



## NUMSA PRESS STATEMENT ON THE SACP CONFERENCE OF THE LEFT

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***“We, the members of the National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa, firmly commit ourselves to a united South Africa, free of oppression and economic exploitation. We believe that this can only be achieved under the leadership of an organized and united working class.”***

- NUMSA Constitution Preamble

### INTRODUCTION

Our participation in the Conference of the Left and its processes must be understood in terms of our quest, as set out in our Constitution, constitutional resolutions, and decisions, always to work to unite the working class in South Africa and throughout the world ***for the attainment of socialism*** in a long journey towards communism, a society organized on the basis of the principle, “from each according to ability, to each according to need”.

In its Preamble, our Constitution says that members of NUMSA commit themselves to a united South Africa free of oppression and exploitation. This is a call for socialism. We believe socialism can only be achieved under the leadership of an organised united working class, conscious of its class interests. This view expresses the Marxist principle that the liberation of the working class can only be achieved by the working class itself, and not as a gift from any other class.

We have not entered this process as a follower, a junior partner, or as an organisation abandoning its Marxist-Leninist orientation. We do not participate because we believe all tendencies grouped under the broad label “the Left” share the same interests, ideological clarity, or revolutionary commitment. ***We participate from the standpoint of Marxist-Leninist-inspired working-class politics.***

***We also participate precisely because the crisis of South African capitalism continues to deepen at dangerous levels:***

- ***mass unemployment,***
- ***hunger and starvation,***

- *continued racialized and historical land hunger,*
- *dangerous levels and forms of mass poverty,*
- *domination by finance capital,*
- *destruction of national productive forces through deindustrialisation, low levels of fixed investment and widespread capacity under-utilisation.*
- *dependency on imperialist finance and global value chains,*
- *the decay of the social fabric in working class communities and disintegration of solidarity structures,*
- *and the growth of reactionary and neo-fascist politics among sections of the desperate masses.*

Under these conditions, communists, militant workers, revolutionary trade unionists, progressive community formations, anti-imperialist forces, and revolutionary democrats cannot isolate themselves from *sections of the working class and oppressed masses who are engaged in broader terrains of struggle, who will be represented in this gathering of the conference of the left to seek a program of action to address the capitalist crisis in South Africa.*

To abstain completely from such spaces is neither revolutionary nor progressive. Instead, it delays efforts, imperfect as they may be, that are aimed at building the political capacity of the working class to win hegemony over society. It risks sectarian isolation from the masses. Participation does not mean political liquidation, as some mischievous individuals are saying. We are perfectly capable of defending our perspectives and organizational independence as a union. We enter this process, guided by our hard-won Marxist-Leninist perspective to agitate and strengthen the Left forces to advance the principles of:

- working-class leadership,
- anti-imperialism,
- socialism,
- proletarian internationalism,
- Unity in action where possible, ideological struggle where necessary.

We reject any interpretation that participation in this convened Conference of the left by the SACP means that we are abandoning class struggle. We reject, *as infantile*, any notion that anyone who participates, just like NUMSA will be participating in the Conference of the Left starting this coming Friday, that those who participate will automatically cease to be Marxist-Leninist-inspired working-class organization because we enter a contested political terrain.

We recognize the concrete realities of the fragmentation of progressive forces, the ideological confusion within society which is caused by the vicious capitalist system and imperialism as a result the weaknesses of organized

working-class structures, the rise of right-wing and neo-fascist populism, and deepening mass working-class social despair. Under such conditions, tactical engagements with formations on the left, appreciating their varied and sometimes contradictory forms and commitments, are necessary and inevitable - provided strategic and ideological clarity and independence are not surrendered.

*We remain firm that revolutionaries must go where the masses and their organizations are gathered, while maintaining ideological consistency, clarity, and organizational independence. NUMSA fears no contradictions that are necessary in debate and discussions in working class democratic organizations, as it is contradictions that propel society forward.*

## **NUMSA AND THE MATTER OF THE “UNITY OF THE LEFT”**

We understand today “the Left” is a global amorphous community, pregnant with many “Left” and sometimes contradictory philosophies, ideologies, politics, histories, and other features. Historically, no country has ever had a stable “united Left” in one “tent” over a long period.

While we are keenly aware of contradictions among formations of the Left, ours is not to elevate these contradictions, in a time when the right-wing in our country is consolidating its forces. We therefore choose, especially at this point in time, not to enter the permanently unresolvable theoretical and petty hair-splitting terrain of either defining what the Left is, or who actually is the Left or who is not Left. We accept and respect the decisions of the SACP and the Steering Committee to invite and accept applications, as is their right, from individuals and organisations that identify themselves as belonging to the Left and that very same process is in itself a democratic process.

Further, as the Conference is not a platform to liquidate the independence of participating organizations, we reserve the right to disassociate ourselves from any views which, in our opinion, are anti-working class and against any of our well documented policies, politics and practices. If anything, in gatherings of such a nature, the posture we are adopting in terms of outcomes is the one that aims to achieve a revolutionary minimum programme behind which the Left forces can unite.

We believe that, despite its varied forms, traditions and social bases, there objectively exists the real possibility and basis of *unity in action* among Left formations, especially in dire circumstances such as those the South African working class finds itself in today. We are looking forward to participate, and to learn from other formations engaged in different fronts of struggle, in developing a pro-working class programme of action out of

this Conference. The ultimate test however that will confront all the participating organisations will be the practical steps that are concretely undertaken to implement such a programme.

## **NUMSA AND THE CONFERENCE OF THE LEFT**

We must emphasize that the initiative of the SACP to convene a Conference of the Left aligns with our intention, discussed in two of our Central Committee meetings in 2025, to crystallize a revolutionary agenda behind which the working class can be united. In the NUMSA CC meeting, held between the 24<sup>th</sup>—27<sup>th</sup> of July 2025, we resolved to *“plan bilaterals aimed at achieving the unity of the working class behind such an agenda by engaging SAFTU affiliates, COSATU affiliates, and progressive political parties representing the broader sections of the working class...the CC endorsed the initiative taken by NEHAWU and SACCAWU, who requested bilateral engagements with NUMSA national leadership”*.

The SACP initiative also complements our own initiative to host a Political Colloquium. In our Political Colloquium which will engage on the urgency and strategic importance of emerging with a revolutionary agenda and to galvanize unity of the working class to pursue class struggle in implementing such a revolutionary agenda. Such a resolve of NUMSA is informed by the devastating social-economic conditions of the working class in South Africa. The NUMSA Central Committee meeting held between 3<sup>rd</sup>—7<sup>th</sup> December 2025, resolved as follows, among other issues:

*“The CC endorsed the proposed secretariat report process of inviting strategic affiliates of SAFTU, strategic affiliates of COSATU, political parties such as: UDM, COPE, EFF, MK, ANC and the SACP into a political colloquium/symposium which NUMSA will lead and catalyse which must engage on the development of a revolutionary program and how to unite formations of the working class and the working class in general behind such a revolutionary agenda with an intention to emerge with a minimum program to steer the country in the right direction on how we can drive the fundamentals of transforming the economy, address issues of ownership and control of the economy, address the land question and how in the main we can affirm the masses of our people who are economically marginalised landless and disposed and how do we realize an industrial policy that can champion manufacturing and industrialisation to deal with the scourge of poverty, unemployment and inequalities”*.

The Central Committee further resolved that:

*“NUMSA must engage with COSATU and the SACP given their approaches to NUMSA, that the SACP has invited NUMSA to participate in the conference of the left and COSATU has invited both NUMSA and FAWU to their*

*Central Committee. The view that was expressed was that NUMSA leadership must participate in engaging with these invites if we are to succeed in building a working relationship, the example that was endorsed by the CC was for NUMSA to engage and participate in the processes of convening of the conference of the left by the SACP”.*

In taking these resolutions, we are very clear that we are an independent affiliate of SAFTU, still very much of the view that only the full implementation of the provisions in the Freedom Charter opens a pathway to socialism. We remain convinced, as we were in 2013, that the national democratic revolution has long been off track, abandoned, and replaced by entrenched capitalist neoliberal stabilization. Our affiliation to SAFTU, and our participation in the Conference of the Left, do not stand in conflict with our relentless quest for the unity of the working class behind a revolutionary minimum programme.

In engaging in these unity efforts, we have not forgotten the damage that the SACP caused to the unity of the working class in the run-up, and after, the COSATU 2012 Congress. We have not forgotten that the SACP Congress in Ongoye openly resolved to intervene in COSATU, which is supposed to be an independent formation of the Alliance, to isolate and defeat us, referring to us as a “lingering irritation” for standing firm in our demand for socialism and against turning COSATU into a conveyor belt. We have also not forgotten the charge led by NEHAWU, to “surgically remove us” from COSATU, and the principled stance taken by SACCAWU in an attempt to preserve working class unity.

These are serious matters that require deep introspection and reflection. Nevertheless, as an independent, Marxist-Leninist-inspired union, our eye is on the immediate tasks, we must deal with the momentary challenges facing the working class, and the non-proletarian masses among the working people, i.e. to participate in the unfolding processes to forge unity in action of working class and the non-proletarian progressive forces around a revolutionary minimum programme, fully aware of the difficulties of the path ahead.

## **OUR PERSPECTIVE ON THE CONFERENCE OF THE LEFT**

The framework document for the Conference correctly identifies many symptoms of the capitalist crisis in South Africa: deindustrialisation, unemployment, financialisation, imperialist domination, the cost-of-living crisis, and the failure of 1994 to transform ownership patterns. It also correctly recognises the continued domination of white monopoly capital and the class character of neoliberalism.

We understand that the framework document is formulated in such a way as to elicit the broadest possible consensus among the left forces, which corresponds to laying down an approach for the achievement of a consensus around a minimum programme of action. However, we expect that, given the patent failures of

capitalism in South Africa, the Conference will emerge with much more than just a minimum programme. The Conference must test the possibilities of embedding socialist elements within this minimum programme, so as to set the forces in this conference in motion along a revolutionary path. For instance, it is NUMSA's firm view that what has undermined the South Africa revolution was a negotiated settlement which ensured that post liberation we secured sham political power without economic power. The union firmly believes that we are in this crisis for the obvious reason therefore, that what we have not won in the base which is the economy, you cannot win it in the superstructure which is politics.

We are of the opinion that the greatest weakness of the framework of the Conference is that it does not position the working class at the centre of the social forces, as the most decisive force that, when conscious of its interests and sufficiently organized, is capable of taking the country on an upward path of development. As we are of the view that the working class is the only class capable of carrying the revolution to its logical conclusion working with other social forces. The Conference needs to stimulate the confidence of the working class to assert its interests over the course of social development, and to exercise its class leadership over the non-proletarian masses within the broader section of the working people. This is the perspective that we will put forward in the Conference.

We are looking forward to engage with our comrades from the various traditions of the left, and to learn from the various struggles that they are undertaking in different fronts in which the working class and the broad sections of the oppressed non-proletarian masses find themselves in. We will participate in this Conference by actively listening, learning, and constructively engaging with a view to establish the minimum platform around which we can jointly take up struggles.

## **OUR PROPOSALS ON THE CONFERENCE OF THE LEFT**

We now proceed to provide an outline of the elements of the minimum programme that we will propose in this Conference. The elements are as follows:

### **1. State-led development path under working class leadership**

We call for a state-led development path, in which the interests of the working class are primary. To achieve this, the working class needs to be organized to conquer state power. This means that a new type of state, rooted in the working class, in which working class power is exercised needs to be developed. The current state is in the service of the capitalist class, to the detriment of the working class and the oppressed non-proletarian masses, and it is not capable meeting the needs of the working class.

## **2. Nationalization of the mines and monopoly industries**

We reject privatization and its variants, such as private-public partnerships. We call for working class democratic state ownership of the commanding heights of the economy, such as the mines and large industrial enterprises that are strategic to the development of the economy: petrochemicals (SASOL), Steel (Arcelor-Mittal, the strengthening of Scaw Metal and revitalization of Highveld Steel), construction etc. The aim of nationalization by the state under the leadership of the working class is to have the resources required to advance the development of our country under working class control.

## **2. Nationalization of the land**

The land question remains central. *A revolutionary programme must demand expropriation of large land without compensation.* Land must be redistributed through cooperatives, collective production, proletarian agricultural planning, and support for poor rural producers. The programme must oppose elite and patriarchal land redistribution, agrarian patronage systems, and it must foster broad-based development and increased production, linked to our envisaged industrialization programme. Land must be used to overcome widespread food insecurity and regard must be given, to protect against price swings and environmental disasters, national and regional food reserves or stockholding systems. To protect the poor and the working class from the economic insecurity arising from high food prices, droughts and a rising cost of living.

Land-use must be democratically planned and be aligned with the overall central development plan of the country. In urban areas, land must be used with the purpose of destroying the apartheid and capitalist spatial planning, bringing the factories and social facilities and amenities, close to where the working class lives, and providing decent housing where families live in peace and comfort.

## **3. Nationalization of natural resources**

All natural resources must be owned and controlled by the state. Water resources must be conserved, used for national development, and they must not be monopolized by a handful of capitalists through privatization of infrastructure.

The spectrum must be nationalized and private activity strictly regulated to ensure that the resources generated from it are used for the development of the country, and to strengthen national security.

#### **4. Nationalization of the Reserve Bank and the financial system**

The reserve bank must be nationalized. The power vested in the reserve bank should be used to direct credit to strategic sectors in order to support the rapid development of the productive forces. Credit must be centralized in the hands of the state to make liquidity available to a democratic state to build productive forces and infrastructure, to support the provision of basic goods and services such as bulk infrastructure, housing, education, etc. in order to improve the well-being of the people. Furthermore, the reserves management strategy must also cushion our currency against volatility arising from geopolitical developments, and speculative activities by these financial capitalists.

Foreign exchange controls must be reintroduced in order to increase sovereign independence to implement developmental financial policies. There should be an audit of financial flows in order to quantify the amount of illicit flows and to hold those who engage in illicit financial flows accountable.

#### **5. State-led industrialization**

A revolutionary programme must reject raw mineral export dependency, deindustrialisation, and neoliberal “service economy” fantasies. Such a programme must be focused on ‘structural transformation’ (a shift from low-productivity, low value economic activities to high productivity, high value industrial activities) rather than the supply-side economics we are sold as ‘structural reforms’. We call for the state to launch a heavy, and rapid industrial expansion programme, machine-building, rail development, steel production, public energy expansion, pharmaceutical production, agricultural mechanisation, and scientific-technological development. Where activities are targeted for subsidisation, protection and investment, arising from their ‘linkages’ and ‘multipliers’ in a manner that connects the city to the countryside. The steel and machinery to the iron ore mines, the agro-processed food and beverage markets in the city to the farms in the countryside.

Industrial development should eliminate the rural-urban development divide, decisively deal with spatial inequalities, and revitalize small town economies and stabilize urban-rural migration. For this to succeed the country must move away from austerity and adopt an expansionary budget. Furthermore, state led industrialization does not only involve ‘delegated ownership’ or control by the state on company balance sheets; but also active price management of key inputs (water, energy, lending rates, freight and logistics and so on) into industrial production. Ensuring that favourable pricing of inputs makes our industrial products competitive, in markets increasingly characterized by the crisis of ‘over-production’ and underconsumption observed by Marx.

The pillars of state-led, socialist industrialization should be massive social and infrastructure development, beneficiation of all minerals, the ban of scrap metal exports, the rebuilding of domestic industrial value chains,

particularly foundries, and support for technological innovations to rapidly place the economy on a digital transformative path, while lifting the living standards of the working class.

#### **4. Full employment**

Mass unemployment in South Africa is structural, caused by the continued de-industrialization, the slow and limited pace of fixed capital accumulation. The white racist capitalist class monopolizes the country's resources and illicitly transfer capital from South Africa, which should be used to expand access to basic goods and services to address the historical legacy of colonialism and apartheid to the working class. The neo-colonial state has failed to address elementary duties such as maintenance of existing infrastructure and to support environmental sustainability.

We demand full employment: everyone willing and able to work must be guaranteed work. Everyone willing and able to work must have a right to work. Full employment must be coupled with decent work: a decent living not minimum wage, compliance with basic conditions of employment. In the case when the state fails to guarantee employment, a Universal Basic Income Grant, sufficient to guarantee a decent standard of living, must exist.

#### **6. Provision of free quality social services:**

- a. Free, quality and decolonized education
- b. Free and quality public healthcare, and the introduction of the National Health Insurance
- c. Improved quality housing, community infrastructure, etc.
- d. Affordable and safe public transport
- e. Affordable and reliable basic services such as water, sanitation and electricity

**7. Wide-ranging audit of employment equity** and labour law compliance by all establishments, with a view to penalise non-compliance.

**8. Abolition of the apartheid and colonial labour market** and criminalisation of violation of labour laws. The labour market must provide decent work at a living, not minimum, wage.

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