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DEMOCRATISED TRANSPORT LOGISTICS AND ALLIED WORKERS UNION OFFICE OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY

PRESS RELEASE

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DETAWU FINDS LITTLE TO CELEBRATE THIS MAY DAY

The Democratised Transport Logistics and Allied Workers Union (DETAWU) wishes all workers a happy May Day and congratulates the South African Federation of Trade Unions (SAFTU) on its fifth anniversary.

It is, however, disheartening that workers have very little to celebrate given the devastating impact the Covid-19 pandemic has had on the economy. An estimated 1.5 million jobs were lost in 2020, adding to the already unprecedented levels of the unemployed. Even worse, daily numerous companies announce their intention to cut more jobs relegating more South Africans to a bleak future.

This comes at a time when the budget of the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) has been cut to the bone; forcing it to operate without part-time commissioners and by so doing effectively trimming away the buffer between exploited workers and unscrupulous employers. In the past year, workers have not only lost their jobs but have had to endure the pain of losing loved ones to this ruthless pandemic. DETAWU sends its condolences to all those who have been affected in this manner.

More infuriating, however, is watching the same government that introduced progressive labour legislation in this country, relentlessly chip away at collective bargaining by refusing to negotiate new settlements or honour previous ones. The attitude displayed by the government in the past year has had the unintended consequence of emboldening employers into thinking they can flout regulation without consequence. The closure of Greyhound is a case in point, where a corporate of KAP Industrial Holdings' stature deliberately skipped crucial steps in the Section 189 process.

For DETAWU, the collapse of the country's rail infrastructure is of particular concern, as it impacts the working class directly given rail is the most affordable mode of transport. We have noted the utterances made by Transport Minister Fikile Mbalula and the new Group CEO of Passenger Rail Agency of SA Zolani Matthews with regards to reviving the rail service. Truth be told, similar promises were made countless times before when previous CEOs were appointed. We urge all involved to ensure promises are kept this time around.

To stem the further destabilisation of the trucking industry, DETAWU is calling on the Department of Labour to fast-track legislation regulating the employment of non-South Africans in all sectors. We also call on the government to strengthen border controls by ridding the ports

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of entry of corrupt officials and replace them with patriotic, honest officials; erect adequate fencing as well as deploy the South African National Defence Force to effectively man our borderlines to curb the influx of illegal immigrants.

DETAWU is also worried that if left unchecked, the seemingly orchestrated continuous attacks on the country's judiciary will lead to a complete erosion of the people's trust and confidence in the crucial role it plays in our democracy. As a trade union, the judiciary is our last line of defence against errant employers; we therefore call on those who have been leading the attacks to stop.

Finally, it would be insincere to present the labour movement as completely blameless for the various problems bedevilling the working class. The weakened representation of trade unions within some bargaining councils is one of the issues we have identified as a crucial factor that has led to workers losing hard-won gains in recent years.

When DETAWU celebrated its fifth anniversary late last year, we used the moment to introspect and look at the organisation critically knowing that even though as a young trade union DETAWU punched above its weight, more work needed to be done specifically with regard to strengthening our representation within bargaining councils of sectors we organise. To this end, we recently launched a national recruitment campaign to ensure we strengthen our membership base so we can wage a war against the exploitation of the working class.

DETAWU also calls for more revolutionary unity and improved cooperation among the various federations in the country. Divided labour formations weaken the working class and make it impossible to confront and defeat capitalism.

We envision the kind of cooperation that will see federations jointly coordinate various campaigns much the same way as they do on international solidarity programmes.

Having recently affiliated with the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) in pursuit of international struggles and international solidarity, DETAWU wishes transport workers the world over a happy May Day.

For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact:

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