



COSATU'S NEWLY ELECTED NATIONAL OFFICE BEARERS COMMIT TO Organisational Renewal, Working-Class Unity and a Renewed Campaigning Federation

27 October 2026

The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) has convened this media briefing to report back to workers and the society at large on the outcomes of its successful 15th National Congress held on the 12th – 14th October 2026. Our 15th National Congress attended by 1840 delegates, representing 1.5 million organised workers across South Africa, met under the theme: ***“Building a militant, Revolutionary Labour Movement and Strengthening Anti-imperialist Working-class Unity to Defend Jobs and Advance Socialism”***.

First and foremost we wish to introduce the newly elected National Office Bearers (NOBs) of the 15th National Congress as follows:

Position	Name	Gender	Gender
1.	President	Cde Michael Madala Shingange	Male
2.	First Deputy President	Cde Suzan Khumalo	Female
3.	Second Deputy President	Cde Mbali Blose	Female
4.	National Treasurer	Cde Kgomotso Makhopula	Female
5.	General Secretary	Cde Zingiswa Losi	Female
6.	Deputy General Secretary	Cde Gerald Mkhomazi Twala	Male



This outcome represents an important milestone and achievement by the 15th National Congress as women now constitutes 67% of the elected National Office Bearers of COSATU. Another important milestone is the election of the first female General Secretary in the entire 40 years history of the Federation. This is a clear demonstration and a commitment by COSATU in advancing the struggle against patriarchy and underrepresentation of women in positions of responsibility.

The newly elected leadership assumes its responsibilities at a critical juncture in South Africa's political, economic and social development. Workers continue to confront unemployment, poverty, inequality, job insecurity, the rising cost of living and the erosion of public services. These challenges demand a united, militant, politically conscious and campaigning trade union movement capable of defending workers' immediate interests while advancing the historic struggle for economic emancipation and socialism.

The 15th National Congress reaffirmed COSATU's historic mission to organise, mobilise and politically educate the working class. It further reaffirmed the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) as the minimum programme of democratic transformation and the path towards socialism.

The newly elected NOBs are entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring that these commitments are not reduced to declarations on paper, but become measurable programmes that improve workers' lives, strengthen workplace organisation and rebuild the power of the Federation.

As Karl Marx wrote in Theses on Feuerbach (1845):

"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it."

This principle underscores the responsibility of the newly elected leadership to translate the Congress mandate into practical action that changes the material conditions of workers and their communities. COSATU congratulates its sister federation, FEDUSA, on a successful 8th National Congress and wish its newly elected leadership well in their term of office.

IMPLEMENTING THE RESOLUTIONS AND DECLARATION OF THE 15TH NATIONAL CONGRESS

The newly elected leadership will prioritise the implementation of the political, organisational, socio-economic and international solidarity resolutions adopted by the 15th National Congress.

Politically, COSATU will continue to champion the interests of workers and the poor, strengthen working-class political independence and advance the struggle for socialism. The Federation will pursue the reconfiguration and renewal of the Tripartite Alliance through structured political engagement, an Alliance Political Council, an Alliance Summit and the broader process towards a Conference of the Left. The 15th National Congress Super resolution is a historic game changer



that reflects COSATU's dynamism in pursuit of the NDR and workers power under the present conditions. Our goal is Preserving unity, ensuring organisational cohesion and advancing strategic and ideological clarity.

COSATU represents all workers and encourage unity in diversity but remain firmly focused on building workers power in all sites of struggle. COSATU will also advance a working-class electoral strategy that places the material interests of workers at its centre. In the context of the 2026 Local Government Elections, the Federation's Congress mandate calls for principled support for the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP), with the objective of strengthening working-class unity and advancing a programme that responds to workers' demands.

Organisationally, the NOBs will prioritise rebuilding COSATU as a strong, united, militant and campaigning Federation. This includes strengthening workplace structures, recruiting and organising unorganised workers, revitalising locals and shop-steward councils, defending collective bargaining, improving affiliate participation and ensuring accountability for the implementation of Congress resolutions such as, **rebuilding private-sector organisation by** directing the Federation and its affiliates to accelerate organising in fragmented sectors of the economy, including outsourced, precarious, platform and other non-standard forms of employment. Where appropriate, consolidation of unions in related sectors must be pursued to overcome fragmentation, strengthen bargaining power and organise workers across value chains.

The Federation will also intensify its campaigns for a living wage, decent work, employment creation, social protection, safe workplaces, gender equality and the elimination of gender-based violence and femicide. Worker education, political education, shop-steward development and the development of a new generation of working-class leaders will remain central to organisational renewal. The NOBs will work with affiliates to establish clear responsibilities, implementation timelines and monitoring mechanisms so that the decisions of Congress translate into practical outcomes including rejecting **austerity as a class programme** that shifts the burden of capitalist crisis onto workers and the poor. COSATU demands progressive taxation of wealth and finance, a strengthened SARS, expanded social protection and increased public investment in energy, rail, water, municipal infrastructure and reindustrialisation.

Congress also declared to **escalate cost of living** as one of the central challenges facing working-class households. COSATU shall intensify the campaign for the regulation of administered prices, expansion of the zero-rated food basket and opposition to above-inflation increases in electricity, transport and municipal tariffs.

The Federation shall pursue the development of a workers' cost-of-living index to strengthen collective bargaining and inform public policy.



LAUNCH OF THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN — 4 NOVEMBER 2026

COSATU is intensifying its election campaign and mobilisation in preparation for the 4 November 2026 Local Government Elections. The campaign is guided by the resolutions of the 15th National Congress to support both the ANC and the SACP, and the Federation's responsibility to ensure that workers' voices are heard in determining the direction of local government and the broader development path of the country.

COSATU calls on its affiliates, shop stewards, organisers and members to mobilise workers and communities around a programme that prioritises employment creation, reliable public services, accountable municipalities, affordable basic services, infrastructure development and the protection of workers' rights. The campaign will emphasise that elections must serve as an instrument for advancing the interests of workers and poor communities. Political support must be principled and linked to a clear working-class programme rather than treated as an unconditional mandate for any political formation.

COSATU believes that electoral participation must contribute to building working-class power and advancing meaningful social and economic transformation. The Federation will continue to engage workers and communities on the importance of holding elected representatives accountable for delivering services, creating conditions for decent work and improving the lives of working-class people.

COSATU'S 41ST ANNIVERSARY — 1 DECEMBER 2026

COSATU will commemorate its 41st anniversary on 1 December 2026, celebrating more than four decades of struggle, sacrifice and working-class organisation. Since its formation, the Federation has played a historic role in confronting apartheid, defending workers' rights, advancing collective bargaining and championing the broader struggle for democratic, social and economic transformation.

This anniversary will provide an opportunity to reflect on the achievements of the labour movement, acknowledge the sacrifices of generations of workers and trade union activists, and assess the challenges confronting organised labour in the current period. The anniversary must also serve as a moment of organisational renewal. COSATU will use this milestone to strengthen recruitment, rebuild workplace structures, organise unorganised workers and reaffirm its commitment to a united, militant and campaigning Federation.

As COSATU enters its 41st year, the central task remains to defend workers against exploitation, strengthen collective power and advance the struggle for a society in which the wealth created by workers benefits the people as a whole. The Federation calls on its affiliates, shop stewards and members to use this anniversary to renew their commitment to working-class solidarity, organisational discipline and the struggle for economic liberation towards socialism.



COSATU 3RD ANNUAL CHARITY GOLF CHALLENGE— 3 DECEMBER 2026

COSATU will host its 3rd Annual Charity Golf Challenge 3 December 2026 as part of its efforts to strengthen relationships with stakeholders, mobilise support for the Federation’s work and contribute to the sustainability of its programmes. The event will provide an opportunity for engagement with partners and supporters who share an interest in workers’ development, organisational renewal and the broader objectives of the Federation.

COSATU encourages stakeholders, partners and supporters to participate in the Annual Golf Day and to support initiatives that strengthen the capacity of the labour movement to advance workers’ interests.

The Federation remains committed to ensuring that its activities and partnerships contribute to the broader objectives of solidarity and social transformation.

ELIJAH BARAYI COMMEMORATION — 24 JANUARY 2027

COSATU will commemorate the life, contribution and legacy of our founding President, Comrade Elijah Barayi through wreath laying at his grave in Carletonville on the 24 January 2027. Comrade Barayi remains an important figure in the history of the South African trade union movement and the struggle for workers’ emancipation. His contribution reminds us of the courage, discipline and determination required to build a powerful working-class movement capable of confronting exploitation and injustice.

The commemoration will provide an opportunity to educate younger generations about the history of the labour movement and the sacrifices made to secure workers’ rights and democratic freedoms. COSATU will use this occasion to reaffirm the importance of shop-steward leadership, political education, worker solidarity and the building of a militant trade union movement rooted in workplaces and communities. The best tribute to the pioneers of our movement is to continue the struggle for decent work, social justice, economic transformation and socialism.

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY AND LULA’S VICTORY

COSATU celebrates the victory of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva as an important moment for working class in Brazil, the global south and the BRICS bloc. President Lula da Silva’s historic fourth term victory signals hope for multilateralism, climate action and has profound geopolitical implications for global sovereignty. The Federation recognises the significance of international solidarity among workers and the struggles of progressive movements to defend democracy, improve the living conditions of the working class and challenge inequality.

For COSATU, international solidarity is inseparable from the domestic struggle for decent work,



social protection, economic justice and working-class power. The challenges confronting workers in South Africa are connected to wider global struggles against exploitation, austerity, imperialism and the concentration of economic power. COSATU will continue to strengthen relations with progressive trade unions and working-class organisations internationally, share experiences and advance common campaigns in defence of workers' rights and social justice.

We want to wish our sister federations, Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) a successful 10th National Congress as well as the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) on its 43rd National Congress.

The Federation remains committed to international working-class unity and cooperation among progressive forces in pursuit of a more just, equal and democratic world.

A RENEWED COMMITMENT TO WORKERS

The newly elected NOBs recognise that the credibility of COSATU will be measured by its ability to organise workers, defend their rights, improve their material conditions and provide clear leadership during a period of profound political and economic challenges. The leadership will work collectively with affiliates, provincial structures, shop stewards and members to strengthen the Federation's unity, organisational capacity and capacity for mass mobilisation.

COSATU will remain a principled and independent voice of the working class. It will engage political formations and government on the basis of workers' interests, while opposing policies that undermine collective bargaining, decent work, public services and social protection. The newly elected NOBs call on all affiliates and members to unite behind the mandate of the 15th National Congress, strengthen the implementation of its resolutions and build a Federation that is active in every workplace and community.

The Federation must emerge stronger, more united, more responsive to its members and better equipped to confront the challenges facing workers. This requires sustained mobilisation, political education, organisational discipline and a shared commitment to advancing the interests of the working class.

The task before us is clear: **organise the unorganised, defend workers' gains, build working-class unity and advance the struggle for economic liberation towards socialism.**

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