

COSATU International School

12th – 14th September, 2016 in Ekurhuleni

Declaration



**Decent work, industrial development and Job creation is about decent lives
for workers and communities**

Introduction

“Massive poverty and obscene inequality are such terrible scourges of our times . . . that they have to rank alongside slavery and apartheid as social evils.”—Nelson Mandela, former President of South Africa

COSATU Convened an International School, with delegates drawn from all COSATU affiliates, our alliance partners, representatives of various government departments, civil society organizations, various local guests, international fraternal organizations and our strategic partners in the decent work struggle, such as ILO for the following purposes;

- Deepening our understanding of the changing world, what it means for workers, communities and the African continent in particular
- Advancing a clear decent work, industrialization and job creation momentum, in full cooperation with our African and global southern partners for effective development and dignity for all, using the ILO Conventions and Recommendations as our important levers, and;
- Finally, Clarifying what our strategic focus and practical tasks are in that regard, by outlining a coherent and insightful programme of action to rally our forces and all progressive partners into action against the crisis affecting humanity, the environment and the quality of life for the people

The International School was characterised by very robust, frank, insightful and strategic discussions by our unions, but also massively benefitted from the enriching inputs from our comrades and guests, particularly from Brazil, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Venezuela, Senegal, Kenya, Ghana, Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Zambia and our alliance partners. The essence of the debates was to understand properly the defining features of this changing world and what does it mean for us and our struggle?

PART ONE: What are the signposts of the world today and what it means for workers and our struggle?

The School unpacked and clarified the essence of decent work as about improving the lives of workers, their families and communities. It entails affirming full rights to live and work under humane and dignified conditions.

“Accumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery, agony of toil, slavery, ignorance, brutality at the opposite pole” – Karl Marx

The School also took particular interest in the situation and crisis facing Africa people all over the world, including in the diaspora and their socio-economic and political conditions. In this regard, we express our full support for the global movement against racism that affirms the equality of people and races, particularly black people, who continue to suffer sub human treatment in many parts of the world.

Data extracted from the Borgen Project by Jordanna Packtor indicate the following important facts about the issues we confronting.

- According to ILO World Employment and Social Outlook Report, under Trends 2015, “by 2019, more than 212 million people will be out of work, up from the current 201 million”. This spells doom for jobs, let alone decent jobs. We live in a world in which every possible means to replace work with machine, anti-labour exploitative practices and work methods, laws that reinforce and entrench starvation wages and deny workers the right to organise, have become the norm.
- Vulnerable employment account for 1.5 billion people or over 46% of total employment. In both Southern Asia and Sub Sahara Africa, over 70% of workers are in vulnerable employment.
- Global economic growth in 2016 is estimated to stand at 3.2%, 0.4% points lower than the figure predicted in some key emerging commodity-exporting countries, in Argentina, Brazil and the Russian Federation. In addition, growth in developing countries, at only 4.2% in 2016, is at its lowest level since 2003.

- Seventy-five percent of the world's poorest countries are located in Africa. For the past few years, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Africa's second largest country, has also been ranked the poorest in the world with a Gross Domestic Product (based on purchasing-power-parity) of \$394.25 in 2013.
- According to Gallup World, in 2013, the 10 countries with the highest proportion of residents living in extreme poverty were all in sub-Saharan Africa. Extreme poverty is defined as living on \$1.25 or less a day. In 2010, 414 million people were living in extreme poverty across sub-Saharan Africa. According to the World Bank, those living on \$1.25-a-day accounted for 48.5 percent of the population in that region in 2010.
- Approximately one in three people living in sub-Saharan Africa are undernourished. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations estimated that 239 million people (around 30 percent of the population) in sub-Saharan Africa were hungry in 2010. This is the highest percentage of any region in the world. In addition, the U.N. Millennium Project reported that over 40 percent of all Africans are unable to regularly obtain sufficient food.
- In sub-Saharan Africa, 589 million people live without electricity. As a result, a staggering 80 percent of the population relies on biomass products such as wood, charcoal and dung in order to cook.
- Of the 738 million people globally who lack access to clean water, 37 percent are living in sub-Saharan Africa. Poverty in Africa results in over 500 million people suffering from waterborne diseases. According to the U.N. Millennium Project, more than 50 percent of Africans have a water-related illness like cholera.
- Every year, sub-Saharan Africa loses \$28.4 billion to water and sanitation problems. This amount accounts for approximately five percent of the region's gross domestic product (GDP)—exceeding the total amount of foreign aid sent to sub-Saharan Africa per year.
- Thirty-eight percent of the world's refugees are located in Africa. Due to continuing violence, conflict and widespread human rights abuses, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reports that 11 million people, including stateless people and returnees, exist in Africa.
- Fewer than 20 percent of African women have access to education. Uneducated African women are twice as likely to contract AIDS and 50 percent less likely to immunize their children. Meanwhile, the children of African women with at least five years of schooling have a 40 percent higher chance of survival.
- Women in sub-Saharan Africa are over 230 times more likely to die during childbirth or pregnancy than women in North America. Approximately one in 16 women living in sub-

Saharan African will die during childbirth or pregnancy. Only one in 4,000 women in North America will.

- More than one million people, mostly children under the age of five, die every year from malaria. Malarial deaths in Africa alone account for 90 percent of all malaria deaths worldwide. Eighty percent of these victims are African children. The U.N. Millennium Project has calculated that a child in Africa dies from malaria every 30 seconds, or about 3,000 each day.

We also took serious note of the crisis facing various parts of the world, particularly Brazil, Venezuela and various parts of Latin America, owing to the consolidation of right-wing forces and the decisive desperation of imperialism to exert full control throughout that region and beyond.

The right-wing coup against a democratically elected President of Brazil, Dilma Rousseff, the desperately tireless efforts for same against President Nicholas Maduro in Venezuela and other such subtle aggressions, reflect a new heightening of imperialism and desire for power and the control of the natural resources of the worlds peoples. But its also a clear means to re-assert neo-liberalism and reverse the gains of the working class in these regions, as part of the global anti-working class offensive. This offensive is clear even here at home in South Africa, led by the Free Market Foundation and their political representatives of varying forms.

PART TWO: The Road to decent work, industrial development and Job Creation in Africa – our absolute priority work

1. On the meaning of decent work and job creation to fight poverty and unemployment in Africa.

- We need to organise the unorganised workers into unions and strengthen and our reach to the most vulnerable, working with other social forces and strategic partners.
- We must institutionalise the culture and practice of social dialogue in policy and legislative formulation to deepen worker and community participation in public affairs and advance accountability, transparency, mass awareness of social issues and democracy.
- Use 07th October 2016 international decent work day – to frame a clear message and actions against exploitative practices and companies involved in them, uniting workers throughout the whole African continent and beyond around most concrete issues.
- We must drive the lead in the Implementation of ILO R204 – transitioning from the informal to formal economy

- Have joint programmes, with sister African unions, starting with our own region, SADC to coordinate issues affecting Vulnerable workers throughout the continent, with a special focus on women and youth as the most affected and worst vulnerable

2. On building the BRICS trade union forum as the critical force for the international trade union and progressive movement in changing the global balance of power

- We must build and strengthen the BRICS Trade Unions Forum as a critical and strategic lever of workers power and a champion of a new and just world order.
- We must Develop closer solidarity program with our sister unions in BRICS to intensify the working class solidarity programme.
- Strengthen the capacity of the BRICS trade union movement to effectively harness and harmonise policy perspectives to shape a new paradigm in the international trade union movement, but also influence our governments in that direction too.
- Assess the state of the trade union movement, its capacity and its influence in each BRICS country, to ascertain what power we wield together and individually, but also support progressive forces in each of our regions
- COSATU must hold a fully-fledged BRICS and SIGTUR Workshop for its leadership structures to understand and clarify our perspectives on this and related matters, particularly of the global south
- We must promote BRICS Trade Union Forum as a Standing platform of cooperation and coordination amongst BRICS trade unions in international forums and multilateral bodies to promote synergy and united approaches, particularly in defence of ILO Conventions and standards, progressive values and social justice in general

3. The UN sustainable development goals, the AU 2063 vision, and our struggle for industrial development, regional integration and fair migration

- Fight and campaign for a progressive discourse on development to shift the whole paradigm of the debate and focus on the most fundamental, structural and deep-rooted features of the global economy and world system in general
- We recognise the glaring inconsistencies and contradictions inherent in the global development programmes, but still believe that they are critical sites of struggle and platforms to challenge and expose the broader paradigm and its anti-development orientation. In this regard, we must utilize the SDGs and AU2063 to mobilize society through

campaigns in putting pressure on member states and education amongst trade unions to sustain the struggles

- Target former colonies and other powerful countries that reinforce dominance over African economies, such as what France is doing through the CFA (Common Francophone Community currency) and control of their reserve banks and overall monetary policies
- Establish and strengthen the African Progressive Left Network (labour, civil society, re-energizing liberation movement alliances), first at SADC, and in the continent, to confront the offensive by the agents of the neo-liberalism to ensure self-determination for Africa.
- Campaign and advocate for the review of the tax system to ensure maximum benefit for Africa (Tax Justice) and against illicit financial flows, but also improve the quality of enforcement against corporates and other elusive tendencies in this form.
- We must explore and develop a progressive Funding Model for alternative Industrialisation.

4. The role of the African trade union movement in building working class solidarity and unity on the African continent

- We must Strengthen cross border solidarity across all sector/industries and strengthen democratic institutions both in the SADC region and the broader African continent, strengthen overall political education within the trade union movement
 - Explore the possibility of an Organising Academy to specifically target and focus on organising, recruitment, building and training organisers, shopsteward and leaders on matters of organising and building trade unions more effectively
- Look into new ways of organizing (new recruitment strategies) that will attract young workers to join trade unions and also sustain existing membership. Pay attention to also vulnerable workers such as domestic workers and taxi drivers and to better organize them as they fall outside of mainstream work environments
- We should revisit the discussion of one country, one federation, one union one sector. In this way, we shall prioritize the unity of workers
- We need to create activist and progressive trade union movements that focus on organizing, politicizing and recruiting workers around their own issues. This could also extend to incorporating accurate trade union history within the curriculum in the schooling system
- We should look into establishing relations with certain civil society organisation that are advancing worker issues or issues of the corner of the trade union movement, these

relations should be issue based, caution should be taken in identifying with whom these relations could be established

- Strengthen union to union exchange programmes on issues such as skills development, organizing skills within different sectors in different countries on the African continent in particular and with friends in general, this will also aid in strengthening regional, continental and international solidarity
- Protection of female workers in particular, the advancement of the gender struggle within the trade union movement that deals with sexism and patriarchy as forms of oppression, this involves deep political education.

5. Transforming the structures of our economies to advance climate justice and create green jobs

- The decisive point about green jobs and development is the urgency of a shift from the old carbon emitting forms of development to a new, clean energy or less emitting form of development
- We must build our capacity for Research and Development and enhance joint initiatives in that regard
- We must build popular awareness through education through media and other important avenues and forums on the effects of climate change and environmental issues.
- Remove invasive plant species that absorb too much water.
- Regulating the industry.
- We need more reliable safe public transport, to reduce the number of cars on the road.

6. What the crisis in Venezuela, Brazil and Latin America mean for working class solidarity and our struggle against imperialism in the era of sustained global economic crisis

- We need to rebuild a cohesive, robust and wide-reaching international solidarity movement that brings together all forces committed to change, affirming the right to self-determination and development, democracy and justice for all

- The aim of the movement shall be to unite and raise mass education and awareness on issues of international solidarity and justice, but also coordinate a public wide movement and debate around them.
- We need to be decisive & radically transform our economies so that it serves the poor, instead of serving the few elites and multinational companies.
- Have exchange dialogues & programmes as developing countries in order to map a similar progressive economic agenda for development.
- Appreciate our own geo political strategic position & increase our active involvement and role in SADC solidarity entities as a starting point.
- Build regional integration through people-to-people initiatives, cultural activities that unite our people in order to build confidence & consciousness of our people in reality
- In international forums, we need to speak in solidarity with one voice.
- Consider Convening an International Solidarity Conference of challenged countries to strengthen these countries & learn from one another.
- Build a united front of popular forces for democracy, self-determination, environmental rights and social justice to push back the frontiers of imperialist spaces in our various countries, by affirming the dignity of the people.