



## **South African Communist Party**

### **SACP International Workers' Day 2021 Message**

*As delivered by the SACP General Secretary Dr Blade Nzimande, at a COSATU hosted hybrid virtual and physical rally, Gauteng Province*

1 May 2021

Programme Director, Vice President of COSATU, Cde Mike Shingange.

President of the ANC and the Republic, Cde Cyril Ramaphosa.

President of COSATU, Cde Zingiswa Losi.

Cde Thulas Nxesi, Deputy National Chair of the SACP.

All Alliance leaders and the democratic movement.

The workers of our country and the world.

This is the second International Workers' Day we celebrate under the global COVID-19 pandemic. That is why today we remember all those we lost to the deadly virus, both in our country and globally, including workers and working-class leaders. By the end of April 2021, the deadly virus had killed over 3 million people globally, of whom over 54 thousand deaths occurred in South Africa, including health and other frontline and essential workers.

The most immediate task and challenge facing workers and the progressive trade union movement both locally and globally is to intensify the battle against the COVID-19 pandemic on all fronts. The development, production, and access to vaccines to all is the most immediate battleground, especially access for developing countries populations.

The single biggest obstacle to access to vaccines is what we refer to as vaccine imperialism—the actions by the big multinational pharmaceutical corporations headquartered in the United States and Western Europe, backed by their governments, to impose draconian conditions, imperialist in content, for supplying vaccines to Global South countries.

For instance, the United States and Western Europe headquartered big multinational pharmaceutical corporations demanded that our country must set up an insurance scheme in case something goes wrong, thus, they do not want take responsibility for the efficacy of their own vaccines. Today, we call for action by all progressive trade unions in our country to challenge the greed by these big multinational pharmaceutical companies.

The United States and Western European countries are also driving vaccine nationalism, among others involving buying more vaccines than they need for their populations, which are 14 per cent of the total world population. We need to rise against imperialism on all fronts, including in the battle against COVID-19 itself as a front of struggle, and confront vaccine nationalism. We must struggle for vaccines and vaccination as a right and not a commodity! Fighting for COVID-19 patterns waiver so that Global South countries with vaccine productive capacity can produce the vaccines to make them available to all as public goods and vaccination for all as a public, healthcare for service.

That is one reason in our message on this important occasion, the SACP centenary year International Workers' Day, we say, Put People Before Profits! We say, let us Learn from the Past of our liberation struggle against colonial and apartheid oppression, let us Intensify our Activism, let us Deepen the Struggle Against Capitalist Exploitation and Imperialism, let us Build Momentum Towards, Capacity for, and the Elements of Socialism in the here and now. We say, in short, Socialism is the Future—Build it now!

Another set of workers struggles that the SACP pledges to support are the struggles against retrenchments and undermining of collective bargaining rights. It surely cannot be that the negative economic impact and the brunt of COVID-19 must be carried by workers alone. Forging a wider progressive trade union unity in action to advance the common interests of the workers should include strengthening the fight against retrenchments. Let us not allow our belonging to different worker federations to stand in the way of joint action for common interests, for common demands, and against retrenchments, among others.

The SACP also calls for government to take the lead in ensuring that the dispute with public sector workers is resolved through the courts, but by taking it back to the negotiating table. The SACP does not expect of our own government not to honour bargaining agreements with public sector workers. This also sets a very bad example for private capitalist bosses who think they can now embark on unilateral actions thus undermining the collective bargaining system that South African workers fought so hard for.

One of the biggest enemies of the working class in the current period is that of corruption, both in the public and private sectors. Yes, corruption is rife in both the public and private sectors, as it is being currently exposed by the Commission of Inquiry into State Capture. Corruption in the public sector

involves not only those located in the public sector but also corrupt elements from the private sector.

On this day, we also call upon workers and all our trade unions to close ranks and jointly intensify the struggle to fight the scourge of corruption. Workers and trade unions should also be asking themselves as to where they were as state resources were being stolen through state capture networks. Never, and never again, as Nelson Mandela would have said, should workers be found wanting in not confronting state capture and all other forms of corruption.

We wish to take this opportunity to thank you, President, in your capacity as the President of the ANC, for your frank engagement with the Commission of Inquiry into State Capture. The SACP welcomes the latest decisions and actions taken by the ANC to deal with corruption and factionalism within its own ranks.

The SACP, COSATU and all the democratic forces must unite in support of the decisive stance by the ANC to deal with corruption. However, at the same time we must remain vigilant that those who find themselves in a corner do not try to weaponise the struggle against corruption to manufacture lies and baseless allegations as part of their fight-back strategy. Such tactics are used to try and undermine the determination of the ANC to implement its resolutions.

The web of state capture and factional networks thrive on the fake news and disinformation propaganda. These factionalist networks use both the new media platforms and traditional media outlets, such as the print media, especially compromised media outlets, to spread fake news and disinformation. They do this both to defend those implicated in real corruption and to drive a smear campaign against those genuinely committed to fighting real corruption.

The fight against corruption must also be accompanied by the struggles to defend and deepen our democracy, by seeking to unite the widest possible sectors of our society to defend our gains, to isolate and defeat all counter-revolutionary actions by those driving attempts to steal our organisations in pursuit of corruption. We should all say with one voice, our Alliance and our democracy are not for sale! Defending and protecting collective bargaining is part of defending our hard-won democratic gains!

The working-class also needs to intensify the fight against neoliberalism and its austerity agenda in the here and now and seek to advance alternative economic policies that stand to benefit the workers and poor of our country. This must be done at the same time as we struggle to dismantle the networks of state capture. This is what we mean, as the SACP, when we talk about the struggle on two fronts.

The SACP calls upon and commits to join the workers of our country in fighting the scourge against gender-based violence as part of deepening the struggle against oppression and exploitation based on gender.

The SACP joins COSATU in pledging our support for an ANC victory in the forthcoming local government elections. However, this is not a blank cheque. We join the President of the ANC by supporting his call that local government elections must be used by our people to flush out corrupt councillors. Similarly, as the SACP, we will not support imposed councillors or those who are in ANC electoral lists through corrupt and fraudulent means or who are imposed on communities. We call upon the ANC to ensure electoral lists that are inclusive of its Alliance partners and popular candidates in communities!

The SACP wishes on this day to strongly condemn actions by organisations like Solidarity and Afri-Forum in opposing the international solidarity brigades of Cuban doctors and engineers. These organisations, relics of the apartheid past, were beneficiaries of a racist labour relations and governance regime that never allowed black people to train and become artisans, technicians, and engineers. They remain silent with continuing racism and patriarchy in many of South Africa's workplaces, including murders of farmworkers and community members by racist farmers in farming areas.

Let workers of our country recommit themselves on this day to fight racism wherever it occurs, especially in our workplaces.

To succeed as organised workers, as class-conscious workers, and as the Communist Party, we must consolidate and strengthen our unity. We must organise the unorganised into progressive trade unions, and politically into our national democratic revolutionary front, paying special attention to political education and recruiting advanced cadres into the Communist Party to strengthen its vanguard character. The Communist Party reiterates its call for wider progressive trade union unity in action, behind the common interests of workers.

Let us defend the unity of the workers, the unity of the ANC and the unity of our Alliance. Let us unite to build the capacity of our state to transform society for the better. Let us defend and strengthen our state-owned enterprises to build a better economy based structural transformation going to the root of our economic problem and consequent broader social and political problems.

Let the workers join a broader revolutionary front to go to the root of our problems, and work to uproot the capitalist system and its exploitative methods.

Amandla!

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