

DETAWU 5th ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATION GALA

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE GENERAL SECRETARY, CDE VUSI NTSANGASE

Thank you, very much and good evening, program director, Ms, Ayanda Borotho.

SAFTU General Secretary, Comrade Z Vavi and SAFTU 1ST Deputy President cde Nomvume Ralarala, cde President June Dube in absentia but I do not doubt that he is with us here today in good spirit celebrating our 5th anniversary for I know he has not died, he has multiplied because leaders like him do not die they multiply. Cde Dube's family representatives Mrs Dube and his son Mthokozisi Dube.

My fellow National Office Bearers led by comrade President Reuben Tjaitjai.

Esteemed leadership from various SAFTU affiliates, and SANSAWF General Secretary cde Anna Mashego.

TAPSOSA representatives led by President Jones Mophalaphathwa

PSIRA CFO, Ms. Segobodi standing in for the CEO

TETA, COO Mr. Famanda Shirindza,

SASSETA, ACEO Mr. Vukani Memela and his CFO

JS Consulting director Mr Jackson Simon

TRAC HR Executive Mrs Adrie Fourie

Our valued Sponsors, who made donations to enable us to successfully convene this august occasion.

Progressive Employers, Service Providers, the patriotic bourgeois, Members of the Media Fraternity, Former DETAWU Leaders, cde Zondi Masemola and cde France Rakululu.

Worker leaders, our front-line troopers, all officials, and Staff Members.

Our friends and members joining this event via Facebook and zoom live streaming platforms.

Ladies and gentlemen, all protocol observed.

On behalf of DETAWU leadership and the entire membership, I extend a revolutionary greeting to you all.

Good evening

Sanibonani

Molweni

Goeienaand

Ndi madekwane

Dumelang

Riperile

It's my singular pleasure to address you in this 5th Anniversary Commemoration Gala Dinner. This is indeed a momentous occasion for us as DETAWU and we are delighted to share this moment with each one of you and we are grateful that out of your busy schedule you opted to be with us this evening.

Today we celebrate a significant milestone in the short life of DETAWU, and while we reflect on our collective experience over the past five years, let us remain resolute and steadfast as we set course for the next five years and beyond.

All our members, leaders, staff, and officials this is your moment and I hope you shall make it memorable indeed!

As we are gathered here today to mark this significant occasion, I wish to preface my speech with a quote from Amilcar Cabral:

“Hide nothing from the masses of our people. Tell no lies, Expose lies whenever they are told. Mask no difficulties, mistakes, failures. Claim no easy victories”.

The past five years has been the most difficult and at the same time fulfilling period. We can proudly declare that for us, it was not a wasted 5 years. The wheel continues to turn it will not stop until it has turned the whole circumference.

Ladies and gentlemen, comrades and friends this 5th-anniversary celebration is taking place under the theme:

Reflecting on the past, consolidating our gains, and setting the pace in building a strong DETAWU.

As a relatively new organisation, we recognise the importance of taking time to critically reflect on where we began as a Trade Union, the challenges we encountered, subsequent achievements, and the various lessons learnt in the period under review.

We expect that this theme shall serve as a tour guide as we navigate the terrain of the working class struggles and strategically plot the journey ahead.

If the phrase 'life begins at 40' were to be applied it would mean that DETAWU's real-life has not commenced and all of us still have a lot to learn, more skills to acquire, and more valuable experience to accumulate as we build a towering DETAWU.

The formation of DETAWU on the 24th September 2015 was an ambitious revolutionary journey fraught with dangers, but we chose to change the course of history instead of being paralysed by fear, we chose hope over despair.

We were under no illusion that the journey would be short, without risks and sacrifice, but we knew that success was inevitable, we needed to cultivate a strong, insightful, and resilient leadership culture.

We decided to form DETAWU after it was clear that we could not stop a snake eating itself from the inside.

lengthy consultation with workers culminated in the founding National Congress on 24 September 2015 in Pretoria at 224 Hotel.

A few months down the line, on 15 December 2015, the Department of employment and labour conferred on us a certificate of registration, declaring that the midwife had delivered a well and sound baby.

The founding National congress's task amongst others was to elect National leadership.

The General Secretary, Deputy President, and the National Treasurer were successfully elected.

Both the President and the Deputy General Secretary were elected in absentia as they could not attend due to ill-health and circumstances beyond their control.

At the time of their election, the President was still the President of SATAWU and the DGS was still a full-time employee of SATAWU. election, he was elected in absentia due to ill health as well as the DGS who was elected in absentia since she could not attend the founding Congress due to circumstances beyond her control.

Post-Congress, I the founding General Secretary, was mandated to engage the late President and persuade him to accept the difficult task to lead the new Union.

Let me mention that this was five months after his house was mysteriously petrol-bombed and his family almost finished off, this happened on the same fateful night which cde Chriss Nkosi, the SATAWU Gauteng Provincial Secretary was mysteriously gunned down in a hail of bullets in what appeared to be a well-planned hit, may his soul rest in peace. We call upon the law enforcement urgencies to do all possible to ensure that the perpetrators are brought to books.

These events proved beyond any reasonable doubt that our fights to remain within SATAWU were futile and that the situation has reached a point of no return, it become clear to us that the enemy was prepared to do anything to conceal the wrongdoings.

After a few visits to comrade June's house and several lengthy conversations, later he graciously and consciously accepted the founding Congress mandate and he tendered his resignation as a President and a member of SATAWU.

The Deputy General Secretary also resigned from her former employer, SATAWU to assume her full-time status with the organisation as per the provisions of our constitution.

These developments constituted one of the most important turning points in the life of DETAWU.

We had to contend with our former comrade's concerted efforts to discredit DETAWU with a sole intention of stalling our progress through the use of propaganda, to tarnish the image and credibility of the leadership in general but that of the General Secretary in particular as he was viewed as being instrumental in spearheading the project.

The political and organisational onslaught included conniving with some employers not to grant DETAWU organisational rights, denying us access to workplaces with a hope that with no income the Union would severely paralyzed and eventually die.

At the time, one remembered the words of Martin Luther King Junior when he said, I quote,

“In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends,”

Our most somber moment was the unexpected passing of our founding President, comrade June Dube. We were not far ready to lose any of the National leaders let alone the President. May his soul rest in peace. We are still healing from that dreadful moment.

As the incline become steep and the loneliness too much to bear, we soldiered on propelled by the primary reasons why DETAWU was formed, which I can sum-up as, provide decent service to members, promote good governance, accountability, transparency, tolerance of divergent views, worker control, internal democracy, and fighting corruption.

These were the principles that had diminished from the organisation which most of us once called home for many years.

Despite the many challenges we were faced with at the time, including lack of resources, no infrastructure, demoralised officials due to no pay or low stipends, and ongoing death threats on the General Secretary, there was one challenge we did not anticipate, and that was an increasing sense of personal entitlement some of the founding officials. We were forced to grapple with this challenge as it sought to threaten and undermine our course and existence, I am glad to say that we have since overcome this cancer.

Having faced countless adversities, we continued to maintain unity and cohesion guided by our cardinal pillars of self-sustainability, organisational discipline, militancy, international solidarity, equity and gender equality, non-sexism, and non-racialism.

We pride ourselves for having obtained successive clean annual audit reports with not even a single qualification since DETAWU's inception. Our continued strength lies in our administrative capacity which has amongst other factors contributed to the resilience of DETAWU.

We pride ourselves on a network of dedicated and loyal comrades, who are passionate about the cause. We continue to win the majority of cases on behalf of our members in different workplaces, Bargaining Councils, and the CCMA.

Our mutual and valued relationship with the SETAs' has to a great extent enabled us to build our internal administrative capacity in meeting organisational needs and fulfilling our member's expectations. Through this relationship, we are proud to contribute to the country's skills development and empower the country's workforce.

The current economic climate, underpinned by the high unemployment rate and alarming skills shortages, sends a loud message to all of us that we need to double our efforts and tackle the triple burden of unemployment, poverty, and inequality that continue to bedevil our Nation.

We are proud to have been at the forefront in the realisation of the birth of our Federation, SAFTU, which gave us a home and a sense of belonging. This came at a time of uncertainty, where workers were yearning for a mass-based fighting worker's organisation, that is worker-controlled to provide the militancy, strategic and political leadership in dealing with the challenges facing the workers and the working class as a whole.

The birth of AFTU which DETAWU together with other Unions championed presented a fundamental paradigm shift in the Trade Union movement and brought back the fast diminishing hope and restored the growing sense of despair amongst workers.

The most important character of SAFTU is her independence from any political formation and influence but still retains her apolitical outlook in pursuit of the working-class struggles because we know that workers do not reside in their workplaces but they constitute an integral part of their communities. We as well as SAFTU are not apolitical.

The birth of DETAWU and the number of other Unions including the birth of SAFTU was unprecedented and an unfortunate political development which we never anticipated due to our previous political life we strongly believed in the principle of "One Country, One Federation" and "One Industry, One Union" of which we still do.

Many of us never imagined that there would be apathy, political fragmentation, and disintegration of the once-revered worker's formations in the scale in which it happened which was as a result of a complete

political betrayal of the founding principles of this organisation, such as worker control, democratic management of the organisations, tolerance of different views as an integral part of the political life of COSATU as we understood it.

The era of the great political purge, political implosion, and unethical leadership behaviour became unbearable and led to the exodus expulsions and resignations of those who would not toe the line and those who were perceived as a threat to the entrenchment of palace politics agenda whose sole aim was to hollow out and weaken the Trade Union movement. The formation of alternative Trade Unions including ourselves as DETAWU and the birth of SAFTU become impossible to avoid.

Despite these historic political challenges, our commitment to the noble principle of “One Country and One Federation” remains firm because the unity of workers as a class in itself, and, as a class for itself remains sacrosanct even more today than it ever did.

We continue to build a strong DETAWU, we dare not be complacent given the potential political pitfalls associated with the repetition of history.

As DETAWU we are proud to be one of the militants, fearless and instrumental affiliates of SAFTU. We have waged battles against employers on our own and alongside other Unions who are not within our Federation because unity and worker-to-worker solidarity are sacrosanct in a struggle against the brutal and unscrupulous employers. We continue to do this without apologising for our stance.

We have realised that the revolutionary task of building SAFTU is not smooth, it is characterised by political twists and turns and potential dangers that seek to derail the project of building a politically independent Federation.

We dare not join the group of political liquidators who are hell-bent on sponsoring the political destabilisation of SAFTU which is seen as a beacon of political hope by many organised and unorganised workers.

We aim to build a strong SAFTU that is capable of being the voice of the voiceless workers, and DETAWU must aim to be a Political Spear whilst SAFTU must remain a Political Shield for all the organised and non-unionised workers across all the sectors of the economy, in particular the most vulnerable and neglected workers such as Security Officers, Truck Drivers, Bus Drivers, Cleaners, Toll Collectors and others.

Our task, as part of the Federation, is to implement various campaigns to take over the commanding heights of the economy and place it under the democratic control of the working class. We are rightfully positioned and geared to overhaul the political, economic, and social systems of this country for the benefit of all.

As we commemorate our 5th anniversary, we must always remember the important role the Trade Union movement played in dismantling the apartheid and serving as a reliable political instrument at the disposal of workers, even though its colonial features are still haunting the post-apartheid society 26 years into our democracy, this is a tragedy.

The Trade Union movement remains under siege, we continue to experience fundamental structural key challenges such as Trade Union Proliferation, Fragmentation, Political and Ideological degeneration, lack of unity and cohesion, dwindling numbers of Unionised workers, and shrinking revenue base which undermines our ability to mount sustainable battles against employers, neoliberal policies, choreographed attack on collective bargaining, the downward variation of working conditions, rise of precarious work or labour brokers, lack of worker-to-worker or human

solidarity, absence of radical campaigns program, Imperialist Globalization and workplace restructuring and outsourcing

As DETAWU, our existence has always been based on the need to strengthen collective bargaining to secure improved wages, enhanced working and living conditions for workers. The vast changes in the organisation of labour over time have advanced significant challenges on us as organised worker's formations to remain a force to be reckoned with.

As we march forward towards a decade, we must commit to building the organisation through membership growth that will enable our participation in the structures of the Bargaining Councils of the sectors we organise.

This is the immediate challenge facing DETAWU which is attributed to the snail pace of our membership growth, we have overcome it. It must be declared a thing of the past.

Membership growth and retention will remain a pipe dream if we do not tighten our service to members. As we celebrate our 5th anniversary there must be no member who leaves our offices unsatisfied with the service we provide. The only reason workers join any Union including ourselves is to get service and protection against their employers, nothing more nothing less.

We make a loud call to all organisers, officials, shop stewards, and leaders to ensure that service to members becomes our primary preoccupation if we are serious about winning our member's confidence and trust including those who are insulting us every day on our Facebook page.

We are an organisation that accepts constructive criticism and from their comments though sometimes unnecessary rude we aim to improve and get better as an organisation.

As we begin a new path to the next five years, we can no longer accept sheer laziness and lack of commitment from some officials, this too must be declared a thing of the past, and DETAWU must rise for her to rise we require maximum determination, loyalty and commitment from all officials and staff.

If we do not have major challenges in servicing and retaining our members, then we should not have excuses not to grow our beloved DETAWU to be a force to reckon with. As we navigate the terrain of the working-class struggles, we should always remain a purpose-driven organisation.

The Sectors in which DETAWU organises have historic, systematic, and deep-rooted challenges haunting workers. The private Security Industry, although having realised exponential growth over the years has deep-rooted challenges, some of which continue unabated and unresolved.

Although regulated, the industry for a long time has been harbouring elements of exploitation of its workforce, some of whom do not enjoy full benefits. They continue to be subjected to insecure employment, appalling working conditions, low wages, long working hours, and some with no benefits when they die or retire.

Exploitation and non-compliance in this industry takes away the hard-fought gains by workers who are at the receiving end of such unacceptable practices. The increase in the number of unregistered and non-compliant businesses has resulted in the mushrooming of fly-by-night companies that do not pay the minimum wage and end up undercutting the market, contributes, and perpetuates the recurring view that the Industry at large is exploitative.

This Private Security industry is one of the least transformed and requires a plan of action to better the conditions of workers and contribute to the economy of this Country. Its transformation is non-negotiable and the maintenance apartheid status quo system through monopoly must be resisted with the contempt it deserves. We call upon progressive employers to unite and push back all the remnants of racism and apartheid holding the Industry back and we must position ourselves as the catalyst for change.

Workers will not realise any progress should these issues remain unresolved. We need to create and harness a conducive operational environment for the benefit of all that will fit into the Industry value chain commencing with how it is perceived, how it values its workers, how it is monopolised by larger players, who are overwhelmingly white males which creates an uneven playing field.

The Private Security Industry Regulatory Authority's capacity to carry out its statutory mandate remains a concern. There is a need to strengthen and enhance the capacity of PSIRA to meet the demands of this vulnerable Industry.

We welcome the birth of the Private Security Industry Bargaining Council. Our objective in advocating for this Council was motivated by the quest to create not only better salaries, benefits, and better working conditions but also to drive compliance and a broader transformative agenda and creation of equal opportunities for all.

However, it is interesting to note that Security workers have not realised the value of the Bargaining Council as yet. We hope that this Council will not be used to further pursue the monopolistic agenda and neglect fundamental issues of transformation in the Industry. As we mark our 5th

anniversary we make a clarion call for the Council to strive for objectivity in regulating the Industry without the influence of competing interests. Our support to the Council is underpinned by workers interests is not a blank cheque.

We wish to also highlight our concern at the spike in security officers' killings in the country. Since the beginning of this year, we have lost more than 32 security officers who were killed in the line of duty, many more are nursing work-related gunshots wounds.

The attacks on Security Officers have become prevalent and, as such, it urgently needs to be addressed by all stakeholders, we expect the Council and PSIRA to provide leadership in policy formulation to respond to these challenges.

The Council is now more than 2 years old since its registration on 21 June 2018, regrettably it has failed to take off and champion Industry redress and clean it from all ills.

Tomorrow marks the close of Transport Month, the Road Freight sector is also not immune to challenges. Road Freight is the backbone of any country's economy in this country it contributes above 7% to the country's GDP and represents a workforce of approximately 70 000 to 90 000 workers.

We make a clarion call to our frontline troopers that we must ensure that the interest of workers in this sector should prevail. The protection of workers and the promotion of fair labour practices should be of utmost priority to us.

A few months ago, we saw several trucks burnt down after some truckers downed tools, this was an attempt to send a message to the government and the private sector, that local truck drivers should be prioritised over

foreign Nationals, though we condemn the lawlessness and we support the call as a matter of principle.

Equally, we condemn employers who continue to exploit foreign Nationals by paying them less than their South African counterparts. This practice will fuel the ongoing protests against the hiring of foreign Nationals given the high unemployment rate in this country.

Industry leadership and government have failed to cease the moment and use this situation to drive a Policy change and impose quotas to regulate the employment of foreign Nationals to aggressively enforce those quotas by levying stiff penalties against employers who employ illegal foreign nationals.

This sector is one in which non-standard forms of employment and outsourcing influence job security, and liberalisation and reform have gone hand in hand with high levels of competition. These factors have harmed conditions of work and to some degree the level of Bargaining in the Sector.

They have also led to increased stress levels Transport workers due to demands placed on them.

The lack of regulations also has a negative impact on the respect for and protection and fulfillment of worker's rights.

Transport workers are susceptible to a range of work-related disorders, including fatigue, stress, sleep deprivation, health disorders, these in turn can lead to road fatalities, while some collisions are caused by drivers who are not adequately trained or trucks with mechanical challenges.

We have noted with concern exploitative tendencies in the Sector where workers are being short-paid or placed on shorter shifts than what is stipulated in the Main Collective Agreement of the Road Freight Industry.

Other issues reported include cases of employees being ordered to pay the company for operational damages or loss out of their own pockets. The practice is procedurally flawed and is an instance of non-compliance with Section 37 of the Main Collective Agreement.

The sector is notorious for using labour brokers to undermine job security and reverse the hard-fought worker's gains.

All these challenges should propel us as DETAWU to reinforce our commitment to organisational building to be able to effectively participate in various structures of the Sectors' Bargaining Councils. This is what we are gearing towards as we open a new chapter.

We know that all these challenges will not rollout without a push and a fight, they will not disappear through podium declarations and boardroom engagements but will require a strong, militant, and campaigning DETAWU.

Therefore, we call upon our front-line troopers, the organisers, and shop stewards to heed our Thuma mina call to build the Union to be a force to be reckoned with.

We are approaching the end of this year faced with an unprecedented crisis that has affected us economically and socially. Society and major industries globally are currently grappling with the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. South Africa's economy has taken a hit during the COVID-19 pandemic, leaving most of the country's population frustrated as the future looks increasingly bleak.

Covid-19 has pushed the black working class and the poor further into a dark hole.

The National Treasury's projections indicate that South Africa could lose up to 7 million jobs and see unemployment surge up from 29.1% to 50%. The economy is projected to contract by 6.4%. It is indisputable that the economy is in a state of a crisis that necessitates a radical shift not only in Policy direction but productive and social relations.

Long before COVID-19 workers were already hurting from the existing challenges in the labour sector. Their situation has been worsened by the necessary coronavirus response measures, more than 3 million people have reportedly lost their jobs since the start of the COVID-19 lockdown. Although we are currently under Lockdown Level 1, the effects of the pandemic on businesses will not dissipate immediately.

There are still tensions in workplaces as workers have to contend with several issues, including long hours, lack of personal protective equipment, salary cuts, the threat of retrenchment, and salary increase freezes.

Some employers are opportunistically using this crisis to retrench their workers. Section 189, permits employers to dismiss employees for operational requirements, has long been used as a tool to punish Trade Unions and workers. Under Section 189, the Union has no power to stop a retrenchment decision by the employer which is often fictitious.

The only recourse the Union has is to call a strike or refer the matter to the labour court, which is essentially another tedious and laborious legal process. The bottom line is that workers are bearing the worst brunt.

As organized labour, we need to be vigilant and interrogate distress claims by companies, especially big business. We know there are challenges due

to the pandemic, but workers and their representatives must be included in proper consultations. We need to be proactive and anticipate attacks by employers and actively engage them about the future. This pandemic propels us to adapt to change for us to remain relevant in representing workers' interests.

COVID-19 has exposed the ugly UIF corruption, structural leadership decay, and operational inadequacy, as DETAWU we publicly challenged the minister to cease the moment and embark on a renewal and recapacitating of the department to allow it to fulfill its mandate and review its turnaround times when processing worker's claims.

We are confronted by difficult times as Unions, membership subscription fees have fallen, except in strategic sectors that remained operational during the lockdown. The smaller Unions seem to have disappeared or seriously struggling financially. Bigger unions will possibly survive, some will merge, others will be deregistered.

So, it goes without saying that as DETAWU, we remain grateful that we are still standing and we should consolidate even further to withstand future trials.

We should also be ready to deal with the impact of automation and the digital revolution which is being increasingly felt in various Sectors. We need to begin now to focus on issues of empowering our workforce with the necessary skills to meet the requirements of this imminent technological change.

We need to influence the SETAS' to drive skills development programmes that will enhance the level of skills of our workforce to meet the standard of employment presented by this revolution.

Change will not wait for us; we need to play an intricate and proactive role in the processes of up-skilling our people and retraining them so that everyone can benefit from the Fourth Industrial Revolution and not be outmaneuvered by capitalism. The labour movement as protectors of the working majority and potential pillars of democracy had better move fast if we are to remain relevant in the future.

We cannot allow the material gains achieved for workers to diminish. Such difficult times provide us with an opportunity to test and renew established negotiating tactics and strategies. As DETAWU, we should accept this challenge and ready ourselves to confront it.

Despite all our organizational limitations, DETAWU remains the beacon of hope to many vulnerable workers who are facing brutal oppression and exploitation from ruthless employers who are often driven by selfish profit accumulation.

As we enter another era of transformational leadership to realise a decade of existence and relevance, we need to as the leaders of DETAWU display the true measure of leadership through influence.

It is the leader that makes the position. Real leadership is being the person others will gladly and confidently follow and defend.

As we commemorate our 5th anniversary, we dare not forget the huge political battles that lie ahead of us as a Union and the working-class movement.

Karl Marx taught us that we seek to change the world, but not under conditions of our own choosing,

Comrades, allow me to remind you that we are pursuing a class struggle under a hostile domestic and global environment whereby imperialist and capitalist domination is gaining momentum and this brutal system continues to shape the entire society out of its own political image.

This requires formidable Trade Unions to push back all the evil deeds directed to workers and the working class hence the dire need to build a strong DETAWU.

As we move from here all DETAWU Members, Now and Forever, must be guided by a universal slogan that must be the embodiment of our organizational life as Cadres of DETAWU, that building organizational levers and provision of quality service to members is none negotiable.

Our main call to all our shop stewards, leaders, organisers, and staff for the next 5 years as we enter the first decade, is to organise and recruit for admission in key Bargaining Councils.

We should make it a point that when we celebrate our first decade, we must be direct participating members of at least Road Freight and Security Bargaining Councils.

Self, political, and revolutionary discipline must be the embodiment of the entire organizational culture, and the organization itself must remain resilient and also try to be politically relevant at all material times and conditions.

LENIN taught us that

An organisation that fails to purge itself is doom to fail and may not see its distant political future”.

DETAWU must survive the current and future storms so it can nature a political heritage that must be passed down to future generations.

Crucial to our success as DETAWU is the solidarity of our members – that collective desire to fight for something greater.

As I conclude program director, let me remind us that ending gender-based violence should be a priority for all of us, particularly men as perpetrators. Ensuring the safety of women and girls should be the uppermost on our agenda as our Nation battles alarming levels of this scourge.

On behalf of the entire DETAWU membership and leadership, I wish to express my sincere condolences to all those who lost their loved ones through to the covid-19 pandemic and well wishes to those who survived it.

Amilcar Cabral says “claim no victories, tell no lies, expose all lies whenever they are told, do not musk difficulties”.

The necessity never to tell lies weighs heavy on our shoulders, as we celebrate our 5th anniversary, we make a vow that our agenda as this generational leadership would not have ended until we secure admission in our sector’s Bargaining Councils. We will build organisational machinery, we shall strengthen organisational capacity. We shall leave no stone unturned to achieve these targets.

We are marching forward, the revolutionary march towards building a militant, self-sustainable. Independent and campaigning DETAWU is irreversible and unstoppable.

As DEATWU, asesabi, asinavalo, asijiki, siyaphambili futhi asinamahloni.

Tonight, is a joyous night hope you make it a memorable moment.

Happy 5th anniversary detawu happy 5th anniversary

Long live DETAWU long live

Khula detawu khula

Amandla!!!

Niyabesaba na?

I thank you, program director