

Declaration of the Working-Class Summit, 21-22 July 2018, Soweto

A new era in the history of the South African working class began in Soweto on 21-22 July 2018, when representatives from over 147 South African working-class organisations represented by more than 1000 delegates assembled to unite workplace and community struggles in the Working-Class Summit (WCS).

Its importance and relevance has been proved by the latest statistics on unemployment, poverty and inequality which showed that:

- a) Unemployment is up from the already shocking figure of 26.7% to 27.2%. The expanded rate, which includes discouraged work seekers, is up by 0.5% to 37.2%. The number of discouraged work seekers increased to 2.9-million people. 105,000 jobs were lost in the key sector of manufacturing. In every province except Gauteng and Western Cape, more people are unemployed than working.
- b) In 2015, 55,5% of the population - 30.4 million people - lived below the upper-bound poverty line of R992 a month. 40% lived below the lower-bound poverty line of R544 and 25.2% had to live below the food poverty line of R441, just enough for mere existence.
- c) About two-thirds of South Africa's wealth is held by the top 1% and about 90% by the top 10%". In 2017, 82% of all growth in wealth went to the top 1% and the bottom half saw no increase at all.
- d) South Africa's top 49 wealthiest men, and one woman, could use their collective wealth of R329 billion to pay 1 million people the new national minimum wage for eight years.
- e) On the same day the employment figures were published, BankservAfrica reported that for the second month running, the average South African salary declined, by 2.4% in June from the same month in 2017.

These shocking figures show why South Africa is the protest capital of the world and why the Working-Class Summit was so necessary, to turn the tide against the attacks on jobs and living standards which are pushing more and more South Africans into poverty and despair.

The Summit met the challenge brilliantly. It laid the basis for building a new, independent and democratic mass working-class movement.

It made huge strides forward to lay the basis for building a new, independent, democratic and militant mass working-class movement. It was characterised by a commitment to unite the employed and unemployed, women and men, young and old, those in the informal sector and in more secure work, workplace and rural and urban community struggles, education and health lobby groups, the students and the landless, the homeless, environmental groups, mining communities, those fighting against the water crisis, the campaign on HIV and AIDS and the scourge of violence against women and children, into mass campaigns to struggle for a truly free, just, democratic and equal society.

As SAFTU President Mac Chavalala said in his keynote speech: "As the working class we have been on a junk status for far too long. We are not here to moan but to announce a radical and revolutionary programme that will unite ourselves behind common demands and mass programme of mobilization.

“Our warning to all those who seek to keep the status quo is simple – the holiday is over! From now going forward, we will engage you in the streets and the boardrooms.”

The Working Class Summit endorsed the binding principles around which it will unite. These fundamental principles are internationalism, anti-racism, anti-sexism, anti-patriarchy and anti-xenophobia, and unanimously agreed that capitalism is the common cause of the misery experienced by the majority.

It was agreed that the working class movement must be independent and democratically built from the bottom-up and to build working class power in every workplace, every community, and society in general, to defeat the system of capitalist accumulation that has pauperised the working class across the continent and created the widest inequality in the world.

It was resolved to convene working class assemblies across the country, in cities and towns, factories and farms, townships and informal settlements, to discuss how to unite struggles of the poor. South Africa is the protest capital of the world but these struggles; some of them well organised and have secured many victories, but largely localized, isolated from each other and fragmented.

A special appeal was made for trade unionists to become active in these struggles because they are members of communities as well as unionists. In this way, the foundations of the all-important unity of the working class can be established.

The Summit broke into commissions, which debated all the main issues affecting the lives of the majority of our people, and formulated detailed demands. The plenary then adopted a programme to take the struggle forward. The reports from each commission are attached as Annexure 1. A full list of the participating organisations is in Annexure 2.

These are some of the main issues, which the commissions debated, and the Summit adopted:

1. The economy, jobs, poverty, inequality and corruption

Capitalism and the implementation of neoliberal policies by the ANC government since 1994 is proving to have no solutions to the plight and the miseries confronting the working class.

The false optimism, which greeted Ramaphosa’s presidency, has evaporated. There has been no new dawn, only an even worse nightmare for poor South Africans, as the new president’s neoliberal economic policies are exposed as policies to prop up monopoly capitalism that has created the widest inequality in the world and is now making the rich even richer and the poor even poorer.

Government and employers are hell-bent on taking away workers’ rights and cutting their living standards through savage austerity budgets, increases in VAT, fuel levy and transport costs, a poverty national minimum wage, amendments to labour laws to disarm organised workers by undermining their right to strike and render workers powerless as well as the latest move to declare bus drivers and educators as essential-service workers.

Casualisation, outsourcing, privatization and deindustrialization are all on the up despite victories in cities like Johannesburg Metro and certain universities.

Corruption and the looting of resources in both particular in the private sector but also in the public sector remains unpunished and continues to deprive the fiscus of billions of

rands which could be used to improve the lives of the people. More billions are being lost in capital transfers onto tax havens and tax evasion by big business.

Steinhoff, the biggest corporate scandal in SA history, has not led to any prosecutions.

It was agreed that we must not seek to save capitalism from its unending crisis, but rather we must save the working class and humanity from the barbarism of capitalism.

Given the scandalous levels of inequality, it was agreed to demand:

- a) The introduction of a wealth tax and solidarity tax,
- b) Implementation of legislation such as a general anti-avoidance tax act to halt base erosion, profit shifting and the loss of the country's resources to illicit financial flows, that not only reduces the tax base but more significantly perpetuates wage inequality.
- c) A review of the corporate taxes that were around 45% during the apartheid era but driven down to 28% after 1994.
- d) The review of personal income tax to ensure that those who can pay more make more contributions to the fiscus.
- e) Capping the salaries of those earning gruesome amounts.
- f) Finding creative ways of effectively taxing incomes gained in the financial markets.
- g) Raising government revenue to 33% of the GDP.
- h) Scrapping of the Labour Bills that have been introduced to undermine the right of workers to strike and the introduction of a National Minimum Wage that will give workers a living wage and help close the apartheid wage gaps and introduce a new incomes policy.

The summit recognised that unemployment is the most pressing problem facing the working class. In the short-term we demand:

1. Reduction of working hours to share work.
2. The creation of 5 million jobs over next 5 years.
3. Five million young people to be placed in education institutions or internships
- 4 Oppose recent passed poverty minimum wage and amendments to labour laws.
5. Support the three-day general strike and mass occupation of the main cities.
6. Strengthen community struggles
7. A Basic Income Grant
8. Social ownership of land

The summit called for radical social change based on social equality, solidarity and emancipation, though nationalisation of the commanding heights of the South African economy under workers' control.

2. Free decolonised, quality public education

Our system of education is in crisis. There is insufficient funding, poor infrastructure, inappropriate content, unimpressive outcomes, etc. The death of school children falling into pit latrines epitomizes this neglect.

Urgent measures are needed to address the specific problems of students, teachers and other staff, and opening up more opportunities for graduates.

However the underlying problem remains that education remains unequally distributed along class, racial and spatial lines. Private schools tend to be better resourced and managed. Even public schools do not receive the same amount of resources from the state across different provinces, areas and schools.

There is a strong legacy of colonialism in the South African education system, a problem highlighted by the #FeesMustFall and #OutsourcingMustFall movements in 2015 and 2016. The content, curriculum and methods still reflect a past we want to leave behind. Patriarchy, racism and classism remain features of the education system.

Privatisation will not solve the crisis. The control of education by business or the adoption of business principles by the state schools leads to the commodification of education, which is a 'public good' that must be accessible to all, not just to those with the money to pay.

At the root of the problems is an education system based on capitalism and its drive for profit. The children and youth of the working class are educated to prepare them for exploitation and oppression by the system. The only lasting solution is to get rid of the capitalist system itself.

3. Free Healthcare for all

There has been a collapse of the public health system as well as a crisis in the private health system. The Summit demanded the immediate strengthening of the public health system so that it meets the accreditation criteria of the National Health Insurance system and warned against further privatisation. The priority focus should be on primary levels of care from households, to clinics, district hospitals and a provincial health system.

Community Health Workers (CHW) and nurses should be employed in sufficient numbers to provide primary care of a good standard without being overstressed. They should be recognised, accredited and employed formally by the health system with fair conditions of service and remuneration. The CHW and nurses have a critical and fundamental role in the functioning of the NHI, and therefore their participation in the decision-making on NHI implementation is crucial.

There is too little time available for public input into both the NHI and the Medical Schemes Bills. SAFTU will send a formal letter to the Minister of Health requesting extension for submissions so to give sufficient time for full community and worker consultation on the Bills. This will require awareness-raising, information sharing, mobilisation by unions and their members and civil society organisations on the NHI to expose the points raised above and to produce mandated responses to the Bills.

4. Climate and environment commission of the working class summit

The underlying cause of excessive greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change is a capitalist system that constantly seeks to expand production by the cheapest means possible, to maximise profits.

It depends on the exploitation of workers around the world and the depletion of the planet's natural resource base. It is also a system that creates massive waste in the form

of production that exceeds demand, or in the form of goods that are bought but thrown away.

The rich and middle class in the developed countries enjoy the benefits of the development path that they took but we cannot continue to follow that path. We have to create an economy where poverty and inequality are eliminated, and issues of environmental sustainability are addressed.

Climate change will destroy any development we have achieved and the working class already pays the heavier price. We are already paying the costs of the poisoning of our water and air by fossil fuel extraction and processing, the loss of homes to floods and fire, starvation when subsistence crops fail and livestock getting thinner and/or dying, farmworkers working outside suffering heat exhaustion or not being paid if they are sent home due to weather, and the loss of fishers' livelihoods.

While electricity production is the major cause of carbon emissions in South Africa, the majority of the working class suffers energy poverty – they are either not connected to the grid, or they cannot afford enough electricity for a decent standard of living. Any just transition must involve access to clean energy to all.

We support the one million-climate jobs campaign and the demand to move to a socially owned renewable energy programme. The Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Programme currently puts electricity supply in private hands, mainly foreign companies. Down the road, they might charge ever-higher prices or deploy electricity in a way that is not in the interests of the working class.

We call for social ownership and control of our water, electricity supply and natural resources. The Constitution states that everyone has the right to have access to sufficient food and water and we will resist privatisation of water and demand the use of natural and environmentally sustainable sources of water to guarantee that this right is a reality for all South Africans.

We must mobilise for a deep transformation of the current economic system of production and consumption, while at the same time including protecting workers' shop-floor concerns. We have to find a way of reconciling the interests of workers in energy-related industries and those of the working class facing the impacts of climate change.

We have to defend workers against exploitation. Saving and creating jobs is a core concern. As a united working class, we must stand behind workers on their issues as we transition to a low-carbon economy.

5. Informal Economy

Informal workers, including taxi workers, fishers, community health workers, street traders, waste-pickers and others fall into two categories - those who have an employer but who are employed informally like taxi workers - and those who are self employed, otherwise known as "own-account".

Where unemployment is high, as in South Africa, millions of people turn to own-account work to make a living. They are often criminalised or discriminated against, have goods confiscated or evicted from where they work.

Their contribution to the economy is not recognised, they are not consulted and are forced to go to court to challenge decisions of local government that negatively impact on their livelihoods.

The Summit backed demands of informal workers for: -

- a) Full and productive decent paid work for all, including creating socially useful paid work to improve the quality of education.
- b) An end to the so-called "job creation" programmes that destroys existing work.
- c) Full and equal participation in planning the economy, housing and services.
- d) Productive use of public spaces to improve the lives of the users of these spaces – including pavements and parks as places of work.
- e) Recognition of the multiple taxes paid by informal workers.
- f) Informal worker organisations to be recognized as stakeholders in negotiations all levels of government, but especially at local government level.
- g) Urban development must be people centred – not selective "regeneration" for a middle class minority to the exclusion of the majority.

It was agreed to build the organised strength of informal workers, and form alliances with local communities who are the users of the services that informal workers provide. For an example, there was recently a civil society march in Durban in support of the demands of the street traders.

We also need to build and sustain alliances between formal and informal workers within value chains – between farm workers, the food factory workers and food vendors, between chemical workers and waste pickers and between street vendors, taxi drivers, waste pickers with municipal workers and other public-sector workers.

We should invite each other to our meetings so there can be regular sharing of problems and information. We must build solid partnerships in struggle. We should have formalised engagements between SAFTU and informal workers as SAFTU is building its provincial, regional and local structures.

We demand negotiations at national and local government level on issues such as inclusion in making laws and policies, an end to harassment and recognition of the taxes paid by informal workers.

6. Mine-affected and impacted communities

Mining in South Africa was based on cheap migrant labour; to a large extent this continues to this day. The colonial and Apartheid objective was to prevent the African majority from becoming an established and potentially revolutionary working class. It also sustained the uneven ownership of land and industry.

A racial capitalist system was evolved in which a landless African majority was left with nothing but their ability to work on white-owned farms, mines and industries. White settlers were citizens while the African majority became subjects.

After 1994 many leaders of newly elected ANC became mesmerised with the possibility of self-enrichment, which enticed them into an alliance with global and local mining capital. Ministers of mining, many Provincial Premiers, and other ministers became prominent board members, shareholders and credit billionaires through a revolving door between the ruling party and mine bosses was established.

Thus, instead of land redistribution and restitution, we have witnessed corporate land grabbing by the mining industry, which dislodged rural communities from mineral-rich land.

Thus land, labour and minerals are intimately intertwined. No wonder then that many rural communities fear that the policy drive for land expropriation without compensation amounts to little more than a Trojan horse to grab mineral-rich land from customary communities for the purpose of mining.

Working class communities want the nationalisation of the commanding heights of the economy including mining. Mines should be expropriated without compensation and co-managed by near-mine communities and mine workers as part of a working class revolution. In this process no company should be allowed to do asset-stripping in order to subvert or spite the revolutionary process.

Demanding short and medium-term reforms and having radical campaigns and actions to enforce such reforms will educate the working class about the intransigence of the ruling class and its reactionary insistence not to make any concessions to the working class.

Mining affected communities and communities where mining is yet to take place in South Africa wants the right of communities to have continuous free, prior and informed consent and the right to say no to mining, and any aspects of the development of a mine throughout its life must be respected.

Communities want to end the system, which turns the African majority into a landless economic minority with only its labour to sell. Along with workers in particular, we want ownership to shift from foreign corporations to mine-affected communities and the working class, particularly mine workers.

Communities, along with organised mine workers, want representation on the management structures and boards of mining corporations so as to acquire the skills necessary to take control of the management, ownership and operations of mines in a future society in which the means of production will be commonly and publicly owned.

The revolutionary leadership of the working class must adopt a programme of action with defined time frames to mobilise workers and mine affected and impacted communities around these demands.

7. Land, affordable housing and service delivery

The Summit looked into the government's failures around the issue of ownership and return of the land to its rightful owners or the people. It noted that:

- a) Well over 20 000 evictions during 2017 alone. Additionally, Cape Town has seen the demolition of 26 000 informal structures at the hands of the Red Ants in the first six months of 2018.
- b) The failure to provide lands for women and children in rural areas.
- c) Lack of ownership of land by women due to discrimination or patriarchy
- d) Women and farm workers' struggles in rural areas
- e) Traditional leaders claim of ownership of land through their kids, trust etc.
- f) Tensions within the house of traditional leaders over the issue of land.
- g) Challenges around the issue of title deeds and tenure amongst rural communities.

- h) Abuse of farmland by kings, queens and politicians for their selfish interest or personal gains.
- i) Lack of land for building within the cities.
- j) Lack of renting provision or regulation on high rates around purchase or lease of land.
- k) Repossession of houses by the banking sector.

Hence it was agreed that NO possible or viable solution on land could come from the current government or system. Capitalism as a system must be crushed, defeated and is replaced by socialism as the system to resolve working class challenges in particular the land question.

There must be a land audit informed by the working class demands and perspective. Land must be expropriated without compensation by the government of the working class. All land with natural resources including ocean economy must be expropriated to the interest and benefit of the working class and for economic and social justice.

Working class formations must unite in the battles that are within the courts around the land question. All struggles by civil formation must be joined together and not be fragmented.

The Working Class Summit noted the increasing number of shack dwellers and landless people in both rural and urban areas, accompanied by high rents, and the majority of the working class not owning any property which is mainly owned by the minority white and banking sector etc., and the quality of service delivery, and the lack of proper infrastructure and hazardous places where the African working class lives.

This has come about as the result of apartheid system and inequalities, which have increased under the ANC government.

Hence land must be expropriated for those who want to build houses, in both rural and urban areas. Decent, quality and dignified houses must be provided by the government of the working class.

Housing struggles must not be separated from the water, proper sanitation, electricity and struggles for clean environment struggles. Land must be given or expropriated firstly to those who already occupy it, e.g. shack dwellers, and title deeds must be given to all those who occupy land.

There must be regulation of rates for those who want to rent. Decent house must be build close to cities and places of work, and all other needed facilities by the working class.

The working class will wage and join struggles with other parts of the country, Africa and the world by supporting all the ills in various parts of the world, which seek to undermine its unity and any agenda that is not in the best interests of socialism or the working class in general.

8. Struggle for an egalitarian society

The Summit pledged its unreserved solidarity with the Total Shutdown Campaign against gender-based violence, adopted its programs, campaign and demands and will be mobilising for the campaign.

The struggle for an egalitarian society is a struggle for a socialist society, and to overturn capitalism and all its oppressive manifestations. Discrimination on the basis of gender,

sexual orientation, nationality or identity emanates from capitalist exploitation in the country and globally. We must intensify the struggle against xenophobic attacks and discrimination against our fellow workers from other parts of the world.

The unity of working-class organisations is the best possible way to fight against entrenched norms of patriarchy and violence against women, children and the LGBTIQ community. They have an important and revolutionary role to play in raising consciousness and inculcating a culture of tolerance.

There is need to coordinate the struggles of marginalised communities and groups so that they become part of and unite the struggles of all sections of the working class in the country and not just the workers organised in the trade unions.

The Summit agreed to establish an action network or a steering committee to take up a concerted campaign against gender-based violence and the struggles of marginalised communities.

It must seek to raise awareness through educating the working class and the youth at every opportunity and draw up a memorandum of clear demands against government's dismal failure to act against gender violence and to address gender equity.

Women and men must fight together side-by-side against gender-based violence and rape, and for gender equality in every sphere of society on a broad range of working class issues such as access to jobs, housing and land.

The working class must identify with the struggles of the LGBTIQ community and other marginalised communities and pledges its solidarity or takes up its own campaigns in support.

Among such demands of the campaign must include the campaign for free and unlimited access to sanitary pads for women and girls.

There were two issues, which were discussed at all the Commissions:

9. International solidarity

The Working Class Summit stressed the need to intensify global solidarity. Informal workers for example are already represented by international organisations fighting for the recognition of informal workers. StreetNet International's slogan is "Nothing for us without us".

On the economy it was agreed that Africa has been deliberately consigned into a periphery that exports raw materials in the international division of labour by the dominant global capital. The plan of the global capitalist system is to keep Africa dependent on the global North when it comes to capital investment, which is key to a healthy growth in a capitalist economy.

We need to strengthen international work and solidarity because capitalism is essentially a global system that makes socialism impossible in one country, particularly in the periphery. We have to strive to overthrow capitalism on a worldwide scale.

We also need to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the working class around the world in meeting the climate change challenge, because emissions in any part of the world end up in one shared atmosphere creating climate change, and because the climate system is a global one – for example, melting ice at the poles creates rising sea levels everywhere.

10. A Workers' Party and the 2019 elections

The Working Class Summit unanimously agreed on the need to build working class power in all workplaces, communities and society in general.

A clear majority agreed on a need to build an independent, democratic and revolutionary working-class political party, which will be strong enough to conquer social, economic and political power, abolish the capitalist system and replace it with socialism.

It was agreed that the working class is decisive in bringing about a radical socialist change, because of their role in the production of wealth, but that it needs to draw behind it, and into the struggle, all the oppressed people. The party must be a voice for the working class, but it must also unite all those involved in the anti-capitalist struggles that seek to bring about socialism.

In this regard, such a working class party must work to unite the broadest possible front of existing working class formations, which will lead to unity discussions and joint programmes.

A revolutionary party requires not just strong leadership cadre, but it must also be democratically owned and controlled by workers and not built from the top so that workers and communities become foot-soldiers rather than architects of the new party.

The need to create a Working Class Party should not be influenced by the 2019 elections. Whilst elections will always be both a tactic and the political necessity, the Working Class Party will seek to create a party for a fundamentally change of the power relations in society. We however will discuss the approach the working class should take on the forthcoming 2019 general elections.

The process of forming this party must also be open, democratic and inclusive of all the working class so that it is not run from the top down but is a democratic vehicle to unite and mobilize the whole working class.

SAFTU in conjunction with the Steering Committee will ensure the discussion on the Working Class Party resumes and is democratically conducted in all the structures on the ground.

11. Programme of action

The Summit agreed that the working class must continue and intensify its fight on all these issues. We shall embark on the following programme of action:

- 1) We aim is to build a mass working class movement that is independent and democratically built from the bottom-up and to build working class power in every workplace, every community and society in general, to defeat the system of capitalism that has pauperised the working class across the continent and created the widest inequality in the world.
- 2) We shall keep communications between all the 147 organisations. We shall inform each other of the struggles and campaigns of each other and we shall ensure that no campaign and or struggle is isolated any more.
- 3) We shall ensure that within the next three months, we launch provincial structures and local assemblies, across the country, in cities and towns, factories and farms,

townships and informal settlements, to discuss how to unite the struggles of the poor and to co-ordinate action in support of all these demands.

- 4) We shall encourage and we shall reach out to the students in order to help reunite across party political affiliations as they did before in their struggle for free, decolonized education which has not been won fully.
- 5) We shall mobilise for a three-day general strike and mass occupation of all the cities on a date to be agreed in October 2018. All formations will forthwith discuss the timing the “siyalala edolophini” strike.
- 6) We shall mobilise a single day for mass occupation of land, an end to evictions of farmworkers, backyard dwellers, informal sector workers, etc. All formations will forthwith discuss the timing of these mass occupations to retain and reverse land dispossessions.
- 7) The Steering Committee has been appointed to drive this process. The members of the Steering Committee are:
 1. Zwelinzima Vavi SAFTU General Secretary
 2. Anele Yawa TAC General Secretary
 3. Carmia Schoeman Water Crisis Coalition
 4. John Appolis GIWUSA General Secretary
 5. Brian Ashley AIDCS Director
 6. Julekha Latib Gauteng Informal Development For Women
 7. Karl Cloete NUMSA Deputy General Secretary
 8. Mathews Hlabane MACUA
 9. Noor Nieftagodien Wits University Academic
 10. Philile Mbambo FAWU Secretariat coordinator
 11. Weizmann Hamilton Greater Eldorado Park United Civic
 12. Thembeke Baleni United Front – National
 13. Kenneth Matlawe Housing Assembly
 14. Abraham Agulhas AIDC and United Front in Western Cape
- 8) SAFTU in conjunction with the Steering Committee will ensure the discussion on the Working Class Party resumes and is democratically conducted in all the structures on the ground.
- 9) We call on all the working class formations to support the TAC led march to Gauteng legislature on the 07 August 2018 to demand the resignation of Brian Hlongwa and Qedani Mahlangu in government and all positions of leadership. The marchers will assemble at Mary Fitzgerald Square from 09:00.

We call on all working class formations that have not yet joined this process to do so. Ours is a open democratic non-sectarian approach that will benefit from participation of all the organisations of the working class irrespective of their history or relations with any of the formations already participation in the process.