come up with a date for COSATU National Day of Action as part of taking forwards these campaigns.

We need a date to launch a sustained action against Mswati regime.

The People of Swaziland are longing for freedom and as COSATU working with the Alliance.

We need a multipronged campaign to force King Mswati towards a true democratic government in Swaziland.

The Swaziland situation requires more action than endless words.

We expect POPCRU to talk about the type of resources required towards the Swaziland Solidarity campaign.

We will be receiving the Cuban Five, in our country; it was going to be good if they will be joining us in campaigns against the continued oppression of the Swaziland people by the Mswati regime.

Let us direct our unions to action, let the streets of our country be marked by the footsteps and footprints of our members.

Let us have no month passing without an action by one of the COSATU affiliates.

Comrades we want to ask that we should not reduce this National Congress to be just about elections and nothing else.

National Congresses are about refining our strategies and tactics to suit the obtaining material conditions.

Elections are but an aspect of that and not the be all and end all of elections.

The country is awaiting the results of this national Congress to tell them about improving working conditions, about how you plan to provide quality service to members, about your struggles to improve workers salaries and ensuring job security.

The country is awaiting your proposals about transforming the state to serve our people particularly the working class, about your commitment to fight crime and corruption in both the public and private sectors.

As COSATU, we expect nothing else from this National Congress and we hope that you will not disappoint all of us.

We wish this National Congress all the success.

Amandla!