



A BETTER LIFE FOR ALL

May Day Speech by Comrade Cyril Ramaphosa,

President of the African National Congress at the COSATU May Day Rally

Sugar Ray Xulu Stadium, Pinetown

1 May 2019

President of COSATU, cde Zingiswa Losi

General Secretary of the SACP, cde Blade Nzimande

Members of the ANC NEC present

Chairperson of the ANC KZN, cde Sihle Zikalala

Premier of KZN, cde Willies Mchunu

Leaders of all the Alliance formations present

Comrades and friends

Good morning

I bring you revolutionary greetings from the entire National Executive Committee of the African National Congress this Workers' Day.

Being here with the mighty Federation of workers, COSATU, which we launched close to here at the Curries Fountain stadium in 1985, serves as a reminder of how far we have travelled on this journey to a united, non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and free South Africa.

Today is a day for workers to claim the many victories they have achieved in their struggle for decent working conditions and fair labour practices.

It is a day for unity and solidarity, a day to remind ourselves that an injury to one is an injury to all. It is a day to lay claim to the fruits of your labour, to assert your power as workers.

Today is your day to demand equality and justice, rights and recourse, employment and security.

It is your day to remind society and all South Africans that your struggle is, and always has been, a struggle for decent work, a safe working environment, a living wage, equal treatment at work.

The might of workers, united, was a driving force behind the broader liberation movement and a catalyst for our liberation.

Let us always remember when we move in unity; we can do amazing things.

We must also use this occasion to commemorate the centenary of the launch of the first black trade union, the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU), in 1919 in Cape Town.

The experience of black workers was marked by exploitation, systematic oppression, unsafe working conditions and general humiliation throughout the Apartheid years. It was this system of exploitation and oppression that strengthened the resolve of the working class to fight against Apartheid in all its manifestations and wherever it occurred.

Workers always knew that their exploitation as workers was inextricably linked to racial subjugation and that the struggle for workers' rights was inextricably linked to the struggle for national liberation. That is why comrades like Vuyisile Mini and countless others joined the struggle for liberation in all its formations and paid the ultimate price for our freedom.

The words of former President OR Tambo (who was Acting SG at the time) at the 1959 SACTU Congress wherein he called on ANC members to be the organisers in the factories, on the farms, vineyards and sugar plantations are still relevant today. Our struggle is still one; we struggle for the total emancipation of the poor and working class. Our struggle is to achieve the NDR; to put in place a united, non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and prosperous South Africa.

We are one week away from the elections and the ANC calls on all workers to remain united as a fighting force to deliver an overwhelming elections victory for the ANC [on the 8th of May](#).

Comrades, together we have done a lot to change this country for the better. However, much remain to be done and we must show utmost unity and unity of purpose to ensure that we remain on course to putting in place a better life for all.

The ANC, SACP and COSATU are joined together in the strategic and revolutionary alliance and we recognise that the alliance remains the best vehicle to work for total and radical economic and social transformation of South Africa.

The alliance needs to work much more effectively to realise the goals of the NDR. We need to get involved in joint campaigns at community level with a view of enhancing better service delivery in all our communities.

Through the various struggles we have been involved in the alliance achieved many victories for the poor and the working class.

As we celebrate 25 years of democracy we can also celebrate the success that we have achieved in improving the rights of workers. We put in place legislation, such as the Labour Relations Act and the Basic Conditions of Employment Act that are but a few examples of the constitutional protections available to workers. This government guarantees the right to paid maternity and paternity leave, the right to refuse to do dangerous work and the right to a National Minimum Wage.

Our task is now to build on these victories. Let us unite to wage this new struggle for radical economic and social transformation.

The struggle for decent jobs, a living wage continues. The ANC calls on COSATU and all workers to join us in the struggle to grow South Africa.

The ANC's 2019 Manifesto, which we drafted together, presents a comprehensive plan for national development, creating jobs and ending poverty.

It is a plan to fundamentally and radically transform the economy to serve the needs of the many.

The plan aims to create decent jobs and enable our people to and decent salaries as we advance towards a living wage

It is a plan to address the scourge of gender-based violence and other social ills, such as substance abuse.

It is a plan to address our education and health systems.

It is a plan to decisively deal with corruption that threatens our democracy.

The South African economy remains untransformed and continues to exclude the majority of the people.

Our Plan asks the government to intervene through building on the outcomes of the Jobs Summit and creating more jobs and decent jobs. We will focus particularly on youth unemployment and will work with both the public and private sectors to place large numbers of young people in apprenticeships.

This government has already begun to remove experience as a requirement for entry level jobs; making it easier for young people to find employment.

We will increase employment through programmes that expand early childhood development sites, primary health care services and increase police visibility in our communities. This will create jobs and improve the quality of life of communities across the country.

We will broaden ownership through well researched employee ownership schemes and other arrangements that will allow employees of successful companies to share in the profits of these companies. This should increase productivity also serve to create wealth for more South Africans.

We will promote competition and address monopolies to allow for new entrants into the economy; thereby creating more jobs.

Comrades,

Our sustainable land reform programme must extend participation in and ownership of agricultural production and advance food security. We have already put in place an intergovernmental programme, led by the Presidency, through which we have settled many outstanding land claims and we will work even faster and better on this area going forward. The ANC reiterates our commitment to amending Section 25 of the Constitution and putting in place the legal framework for expropriation of land without compensation.

We aim to reverse the apartheid spatial patterns through the land reform programme, building sustainable human settlements closer to where people work and developing township and rural economies.

It is important that we reduce the time and money people spend on travelling to and from their workplaces.

We will invest in safe, reliable and integrated public transport infrastructure to ensure that workers can travel to and from their places of employment.

Comrades, I experienced some of the frustrations that workers go through when I took the train from Mabopane to Pretoria earlier this year. This is unacceptable and I've called on PRASA fix the train crisis without delay.

The programme to increase investment and create jobs remains on track. Last year, we raised nearly R300m of investments through the Investment Conference and we intend to better that target this year. Our initial target of generating investments of R1,2 trillion over five years is on track.

Our ability to attract investment is impacted by our ability to guarantee a secure supply of energy. We have a plan for stabilising Eskom and making it more sustainable. This plan includes the restructuring of the entity and we commit to you that the restructuring will take place in consultation with all affected stakeholders, including COSATU.

The efforts to stabilise Eskom will make sure that the entity remains state-owned.

Comrades, we must make sure that we use the opportunities presented by the changing nature of work to improve the quality of work, address social and economic inequalities and strengthen justice across society. This is in line with what the International Labour Organisation (ILO) calls the reinvigorated 'social contract that gives working people a just share of economic progress, respect their rights and protection against risk in return for their contribution to the economy.'

Government, trade unions and employers must all work together to develop this social contract or compact that will underpin our comprehensive national plan to drive our country to be on forefront of digital innovation and contribute to creating jobs and broadening economic participation.

Comrades, if we work together, South Africa can become a hub of technological advancement and development.

We have been working on putting in place the National Health Insurance (NHI) for a very long time. It gives me great pleasure to say that we should be bringing the legislation to Parliament shortly after the commencement of the 6th Parliament. Our people deserve a national health system that is of a good quality and free at the point of service.

The full implementation of the NHI will be a truly revolutionary development.

We shall not waiver in our commitment to provide good quality basic education to all children in South Africa. Education is a vital tool for lifting people out of poverty.

Free higher education for students from poor and working class households is our policy and we defend this gain jealously. We call on the private sector to contribute to our ongoing efforts to make higher education more accessible.

Let me remind you about our Manifesto commitment that the education curricula must speak to a rapidly digitising environment and prepare young people for the changing world of work. We are already working on making this a reality!

Comrades, let me discuss this scourge that plagues our society. Gender-based violence has touched each and every one of us in some or other form and must be wiped out from our country.

Women, children, gender-nonconforming persons and even men are affected by interpersonal violence and other forms of violence every day. This must end.

The most affected by the evil of gender-based violence are the women of this country. I challenge each and every person in this stadium, this city and this country to become a champion in the fight against gender-based violence.

Do not keep quiet when you encounter gender-based violence!

I promise you that we are training the police, prosecutors and other government employees to be more responsive and caring in dealing with survivors of gender-based violence. We are also working on improving legislation and putting in place a National GBV Strategy.

Our country continues to come to terms with the consequences of corruption and state capture. We remain resolute in our commitment to fight corruption and end state capture.

All processes underway to investigate corruption and state capture – including the Zondo Commission – will continue until their completion.

At the same time, we must expect resistance from those who benefitted from wrongdoing and we must hold everyone responsible for state capture and corruption accountable. There must be no retreat from this position, comrades.

This new era of accountability and consequences rest on all of our shoulders. We must ensure clean and accountable government, sustainable and functioning public institutions and we are the ones who must ensure that we protect our country for our children.

Comrades, we have made tremendous progress over the last 25 years.

Much remains to be done.

Let us work together to grow South Africa.

Vote ANC [on the 8th of May!](#)