

*In the 1980s, the black South African working class led the world. Now, in the age of capitalist offensive coupled with the betrayal of the working class by its own organizations, it seems that the black South African working class may be poised to take the leading role once again.*

# Numsa to mull Zuma resignation call

December 17 2013 at 03:32pm By Genevieve Quintal



Acting Numsa president Andrew Chirwa. Picture: SOWETAN



THE National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (Numsa) on Tuesday got down to the gritty business of deliberating its future in politics, with its acting president, Andrew Chirwa, setting the tone.

Mr Chirwa told delegates to the union's special national congress in Boksburg that the alliance between the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu), the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party had "evaporated long ago".

"Even if the alliance exists, if it is incapable of destroying colonialism and the nature of the economy, no amount of unity can change it," Mr Chirwa said in his opening address. "Revolutionary unity in the alliance is based on a minimum programme ... that minimum programme is the Freedom Charter.

"Without this minimum programme, why must we have an alliance?"

Before his address, delegates at the congress sang: "We have made a serious decision, they are wasting our time."

At its four-day special congress, Numsa is to discuss its future in the alliance and whether to throw its support behind the ANC in the upcoming elections.

While workers who join the union are free to vote for any political party, the resources provided by Cosatu unions in terms of financial support and skilled organisers are valuable to the party's election campaign.

Numsa is debating whether it will provide this support next year, as it has in every election since 1994.

Mr Chirwa said the union remained the only voice in the alliance pushing for the implementation of the Freedom Charter — which includes the nationalisation of mines, banks and all monopoly industries.

He said the status quo could not continue, with South Africa recording some of the worst levels of inequality in the world.

"We are not only leading in the World Cup in 2010, we are leading here (in inequalities)," he said.

On Monday, Minister in the Presidency Collins Chabane had hailed President Jacob Zuma for leading South Africa in organising the World Cup three years ago.

Also speaking at the congress on Tuesday, Numsa second deputy president Christine Olivier described the ANC leadership elected at Mangaung as "clearly pro-capitalism".

Mr Chirwa said Cosatu was "fatally paralysed", adding that the ANC's Mangaung conference promised a "radical second phase of the transition", but all workers had seen of this phase so far was the "second phase of e-tolls".

The e-toll system on some of Gauteng's freeways was activated at the start of December.

"We must call a spade a spade, that's what we must do in this congress," he said. "We must say Numsa will not sit back and fold arms when we are being attacked left, right and centre."

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**Adopted by NUMSA Special National Congress. Adopted unanimously by 1,050 delegates.  
Resolution on Challenges Facing the Alliance**

1. Noting that; 1.1. The Alliance is dysfunctional, in crisis and paralysed. It is dominated by infighting, factionalism and fails to meet regularly.

1.2. Although there are protests everywhere and every day in the country, the Alliance is not an instrument in the hands of these struggling masses nor does it provide leadership to these struggles which is largely leaderless struggles. The reality is that there is a political vacuum and the working class is on its own.

1.3. The Freedom Charter which we understood as the minimum platform of the Alliance has been completely abandoned in favour of rightwing and neo-liberal policies such as the National Development Plan (NDP).

1.4. There exists little common understanding within the Alliance of the real objectives of the National Democratic Revolution (NDR).

1.5. The Alliance operates and works during election periods and it is our experience that the working class is being used by the leader of the Alliance – the African National Congress (ANC) - as voting fodder.

1.6. The Alliance has been captured and taken over by rightwing forces. Those who are perceived to be against neo-liberalism or advocates of policies in favour of the working class and the poor are seen as problematic, isolated or purged.

1.7. Dominant classes in society have swayed the Alliance in their favour.

1.8. The ANC has resisted the reconfiguration of the Alliance into a strategic political centre where issues of policy, deployments into government and programmes are jointly decided upon by all components of the Alliance.

1.9. The strategy of swelling the ranks has not worked and all resolutions of COSATU congresses in relation to how the Alliance should function have not been implemented by the leaders of the Alliance.

1.10. In practice the Alliance is still in the hands of one alliance partner, the ANC. The ANC is the centre and implements government programmes and policies alone with little or no consultation with other components of the Alliance.

1.11. There is strong opposition from the ANC to an alliance agreement or pact. The movement has told us in no uncertain words that the ANC is the political centre. They have also argued against the pact, quoting OR Tambo when he said at the SACP's 60th anniversary in 1981: "Ours is not merely a paper alliance, as created at conference tables and formalised through the signing of documents and representing only an agreement of leaders".

1.12. As Numsa we have been detecting an abuse by the ANC of other Alliance partners.

1.13. The alliance is used to rubber stamp neo-liberal policies of the ANC and not as a centre of power that debate policy issues and implementation.

1.14. The treatment of labour as a junior partner within the Alliance is not uniquely a South African phenomenon. In many post-colonial and post-revolutionary situations, liberation and revolutionary movements have turned on labour movements that fought alongside them; suppressed them, marginalised them, split them, robbed them of their independence or denied them any meaningful role in politics and policy-making.

1.15. The recent alliance summit still failed to make fundamental changes to the current proposed NDP and had no significant impact in changing policies in favour of the working class and the poor.

2. Further noting that;

2.1 There is no chance of winning back the Alliance to what it was originally formed for; which was to drive a revolutionary programme for fundamental transformation of the country with the Freedom Charter as the minimum platform to transform the South African economy.

2.2 The South African Communist Party (SACP) leadership has become embedded in the state and is failing to act as the vanguard of the working class.

2.3 The chance of winning back the SACP onto the path of working class struggle for working class power is very remote. 2.4 For the struggle for socialism, the working class needs a political organisation committed in theory and practice to socialism.

3. Therefore resolve that;

3.1 In light of the above as NUMSA, we should call on COSATU to break from the Alliance. The time for looking for an alternative has arrived.

3.1.1. that our members and shopstewards must be active on all fronts and in all struggles against neo-liberal policies whether these policies are being implemented in the workplace or in communities.

3.1.2. that in all our constitutional structures, there should be a standing agenda item on community struggles, their nature and NUMSA's attitude to these community struggles.

3.2 As NUMSA, we must lead in the establishment of a new UNITED FRONT that will coordinate struggles in the workplace and in communities; in a way similar to the UDF of the 1980s. The task of this front will be to fight for the implementation of the Freedom Charter and be an organisational weapon against neoliberal policies such as the NDP. For this to happen it requires:

3.3. Side by side to the establishment of the new UNITED FRONT, we in NUMSA must explore the establishment of a MOVEMENT FOR SOCIALISM as the working class needs a political organisation committed in its policies and actions to the establishment of a socialist South Africa.

3.4. In order to execute the task of exploring the establishment of the MOVEMENT FOR SOCIALISM, as a union we must do the following:

3.4.1. In line with the existing NUMSA resolution, convene a Conference on Socialism

3.4.2. Leading up to the this conference, NUMSA must conduct a thoroughgoing discussion on previous attempts to build socialism as well as current experiments to build socialism

3.4.3. Commission an international study on the historical formation of working class parties. As part of this study we need to explore the different type of parties – from mass workers parties to vanguard parties. We must look at countries such as Brazil, Venezuela, Bolivia, Greece and any other experiments.

3.5. This work to explore the formation of a MOVEMENT FOR SOCIALISM must be regularly reported to constitutional structures and the work must be finalised by the first NUMSA Central Committee in 2015.

3.6. In all the work being done whether on building a new united front and exploring the formation of a Movement for Socialism, as NUMSA we must be alert to gains that may present possibilities of either the new united front or any other progressive coalition or party committed to socialism standing for elections in future. The NUMSA constitutional structures must continuously assess these developments and possibilities.