



**COSATU MAY DAY RALLY ADDRESS BY**

**ANC PRESIDENT  
CYRIL RAMAPHOSA**

**1<sup>st</sup> May 2025**



**KEES TAALJAARD STADIUM, MIDDLEBURG, MPUMALANGA**

**President of COSATU, Cde Zingiswa Losi,  
General Secretary of COSATU, Cde Solly Phetoe,  
Leadership of COSATU,  
Leadership of the African National Congress,  
Leadership of the South African Communist Party,  
Leadership of the South African National Civic Organisation,  
Members of COSATU,  
Comrades and Friends,**

I bring you revolutionary greetings on behalf of the leadership and membership of the African National Congress. Across South Africa and across the world, workers are gathering today to celebrate the great victories that workers have achieved over many years.

They are gathering to declare that the struggle for the rights and interests of the working class continues – and to commit themselves to pursue that struggle.

This year, we will celebrate the 40th anniversary of the formation of Cosatu.

The founding of Cosatu on the 1st of December 1985 was a truly historic moment in the struggle for workers' rights and in the quest for the unity of the working class.

It also marked a turning point in the struggle for democracy and freedom in South Africa.

On this day, we pay tribute to the leaders and members of Cosatu who sacrificed so much for the achievement of democracy and the advancement of the rights of workers. Their contributions must never be forgotten.

Since its formation, Cosatu has been at the forefront of the struggle to fundamentally

transform our society and to build an economy from which all people benefit.

Working together with the ANC and other Alliance formations, Cosatu has led the way in forging a new labour relations regime in a democratic South Africa.

Cosatu remains the foremost representative of organised workers in South Africa, and it therefore carries the hopes and aspirations of all workers in the country.

As a federation founded on the principles of unity and solidarity, Cosatu has a responsibility to continue to work tirelessly to unite the workers of South Africa.

As we celebrate the great progress that has been made over the 30 years of our democracy, we recognise that the struggle is far from over.

The complete liberation of our people is far from being achieved.

Poverty and inequality continue to define our society. Millions of people are unemployed or struggle to earn a decent wage.

We know the great improvements that have been made in the lives of many poor and working-class South Africans. We can see the many houses that have been built, that have been connected to electricity, and that have running water and proper sanitation.

We have seen improvements in access to healthcare. Millions of children can now attend school without paying school fees, and students from poor and working-class families now receive funding to attend universities and colleges.

However, we also know that many families struggle to put food on the table. Many young



people are unable to find work.

Crime is rife in communities across the country. Violence against women and children continues unabated.

Corruption in government and in business robs our country of much-needed resources and undermines delivery of services to the people. Workers and their families are most affected by these challenges.

As a federation, as an Alliance and as a country, we are having to confront these challenges at a time of great difficulty and uncertainty. This is the first May Day being held since the 2024 elections.

The outcome of the elections, in which the ANC lost its overall majority, was a great strategic setback for the National Democratic Revolution.

It was a setback for our ongoing struggle to fundamentally transform our economy and society, and it was a setback for the struggles of the working class. But although it was a setback, it was not a defeat. We will and we can recover.

As has happened many times in our history, we have had to adapt to new conditions of struggle. We have had to change tactics, while holding firm to our principles and the pursuit of our strategic goals.

In the aftermath of these elections, As we considered these new conditions, we agreed that the best way forward was to establish an inclusive Government of National Unity.

While there are parties within the GNU that have historically opposed the transformation of our society and the interests of the working class, the GNU has agreed on certain strategic priorities and a programme of action that will take our country forward.

This programme aims to drive inclusive growth

and create jobs. It aims to tackle poverty and reduce the cost of living. It aims to build a capable and developmental state that can meet the needs of all South Africans.

In short, the GNU has developed a programme that will advance the interests and improve the lives of the poor and working class.

Importantly, all the parties to the Government of National Unity agreed to a Basic Minimum Programme of Action that protects workers' rights.

The government of national unity is not without its challenges and contradictions.

Our task as the Alliance is to manage these challenges, find common ground with our partners, and continue to pursue an agenda of progressive change.

We have seen some of the challenges of the GNU most recently in the development and adoption of the national budget.

Following engagements between parties in the GNU, as well as with other parties in Parliament and different stakeholders, we have now reached agreement that the Minister of Finance should table a revised budget to Parliament.

While this is unprecedented in the history of our democracy, it has provided important lessons not only on how we govern under these new conditions but also how we manage the budget process.

We are committed as the GNU to adopt a budget that promotes inclusive growth, protects the vulnerable and advances the development of all our people.

At the same time, we need to manage public funds in a sustainable manner.

We need to raise the necessary resources without



increasing the burden on the poor and working class, without dampening inclusive growth and without taking on a debt burden that further erodes social spending.

We welcome the contributions that Cosatu and other formations have made towards the development of the Budget, and we urge organised labour to continue to be engaged in the process. To continue to safeguard the interests of workers. We must remember that social and economic change is brought about by the organisation and mobilisation of the broad range of forces across society.

Therefore, as much as we need to contest state power, we must continue to organise our people in the workplace, on the shop floor, in institutions of learning, through professional bodies, as women and young people, and in communities.

As the Alliance, we must rebuild our structures and ensure that they are rooted within the every day struggles of our people.

At critical moments in our history, South Africans have come together to confront the challenges facing our country and to agree on common actions to address these challenges.

At this crucial time, as we confront many difficulties, we will once again come together, in an inclusive National Dialogue.

The National Dialogue is a chance for South Africans from all walks of life to shape the next chapter of our democracy.

The National Dialogue will bring together government, political parties, civil society, labour, business, traditional leaders, women, youth and community voices to find common

ground and new solutions for our country.

This National Dialogue must be a participatory process that will unfold in phases, from local consultations and sectoral engagements to national gatherings.

It is essential that the voices of workers are prominent in the conversations that will take place across the country, and that the needs and concerns of workers are reflected in the outcomes of the National Dialogue.

This May Day is taking place at a time of turmoil in the globally economy. Trade barriers are being raised and growth forecasts are being reduced.

We have seen a growing trend in a number of countries towards right-wing and narrow nationalist policies, including direct attacks on the rights of workers.

These developments will have an impact on our economy and may threaten jobs. The global situation will make it more difficult for South Africa to address the economic and social challenges faces.

We need to understand and anticipate the effects of these developments and we need to develop strategies to respond to them.

Among other things, this means that we need to diversify our trade, we need to expand into new markets and we need to promote greater investment in local industry.

We need to make use of the African Continental Free Trade Area to expand our trade with other African countries and to work with our neighbouring countries to develop regional value chains.



This is also a time of great technological change, which is reshaping economies and changing the world of work.

In South Africa and across the world, many occupations may disappear and the number of workers in vulnerable jobs are likely to increase.

As a country, we need to prepare for the future of work, ensuring that we invest in skills development and lifelong learning, strengthen social protection and advance gender equality in the economy.

The current global economic environment calls for greater cooperation between the social partners in our country, specifically government, labour and business.

As we have done before in responding to international crises, we must once again work together to protect our national interests and support our economy.

We also need to adapt to changes in the energy and mining sectors as the world moves towards a low-carbon future.

These changes are necessary for the survival and well-being of all people. We have insisted that the transition to a low-carbon future must be just and inclusive.

As the producer of most of the country's electricity, Mpumalanga will be at the centre of this just transition.

This presents both challenges and opportunities. Workers and communities need to be involved in the planning and implementation of this transition to ensure that jobs and livelihoods in the province are safeguarded.

We must invest in the new technologies, industries and skills that are needed to expand job opportunities and build thriving communities.

We need to start now to build the economy of the future here in Mpumalanga.

As we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the formation of Cosatu, we must reaffirm the vital role of a progressive and revolutionary trade union federation in building a free, just an equal society.

Cosatu is as important now – to workers and to the country – as it has ever been. Let us take responsibility as members and leaders of Cosatu, as affiliates, and as Alliance partners to build and strengthen the federation.

Let us take responsibility to unite the working class, as we work to unite all South Africans, for the fundamental transformation of our society.

On this May Day, we salute the workers of South Africa.

It is the workers of our country who drive our economy, who produce our goods, who provide our services, who create our nation's wealth.

As a society, we have a responsibility to ensure that workers are properly recognised and rewarded for the vital contribution they make.

We need to ensure that the rights of workers are protected and strengthened.

We wish all workers everywhere a revolutionary May Day.

**Amandla.**  
**The struggle continues.**  
**I thank you.**

