

Statement by Zwelinzima Vavi on the unfolding implosion of COSATU, 1 April 2015

1. I, together with the seven unions represented here – CWU, NUMSA, FAWU, SACCAWU, SASAWU, DENOSA, SAFPU - have been striving for many months to achieve unity and cohesion within COSATU. So the ongoing implosion of COSATU now unfolding before our eyes is a serious setback and a tragedy not only for the working class, but the country as a whole.

2. We have tried to avoid this scenario at all costs, but as the history outlined in my statement at the press conference on Sunday shows, those pursuing the agenda of elite capture of COSATU, inside and outside of the organisation, will stop at nothing. They have been absolutely ruthless and determined to purge any individual and any organisation that stands in their way. They are seemingly oblivious to the disastrous impact this will have on the working class.

3. In particular I condemn the decisions of the COSATU CEC taken on 30 March 2015 which:

- a. Dismissed the General Secretary who was democratically elected by the 2012 national Congress;
- b. Closed the door to the readmission of NUMSA;
- c. Accept the affiliation of a 'shelf' union, LIMUSA;
- d. Issued no notice of the Special National Congress and opposed the court challenge to compel them to convene it.

4. These decisions will have a huge impact on the struggle for a strong united workers' federation. The leadership imagine that they can continue with business as usual, which is impossible in a situation in which 365 000 workers in NUMSA are excluded.

5. This implosion within COSATU is not just a crisis for the federation and the working class alone. It reflects a broader crisis in South Africa. The underlying catastrophe of high unemployment, poverty and inequality is spreading into our dysfunctional healthcare and education systems, crime and corruption.

It is endangering organisations of civil society, all democratic mass formations and democratic structures of our constitutional democracy. It is also behind the disarray in many state owned enterprises, the SABC, SAA, SARS, Eskom, Parliament, the SAPS, Intelligence, the NPA, SAPO, IDIP, and the use of rogue elements to write fake intelligence reports condemning those perceived as opponents as imperialist agents.

6. All of our mass formations have been blunted as instruments of popular power. The youth-worker axis which drove popular struggles of the 1970s and 1980s has been reduced to a pale shadow of its former self, with the taming of the youth movement. The women's, civic and rural people's movements have to a large extent been co-opted or blunted to such an extent that they no longer have any real impact.

7. The last powerful mass weapon in the hands of working people is the democratic trade union movement, which is now being targeted for co-option to serve the agenda of powerful interests. While workers thought they were struggling for the soul of the ANC, a hidden agenda was being hatched by forces hostile to the working class to capture the soul of COSATU.

8. This all reflects the drive by a predatory elite to exercise control over all areas of society, to advance their narrow agenda of accumulation and control. Its unprincipled abuse of power is

increasingly infecting all institutions of state, civil society organisations and now the trade unions. It is a deliberate political game to hollow out all organs of people's power, and institutions which are supposed to hold leaders to account.

9. If we don't combat this abuse of power it will take us irreversibly towards a failed state and a society in which there is no accountability, run by a kleptocracy, driven by a particular brand of predatory and parasitic capitalism. The cancer of corruption is the most extreme expression of this disease.

10. In the latest press conference of the COSATU CEC, there were statements made about my person which border on defamation and criminal libel. I am in consultation with my family, lawyers and progressive leaders of the labour movement to determine how best to deal with this.

11. In particular I object vehemently to the unprofessional and unethical behaviour of forensic auditors, SizweNtsalubaGobodo, who have still to apologise to me and the COSATU CEC for misleading all into believing that the report submitted to the 10 February 2014 CEC was either a draft when talking to me, or a final report when talking to the CEC.

12. The CEC knowingly decided to adopt SizweNtsalubaGobodo report they are fully aware is flawed. In the process my rights to a fair process have been denied and prejudiced.

13. I am further in consultations on whether or not I should challenge my extremely irregular, illegal and completely unjustified expulsion as General Secretary of COSATU. I have no doubt that the dismissal is unfair and illegal. I have been dismissed without a hearing conducted by an independent chairperson. The COSATU CEC, which is populated by a faction which has been buying for my blood since 2012, has acted as investigators, prosecutors and judge at the same time, while denying me my basic legal right to a fair hearing.

14. I remain firmly convinced that I did nothing wrong, let alone break the law, in the execution of my duties as COSATU General Secretary.

15. But the priority now is not to get drawn into tit-for-tat arguments and exchanging insults, but to redirect our energy to the class struggle. While this is a very sad day, the working class needs to respond decisively to this challenge. This is why we are saying "Don't mourn, mobilise!"

16. We are going to urgently consult all our members, including holding Special NEC meetings and a joint NEC meeting of as many unions as possible to unfold a programme of mass mobilisation of workers to combat and reverse the situation we are now facing. I shall participate fully in this programme of mass mobilisation and consultation.

17. We are calling on workers to discuss the implications of our many years of attempts to win back COSATU as an independent, democratic, militant and fighting worker controlled organisation capable of driving full implementation of the worker-parliament mandates. Has the intransigence of a dominant faction, driving its agenda, transformed COSATU into a toothless dog and apologist of the current status quo? Can we still win back COSATU or have we reached the end of the road where we should now consider alternatives?

Zwelinzima Vavi April 1 2015