

BAP 325.4 CONS (UWCO)

CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED WOMEN'S CONGRESS

(UWCO)



NAME:

The name of the organisation formed as a result of the merging of the United Women's Organisation and the Women's Front Organisation will be United Women's Congress, and will be referred to as UWCO.

AIMS AND OBJECTS:

The United Women's Congress was formed to unite all women regardless of education, occupation, colour or religion in common action to remove all political, cultural, economic and social disabilities.

MEMBERSHIP:

- a) Membership is open to all women over the age of 18 who accept the policy and programme of UWCO.
- b) Any woman who is a member of another women's organisation with similar aims to UWCO may be a member of UWCO. The final decision for membership rests with the Executive Committee.
- c) Application for membership is made on a membership form, accompanied by 25c joining fee, given to the branch or working group secretary.
- d) Every application for membership will be considered by the Executive within one month.
- e) Branch secretaries keep branch membership forms once members have been accepted by the Executive and membership cards have been written. A member must inform the Branch Secretary of her change of address, and contact the Branch Secretary of the new branch if she moves to a new area.
- f) UWCO has a code of conduct to teach members a sense of service, responsibility, initiative and discipline. It is the right of every member to take part in making UWCO policy; to take part in elections and be elected to any committee or delegation of UWCO; to submit proposals or statements to the branch or to the Executive Committee; to question and criticise any official or decision of UWCO in a constructive and responsible manner in her branch meeting, or at the branch's request, in Council or directly through the Extended Executive meetings. It is the duty of every member to understand the policy and programme of UWCO and to carry it out at all times; to take an active part in the work of her branch in organising the women and to explain the policy and programme of UWCO to these women; to educate herself about the political, social and economic problems of South Africa; to combat any rumour or propaganda that will harm UWCO; to observe discipline and accept the decisions of the majority in the branch, in Council or the Executive; to set an example by her appearance and bearing in meetings, organising work and in her daily life and never to be provoked into loss of temper; to accept without ill feeling, criticism and reprimand, raised at branch meetings or by the branch committee, and in the event of consistent breach of discipline at a meeting specially convened by the Executive with the knowledge of the Branch Committee.

- g) A Branch can, with the approval of Executive Council, suspend a member for any period or expel her for breach of discipline. Any member who has resigned or is expelled from UWCO can state her case to the Executive and can call witnesses in support of her case. Any member who has resigned or been expelled can be re-admitted on conditions determined by the Branch Committee and the Executive.

JOINING FEES AND SUBSCRIPTIONS:

- a) A joining fee of 25c must be paid with the application form for membership.
- b) A re-joining fee must be paid annually before the annual conference to retain membership.
- c) An annual subscription of R2-40 will be paid by members either as 20c a month, or in one sum.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- a) The Executive Committee is elected by the membership at the annual conference. The election is conducted by an electoral officer from outside of the organisation.
- b) The Executive will meet at least once a fortnight or as often as necessary. The quorum for meetings will be two-thirds of the total number of Executive members. Any member who is absent without apology from more than two consecutive Executive meetings will automatically lose her position. She will be replaced by a member co-opted at a Council meeting to serve on the Executive until the next conference.
- c) The Executive shall carry out the work of UWCO as directed by the Council and in accordance with the policy and programme of UWCO.
- d) The Executive shall open and operate a bank account in the name of UWCO and approve all expenditure.
- e) The Executive shall approve branch projects where possible by referring them to Council.
- f) The Executive will consist of the following portfolios with the following functions:
1. The Chairperson, who will call all Executive and General meetings; chair all Executive meetings and General meetings; be one of the three signatories to all cheques, and will open the annual conference.
  2. The Vice-Chairperson, who will assist the Chairperson in her duties and deputise for her whenever necessary.
  3. The Secretary, who will keep minutes of all meetings; administer correspondence in accordance with the wishes of the Executive; keep the records of UWCO; be one of the three signatories to cheques; give an annual report on the activities of the organisation at the annual conference.
  4. The Assistant Secretary, who will assist the Secretary in her duties and deputise for her whenever necessary.

5. The Treasurer who will administer the finance of UWCO; keep the books in proper order; draw up monthly statements to be approved by Council, and to submit an audited annual report to the conference; to be one of three signatories to cheques; to co-ordinate central fundraising as determined by Council.
6. The Assistant Treasurer who will assist the Treasurer in her duties and deputise for her whenever necessary.
7. Two Education and Training Officers, who will assist the Secretary in organising bi-monthly discussion forums as determined by Council; assist branches when requested to do so by branches or by Council; and assist in organising workshops for the organisation as determined by Council.
8. Two UDF Representatives who will represent UWCO at all UDF CC's, ensure two way communication between UWCO and UDF, and assist branches to work with the UDF Area Committees.
9. Two Volunteer Group Convenors, who will convene the Volunteer's Group to see to the organising work of UWCO as determined by the Executive or Council.

EXTENDED EXECUTIVE:

- a) The Extended Executive will consist of all Executive Members and the Branch Chairpeople.
- b) The Extended Executive will meet once a month or as often as necessary.
- c) The functions of the Extended Executive are to give leadership to the organisation particularly at branch level and to ensure proper communication between the Executive and the branch committees.
- d) The Extended Executive is not a policy making body of UWCO.

COUNCIL:

- a) The Council shall consist of the Executive Committee and three representatives from each branch and one from each working group.
- b) The Council shall meet once a month to discuss the work of UWCO or to hold educational workshops.
- c) Council's function is to carry out the policy determined at the annual conference. Council has the power to determine policy on matters not previously discussed at the annual conference. In the case of an emergency, policy decisions can be taken by the Executive Committee.
- d) Council must ratify all branch projects and hear reports on branch activities.
- e) Council will hear a report from the Volunteers Group Convenors on the organising work of UWCO and will allocate work to the Volunteers Group to follow up.
- f) Council can set up sub-committees to carry out the specified work as the need arises.

#### BRANCHES AND WORKING GROUPS:

- a) Ten or more members in an area can apply to the Executive to establish themselves as a branch of UWCO. Five members can apply to form a working group.
- b) Branch members will elect a committee when the branch is launched and then on an annual basis after the conference. The Branch Committee will consist of Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Treasurer, Branch Organiser and additional members as determined by the branch. Two members of the Executive must be present at the election of the Branch Committee.
- c) The Branch will elect two Volunteers to serve on the UWCO Volunteers Group to assist with organising work outside of their branch.
- d) Branch activities must further the aims and objects of UWCO in their area. Proposals for branch projects and reports on activities must be submitted to the Council for ratification.
- e) Branch Treasurers must collect subscription fees. All joining fees and 25% of the annual subscription fees of the branch must be given to the Executive Treasurer. Branches can open a bank account in the name of that branch of UWCO. Branches will give financial reports to Council.
- f) Branches will elect three representatives to Council meetings. Working Groups will elect one representative to Council.
- g) Branches will elect three delegates per ten members of the branch to represent them at the annual conference. Working Groups will be represented by one delegate at the conference.

#### ANNUAL CONFERENCE:

- a) The Annual Conference is the policy making body of UWCO.
- b) The Annual Conference will be convened by the outgoing Executive Committee.
- c) Office Bearers will take up positions at the conference until the new Executive Committee is elected.
- d) Decisions will be taken by voting amongst the delegates. Each delegate will have one vote, and in the case of deadlock, the Chairperson will have a casting vote.
- e) All members of UWCO can attend the annual conference as observers with full speaking rights.
- f) The Annual Conference can be divided into different sessions, open or closed to non-members of UWCO.
- g) The Election of the Executive Committee will take place at the end of the Annual Conference. Branches will nominate for each portfolio with motivations. Voting for each portfolio will be by show of hands amongst the delegates.

#### PATRONS

The Annual Conference will have the power to elect Patrons as a salute to women in UWCO who have shown outstanding leadership and commitment to the UWCO and to the struggle of women in the Western Cape.

FINANCE:

- a) All money coming to the Executive Treasurer will be paid into a bank account of UWCO. Withdrawals will be signed by two of the three signatories.
- b) Funds for the running of the organisation must come from subscriptions and fundraising activities organised by the branches and the organisation as a whole. 25% of subscriptions and branch fundraising will go to the Executive Treasurer.
- c) Outside funds may be applied for to donors approved by the Annual Conference. These funds can only be applied for for specific projects motivated for to the donors, and already operating within the organisation.
- d) An annual audited financial statement will be presented to conference.

AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION:

- a) Branches must send proposals to amend the constitution to the Executive a month before the conference. The Executive will circulate proposals to all branches before the conference.
- b) Amendments to the constitution must be passed with a two-thirds majority of the delegates at the annual conference.

DISSOLUTION:

If the Executive Committee sees the need for the dissolution of UWCO, the Chairperson shall call an emergency general meeting, which will vote on the matter. Any assets left after the dissolution will be distributed by the Executive to any organisation that it decides on.

(AS ADOPTED BY THE FIRST CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED WOMEN'S CONGRESS HELD AT ST. FRANCIS, LANGA ON 22 MARCH 1986).