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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Ndllelanhle Nyelezi!

Tomorrow, on the 9th of February 2008, we shall gather in Uitenhage to salute and pay our last respects to Cde Phumzile John Gomomo, the former President of COSATU who sadly left us on 22nd of January 2008.

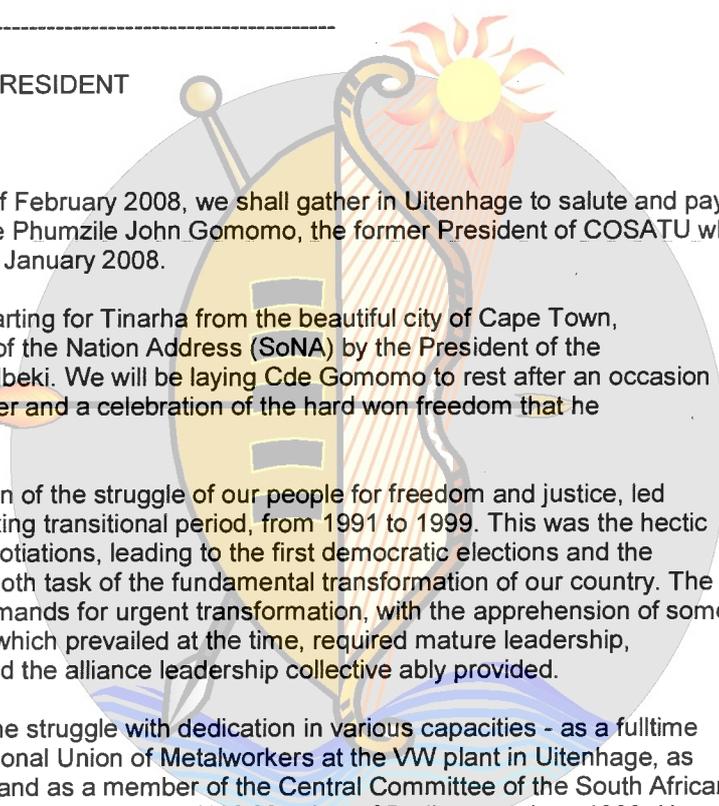
Some of us will be departing for Tinarha from the beautiful city of Cape Town, following today's State of the Nation Address (SoNA) by the President of the Republic, Cde Thabo Mbeki. We will be laying Cde Gomomo to rest after an occasion that is in itself a reminder and a celebration of the hard won freedom that he sacrificed so much for.

Cde Gomomo, a veteran of the struggle of our people for freedom and justice, led COSATU during the taxing transitional period, from 1991 to 1999. This was the hectic period of multiparty negotiations, leading to the first democratic elections and the beginning of the mammoth task of the fundamental transformation of our country. The need to balance the demands for urgent transformation, with the apprehension of some quarters of our society which prevailed at the time, required mature leadership, which Cde Gomomo and the alliance leadership collective ably provided.

Cde Gomomo served the struggle with dedication in various capacities - as a fulltime shopsteward of the National Union of Metalworkers at the VW plant in Uitenhage, as President of COSATU, and as a member of the Central Committee of the South African Communist Party. He also served as an ANC Member of Parliament since 1999. He participated in various parliamentary portfolio committees such as those on Trade and Industry and Agriculture and Land Affairs. At the time of his death he chaired the Public Service and Administration portfolio committee.

As the ANC parliamentary caucus stated in its condolence message, Comrade Gomomo will be remembered as a true servant of the people and a disciplined and a selfless cadre of the movement.

Cde Gomomo's passing on has reminded us of the significant, historical and very fruitful relationship that has existed for decades between the trade union movement



and the ANC.

In its Statement of Policy, adopted at the First Annual National Conference, of the SA Congress of Trade Unions in March 1956, SACTU stated: "While the South African Congress of Trade Unions must thus pursue an independent policy in the interests of the workers, it must also participate unreservedly in the struggle to mobilize the people behind their demands as embodied in the Freedom Charter and must cooperate with all other organizations engaged in this struggle".

This realization of the dialectical link between the trade union movement and the ANC was also emphasized by illustrious leaders of our movement. Inkosi Albert Luthuli stated in May 1959: "I am glad that SACTU has not listened to the ill advice that they should not be interested in politics. There is a Zulu saying that if you are pricked by a thorn you also have to use a thorn to get it out. Workers are oppressed by political action; they must take political action in reply". (as quoted in the book entitled The History of the SA Congress of Trade Unions, by Ken Luckhardt and Brenda Wall).

This dictum guided SACTU, and later COSATU as evidenced by the pivotal role that the federation has played in the struggle for liberation, as well as in the struggle for fundamental transformation.

In response, the workers have demonstrated their unwavering support for COSATU and what it stands for, by continuing to join COSATU affiliates and to confirm its role as the leading worker's movement in our country. At its launch in 1985, Cosatu represented less than half a million workers organised in 33 unions. It currently boasts more than two million workers, of whom at least 1.8 million are paid up. The growth defies the trend of a general decline in union membership worldwide. We should credit COSATU stalwarts such as Cde Gomomo for laying the foundation for the tenacity and popularity of the federation.

A strong COSATU means a strong Alliance, and a stronger worker voice in the Alliance. It means the ANC in government and outside will be always be kept fully in touch with the needs and aspirations of the workers, something Cde Gomomo fought hard to achieve.

As we celebrate the life of Cde Gomomo, we also acknowledge the culture of open debate that he espoused and practiced. As COSATU President, Cde Gomomo was very forthright. He sharply articulated his discomfort with positions that the ANC government adopted, if he felt that these were against worker interests.

He aptly explained the position COSATU had taken as early as 1997, in his Presidential address to the 6th annual congress of the federation. He stated: "We commit ourselves to engage in debate, formulation and implementation of progressive policies, and to continue to engage in struggles to ensure success in rebuilding our country based on the needs of the majority. Mass mobilisation and mass action by COSATU must be seen within this context. It is not a form of opposition to the government and the ANC, or a challenge to the ANC as some would want the public to believe, but a way to indicate support for progressive policies being introduced by the government, raise concerns on policies that we believe will delay or retard the process of transformation, and to tilt the balance of power in the direction of the liberation movement. We reject with contempt any assertion to equate all forms of mass mobilisation and protest with those of counter revolutionary elements who want the failure of an ANC government."

The 52nd national conference has laid a firm foundation for smooth and mutually

beneficial and comradely collaboration within the Alliance. This renewed commitment will ensure that there is no confusion about roles and programmes, as we are going to be in constant contact and discussions.

The conference also laid the foundation for joint action in support of the transformation agenda that the ANC government has to accelerate. As the President of the Republic delivers his address to the nation today, we reiterate that as the ruling party that we will do whatever it takes to ensure the success of the ANC government. We also know that we have the full support of our alliance partners in this regard. Through our existing structures we will work together to ensure that our masses are mobilized to participate and support the programme of action. The SoNA outlines the programme of action of a very important year, as it takes us to general elections in 2009. Our government is aware of the expectations of our people, and will deal with service delivery hindrances through the transformation of the state machinery to make it responsive to the needs of the people. In this way, the hard work and sacrifice of our valued stalwarts such as Cde Gomomo would not have been in vain.

Most importantly, in bidding farewell to Cde Gomomo, we must salute his commitment to unity. In 1987 he led the unity talks amongst metalworker unions which led to the establishment of the National Union of Metalworkers (Numsa).

There are many other instances on the shop floor and also in national leadership, where Cde Gomomo displayed his uncompromising stance on unity and discipline.

We must emulate him, and show our appreciation by working for the unity of the ANC. We are encouraged by the positive mood we experienced when we crisscrossed the country over the last few weeks, as the leadership collective. The objective of the visits was to report back to structures on the Conference, and to promote the renewal of the values of the movement, as mandated by Conference. We found that the overwhelming majority of ANC members are united and are focused on building the movement and to work to achieve a caring society, and fundamental socio-economic transformation in our country.

As we dip our revolutionary banners and bid Cde Gomomo farewell tomorrow, we will find comfort in the knowledge that he has played his role to the fullest in fighting for the liberation of his people, especially the working class.

We thank his family for lending us this gallant fighter. We must carry on where he left off - to bridge inequalities and make the freedom he fought for truly meaningful to all our people, especially the poor and marginalised.

We extend our deepest condolences to the family, comrades and friends of Cde Gomomo, to COSATU and the entire worker's movement.

Ndlelanhle Nyelezi! Ulisebenzele lelizwe!

Jacob G Zuma

POLOKWANE RESOLUTIONS IV

A united Africa begins at home

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first step towards the establishment of an African Union government. This was one of the resolutions of the ANC 52nd National Conference, held in Polokwane in December last year.

The conference gave in principle support for the idea of a continent-wide government as a step towards the strategic goal of the unification of Africa. However, it said the process must be informed by a developmental agenda emphasising regional integration with an immediate focus on building regional economic communities.

The consolidation of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the integration and diversification of the economies of its member states was seen as a critical component of this process. Conference said a SADC parliament should be established as a way of developing a common approach to these and other issues in the region.

Delegates also agreed that the strengthening of the African Union (AU) and all its organs could serve as a catalyst towards the formation of the African Union government. It agreed to strengthen the Pan African Parliament (PAP) and promote the harmonisation of laws in Africa. The ANC would need to initiate a debate on the future of the Pan African Parliament (PAP), and whether it should have legislative powers.

It confirmed that the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) as the developmental blueprint in the continent, and that it should be strengthened through mobilisation and promotion of programmes.

South Africa would need to be proactive in the debate around the African Union government, including the mobilisation of the progressive forces and governments towards a common strategic plan.

This requires that greater attention be paid to party-to-party relations particularly among former liberation movements like SWAPO in Namibia, MPLA in Angola, FRELIMO in Mozambique, ZANU PF in Zimbabwe, PAIGC in Guinea Bissau, CCM in Tanzania, SPLM/A in Sudan, and others. This should include structured support of the former liberation movements in the region must be pursued. Conference decided an audit be conducted to establish a better understanding of the ideological orientation and character of the parties in the continent and identify those that share the same political vision as the ANC.

A deliberate effort be made to strengthen relations with all progressive and like-minded parties in the region, continent and the world. Relations with other ruling parties in the continent that might not share the same vision with the ANC must be promoted and such relations could be based on common interests.

The conference recognised the role that South Africa could play in the economic development of other parts of the continent. It noted that the advent of democracy has created new opportunities for South African business, both in Africa and in the world, particularly in the retail, mining, construction, engineering, banking services, communication services, agricultural, and agri-processing sectors. These opportunities, while welcomed, brought with it new challenges in the relationship between South Africa and other African countries.

South Africa should strengthen the capacity of its embassies to assist South African businesses to gain access to available business opportunities abroad and on the continent; at the same time to encourage African countries to engage in intra-African trade and take advantage of positive economic developments on the continent. This

will encourage trade and investment among African states and countries of the South.

"The ANC, through government, should ensure that the intensification of economic diplomacy leads to changes of colonial patterns of economic relations, and creates possibilities for equitable and balanced North-South relations, transformation and beneficiation of African natural resources, sustainable flows of foreign direct investment (FDI), market access for products from the South to generate employment, and contribute to poverty eradication," it said.

Business code of conduct

The conference noted concerns about the practices of South African companies doing business elsewhere on the continent. It called for the development of a code of good business practice, which should be complied with by companies trading in different parts of the continent.

It was therefore resolved to give in principle support for the development of such a code, which would need to be legislated and regulated without restricting the competitiveness of those companies. It said that in the development of the code of conduct South Africa needed need to encourage partner countries to strengthen their labour and trade laws, encourage the private sector to comply with the standards of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), and that South African business should project local experience of good practices in the countries in which they operate.

The code of conduct should have general standards that guide it, such as prohibition of child labour and discouragement of bribery. Those who practice such actions should be prosecuted. The standards should include, among other things, the encouragement of recruitment of local labour and imparting of skills, prohibition of child labour, and contribution to the social responsibility programmes of that country.

Delegates to Polokwane agreed that Africans in the diaspora also had an important role to play in the development of the continent. Africans in the diaspora are those people whose origins are in Africa, but are in other parts of the world due to forced slavery and long years of migration but who continue to identify themselves as Africans and are making efforts to reconnect with the continent.

As a result of this consciousness, identity and reconnection move, programmes are unfolding to take advantage of the developments. Most of them have skills which they have acquired in their countries of residence and naturalisation that can benefit Africa.

"The ANC notes with keen interest and resolves to support initiatives towards a summit on the African Diaspora, which we are hosting as South Africa. We should share perspectives and policy considerations that will be debated in the summit," the resolution said.

It called on all members of the ANC and mass democratic movement to debate and understand the concepts and the resolutions that emanate from such conferences as the Summit on African Diaspora.

** This is the fourth in a series of articles on the outcomes of the ANC's Polokwane Conference. [a series of articles on the outcomes of Conference.](#)

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