

SPECIAL EDITION
15TH NATIONAL CONGRESS



July 2022

Voice of the South African Communist Party

Umsebenzi

**Build a
Powerful
SOCIALIST
MOVEMENT
of the
WORKERS
AND POOR!**

15TH NATIONAL CONGRESS

Building a powerful, socialist movement

National congress delegates gather in Boksburg during multiple global crises, and the worst-ever domestic economic crisis, to consider the future trajectory of our Party

About 400 voting delegates representing 319 108 members will be meeting in Boksburg from 13 to 16 July for the SACP's 15th National Congress under the theme, Together, let's build a powerful, socialist movement of the workers and poor! With representatives of fraternal organisations, domestic and international, and others, there will be about 600 participants in the Congress in all.

The Congress takes place in a very different context from the 14th National Congress in 2017. The domestic and global circumstances are much more negative now than then for significant transformation in the interests of the working class and poor. We have been hit globally by Covid-19, a major downturn in the economy, increasing inequality within and between countries, the impact of the war in Ukraine, imperialist aggression, a swing to the right and social and political polarisation.

"Our Congress is taking place when the country's having the worst economic crisis ever," says General Secretary Cde Blade Nzimande. "There's global and domestic runaway inflation and the cost of living is sky-high. This worsens the structural weaknesses of our economy.

"Our major focus at this Congress has to be our economic challenges. We have no choice.

"Globally, the drums of war are being sounded and we could be plunged into a kind of war we've never before had. The issues of peace and development have come to the fore. You can't have the one without the other.

"This Congress also will see a transition of leadership, and we hope that this

will be managed in a way that unites and strengthens us."

First Deputy General Secretary, Solly Mapaila, says "Our revolution has reached a regressive point. We need a conscious turning-point as a movement. We might have to retreat in the Leninist fashion of two steps back and one step forward or two steps forward and one step back to reflect on our errors, to rebuild and reset our mission. A lot will depend on how we respond to the Zondo Commission.

"We have focussed too much on our internal strife and not implemented the ANC election manifestoes, which have become ritualistic.

"As the Party, we need to consider how we repurpose the power we have and reconnect with the people. This Congress is crucial in revitalising the working class. We must reconfigure the Alliance strategically, but this will have come from the ground."

Among the discussion documents to be considered are:

- The SACP Programme – SA struggle for socialism;
- Navigating multiple crises of capitalism;
- Fighting patriarchy;
- Land reform;
- Industrial policy review: Turn the tide against de-industrialisation .

Other key background documents include:

- Strengthen and expand the public economy as a national transformation and development imperative;
- High radio frequency spectrum and the digital economy;
- The informal economy: organising informal economy workers and the role of the party and trade unions;
- Social reproduction

All the documents are published in *Bua Komanisi*, Volume 14, Nos 1-4.

The SACP, the state and popular power will also be a key area to be taken further since the 14th Congress and the 4th Special National Congress (SNC).

There will be commissions on:

- Social and economic transformation;
- Nature of the state, transformation of the state, and the state and popular power'
- Workplace and building progressive worker organisation;
- Civic and residential struggles,
- Land for agriculture and human settlements;
- Party building, organisational renewal and deepening international working class solidarity.

Various SACP awards will be made at the congress. These include the Moses Kotane Award, Chris Hani Peace Award, Dora Tamana Award, Florence Matomela Award, and Alpheus Malivha Award and Special Recognition Awards.

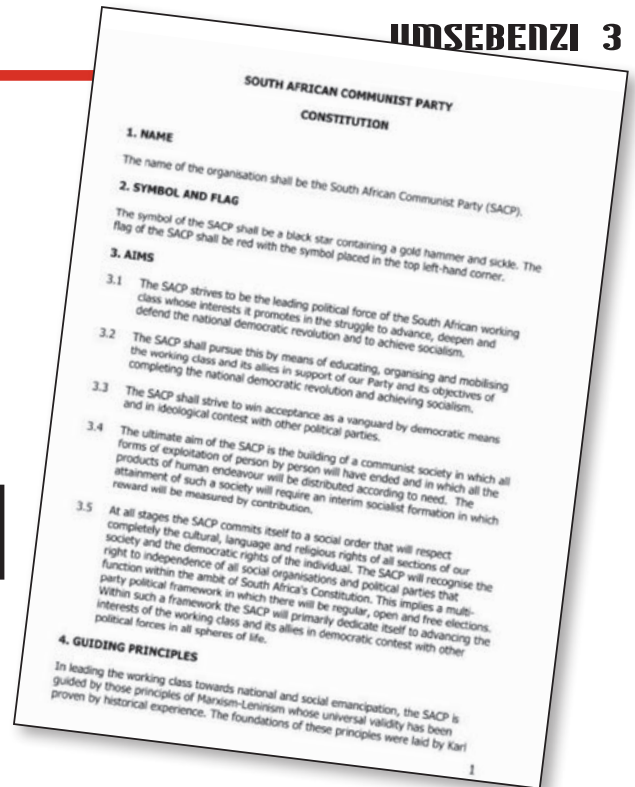
In many respects this is a unique and very challenging congress. It's certainly one of the most important in many years. How we manage this congress and what decisions we take at it will shape the contours of the SACP for years to come. ●

We need a conscious turning-point. We have not implemented ANC election manifestoes

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Constitutional amendments to be discussed

A brief overview of proposals on SACP constitutional amendments



The general approach of the Party to constitutional amendments is based on:

- The Constitution as a guide and a framework but not comprehensive;
- Need for rules and guidelines to complement the Constitution;
- A recognition of the differences between the SACP and Communist Parties in power;
- Need for discussion papers for major constitutional amendments relating to the party's theory and strategy;
- Need to consider financial implications of constitutional amendments; and
- Consensus as far as possible.

The Central Committee (CC) constitutional committee received amendments from the Western Cape and the CC Disciplinary Committee. KZN proposes that we defer constitutional amendments until the 5th Special National Congress in 2025.

This article provides a very brief overview of some of the proposals:

- All SACP members between ages 16-35 must belong to a YCLSA branch.
- Clause 6.5 be removed. It reads: "Members active in fraternal organisations or in any sector of the mass movement have a duty to set an example of loyalty, hard work and zeal in the performance of their duties and shall be bound by the discipline and decisions of such organisations and the movement. They shall not create or participate in SACP caucuses within such organisations and the movement designed to influence either elections or policies. The advocacy of SACP policy on any question relat-

ing to the internal affairs of any such organisations or the movement shall be by open public statements or at joint meetings between representatives of the SACP and such organisations or the movement."

- There should be a Central Ethics Commission (CEC), with sub structures of the Discipline Inspectorate (DI) and the Disciplinary Committee (DC). The CEC should be the over-arching organ of the SACP that is the custodian of Party discipline and its four pillars of organisational, political, ideological and personal discipline;
- Only the DC be replicated at all levels of the Party.

The CEC must be empowered to refer matters both to the DI and the DC. The DI must have inspection and investigative powers to ensure Party unity and coherence. The DC should only conduct disciplinary hearings on matters referred to it by the CEC or by the CC (or relevant structure). No overlap of membership of these structures.

The DI should be made up of 4 comrades who undertake discipline inspections across the Party. The DC should consist of 3 to 5 comrades, chaired by a PB member with at least one non-CC member. The CC appoints CEC. The CEC should have DI substructures and DC that only functions when matters are referred to it.

The CEC should be 3-5 members, chaired by a PB, with the majority being non-CC stalwarts.

An alternative proposal is to continue with the Revolutionary Morality Com-

mittee (RMC). But it must be appointed by National Congress, not the CC. It must not be a decision-making body, but submit reports with recommendations for decision-making by the PB or CC. It should be 5 top 7 stalwarts, chaired by a stalwart.

Members must hold office from one National Congress until the next, but are eligible for reappointment.

The RMC must have powers to institute investigations. If it recommends disciplinary action, no information given to it by the person to be disciplined, may be directly admissible as evidence in any disciplinary proceedings. It can request any Party member involved in any transgression to appear before it. Any can refer any alleged transgression to the RMC.

Both the CEC's and RMC's roles are aimed at ensuring the strengthening of the Party's revolutionary morality.

A Constitutional Commission will facilitate the processing of the proposed amendments at the Congress. It comprises members of the CC Constitutional Committee and 2 representatives of each province and the YCLSA, and a representative of a CC subcommittee proposing any amendments.

After processing the amendments, the Commission reports to the plenary of the Congress to make the final decisions on the proposed amendments.

Of course, constitutional amendments are not made lightly, and so the Commission encourages consensus as far as possible on amendments that are finally effected. ●

Transforming the economy – the key challenge

Alex Mashilo reviews the main documents to be debated by the 600 delegates to the SACP's 15th National Congress



From April to June, the SACP publicly issued 10 papers and the 2021 submission it made to the Commission of Inquiry into State Capture for discussion by branches in the lead up to Congress. Building on the analysis developed in the 2022 draft of the SACP programme *The South African Struggle for Socialism* and the proposals it makes, the other papers make additional recommendations in the face of the massive economic, social and climate change crises affecting the people, mostly the unemployed and workers in exploitative jobs and the informal sector.

The central thrust of the economic policy followed in South Africa has failed to overcome the problems of unemployment, poverty, inequality and de-industrialisation and to build sustainable livelihoods. A number of the failed policy measures were already in place before 1994, chosen by the apartheid regime from around the mid-1970s. While many people paid attention to the hard-won unbanning of the ANC, the SACP and other political organisations, the last president of the apartheid regime, FW De Klerk, advanced those measures in his February 1990 speech.

These measures originate from imperialism. They were transmitted through neoliberal globalisation as part of its policy regime. In South Africa, they were imposed and enforced not only by the apartheid regime but also by the post-1994 government, starting in 1996 through the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (Gear) policy – and its lasting legacy.

The outcomes of the neoliberal policy regime notably include de-industrial-

isation. In *Structural transformation in South Africa: the challenges of inclusive industrial development in a middle-income country*, policy development activists and scholars Nimrod Zalk, Antonio Andreoni, Pamela Mondliwa, Simon Roberts and Fiona Tregenna demonstrate that South Africa started experiencing “premature de-industrialisation” in the 1980s.

In its documents, including inputs to the ANC National Executive Committee Lekgotla sessions and Alliance meetings, the SACP showed that the shock therapy imposed after the adoption of Gear accelerated de-industrialisation post-1994. This is examined with further analysis in the discussion papers:

- *Navigating the multiple crises of capitalism;*
- *Industrial policy review: Turn the tide against de-industrialisation;* and
- *Macroeconomic policy support for industrialisation and the necessity for developmental public banking.*

The proposals advanced in these discussion papers call for a policy change, including a change in the failed macroeconomic framework.

The discussion papers take issue with the failed macroeconomic framework and other economic policies through which South Africa not only experienced de-industrialisation but also growing

high levels of inequality, unemployment, poverty and the associated hardships that millions of working-class and poor households struggle with. Doing the same thing over and over will not help solve the persisting problems that have worsened because of a combination of policy failures and the impact of every global crisis that over the past few decades.

To understand the warning in the discussion documents, it is necessary to appreciate that unemployment (by the officially preferred definition that excludes “discouraged work-seekers”) in South Africa rose from a whopping 16,5% in 1995, the lowest in our democratic dispensation, to crisis-high levels of above 20% by the end of 1996 after the government imposed Gear. Total unemployment which, by definition, includes discouraged work-seekers, has throughout been higher than the narrowly defined unemployment level. For example, at 50,1% in the first quarter of 2022, total unemployment for active and discouraged African work-seekers, regardless of gender, is the worst among all national groups. This means at least 50 out of every 100 African people of a working age are involuntarily unemployed. The SACP Central Committee characterised the total unemployment crisis as a catastrophe that needs a different policy approach to overcome.

In *Navigating the multiple crises of capitalism*, the proposals discussed with further details include:

- Advancing structural economic transformation;
- A universal basic income grant;
- Ramping up public employment programmes, linked to infrastructure roll out and maintenance, building envi-

SA's economic policy has failed to overcome the problems of unemployment, poverty, inequality and de-industrialisation



General Secretary Blade Nzimande during his opening address to the fourth SNC, at Ekurhuleni in December 2019

ronmental resilience, and addressing the crises of social reproduction;

- Supporting workers in the informal economy and pursuing measures to upgrade it as part of building sustainable livelihoods;
- Combatting the effects of rising prices of consumer goods;
- Ensuring that a people-centred just transition to a lower carbon economy is at scale;
- Acting more vigorously against illicit capital flows;
- Achieving structural transformation will, the paper argues, depend on taming financialisation and advancing a renewed and reinvigorated financial sector campaign.

Macroeconomic policy support for industrialisation and the necessity for developmental public banking takes the macroeconomic policy debate further. In opposition to the idea that South Africa has good policies and the only thing it needs is to implement them and therefore stop thinking in policy terms, the paper discusses what is wrong with, and the failures of, the macroeconomic framework imposed in South Africa since the “1996 class project”, Gear.

Industrial Policy Review: Turn the tide against de-industrialisation discusses the imperative to industrialise, while

Strengthen and expand the public economy as a national transformation and development imperative deals with the subject in detail. The paper is critical of the neoliberal wave of corporatisation and fiscal policy that contributed in no small measure to the decline of the affected public entities and calls for more decisiveness in dismantling the networks of the corruption of state capture. The latter, however, is dealt with in greater theoretical detail in the submission made by the SACP to the Commission of Inequity into State Capture.

High radio frequency spectrum and the digital economy discusses the industrial revolution which began in the 18th century, its development and the governance of the high radio frequency spectrum. It is very critical of the privatisation of the high radio frequency spectrum and makes proposals on the way forward.

The informal economy: Organising infor-

Branches & congress delegates: discuss these papers to help shape the Party’s approach to economic transformation!

mal economy workers and the role of the Party and trade unions expands on the analysis and proposals made on upgrading the informal economy in the paper titled *Navigating the multiple crises of capitalism*.

What went wrong in the approach followed and what the way forward is regarding land redistribution in South Africa post-1994? This is dealt with in the paper titled *Land redistribution in post-apartheid South Africa*.

Fighting patriarchy as part of the national democratic revolution and building socialism deals with the imperative of advancing gender equality, while *The vanguard role of the Party in fighting against the crisis of capitalist social reproduction* deals with the subject through both analysis and proposals. There is an interrelationship between the two papers based on an analysis of gender relations.

Branches and Congress delegates are urged to discuss these papers fully and help shape the Party’s approach to economic transformation as part of a radical national democratic revolution that creates the conditions for socialism. ●

Cde Mashilo is an SACP CC member, the SACP’s media spokesperson and a former YCLSA leader

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Fighting patriarchy as part of the NDR and building socialism

*To achieve genuinely revolutionary emancipation of women, writes **Pat Horn**, our Party must develop and – in a broad popular front – drive a multi-pronged programme*



The SACP has to be serious about the emancipation of women and the feminist struggle of fighting patriarchy. This means looking beyond the women's organisations the SACP has historically relied on, which may or may not self-identify as feminist in the sense of fighting patriarchy. And going further, recognising the independent emerging mass feminist self-organisation led by young women and LBGTI+ activists with their strong focus on intersectionality, and engaging with such organisations and movements as part of a left popular front of working class and progressive forces.

This would be in line with the commitment made at the 14th SACP National Congress in 2017, and it is up for debate in a discussion paper for the 15th SACP National Congress.

The discussion paper argues that the revolutionary emancipation of women requires the following:

- Dismantling of patriarchy;
- Transformation of the marginal role of women in the occupational division of labour to a central one; and
- Reformulation of the national question in South Africa to revamp our national liberation struggle into a gendered struggle for a transformed South Africa.

What is to be done – in 2022 and going forward?

Transform the gender division of labour throughout the economy (*including the informal economy*). The language of radical economic transformation for women workers, needs to change to socialist feminist economic transformation or structural economic and broader social transformation and

development based on gender equality and redress.

For a thorough-going socialist feminist economic transformation of the productive labour market, the paper stresses the need to elevate economic struggles for women in the economy, such as:

- Fight for the rights of women hawkers in the CBDs, bus and taxi ranks, for protection and decent storage and shelter with guaranteed rights to trade;
- Fight for women to get employment in sectors that are historically regarded as male domains such as transport and logistics, construction and mining;
- Drive the implementation of the social and solidarity economy policy which is directed at empowering cooperatives, community trusts, non-profit organisations, stokvels and other related survivalist economic activities to grow towards formal economy;
- Re-establish the Dora Tamana Co-operative Centre to institutionalise and train cooperatives, especially in rural communities for economic social ownerships from agricultural activities to small scale agri-processing producing value-added foods, which form part of the emerging rural food systems detached from huge bourgeois retailers – and some of them are producers for school feeding schemes;
- Develop leadership of working-

class women to be drivers of the social and solidarity economy, growing stokvels and cooperatives into investments;

- Develop leadership of working-class women to be at the forefront of new economic transitions from fossil fuels to green economy, and 4th Industrial Revolution;

- Re-orientating and aligning the national skills strategy to be more demand led and responsive to the changing nature of work, including prioritising the upskilling of women and girls with due regard to reversing the deterioration of the gender division of labour while growing the digital economy, recognising and accommodating emerging platform work;

- Provide learners and workers with tools and training to be able to learn and work online, with a transformative focus on youth, women and persons with disabilities;

- Promote and campaign for the provision of free wifi in all municipalities, including townships and rural areas.

Strategy and tactics for the SA road to socialism – gender mainstreaming

Build meaningful black working women's leadership in all economic sectors (both productive and reproductive) in proportion of women working in each sector

Strengthen the role of women workers in all levels of new emerging forms of work in the 4th Industrial Revolution (platform economy, gig economy).

Develop a socialist policy on sex work in consultation with organised sex workers in South Africa and internationally followed by policy conversations at all levels of the organisations to build some socialist understanding and consensus on this work sector.

Revamp our national liberation struggle into a gendered struggle for a transformed South Africa



Delegates celebrate the formal openings of the 4th Special National Congress in 2019 (top), and the 14th National Congress in 2017 (left and above)

Eliminating violence against women

The 1993 UN Declaration on the Elimination of violence against women (Undevaw) recognised “that opportunities for women to achieve legal, social, political and economic equality in society are limited ... by continuing and endemic violence”.

Structural and systemic gender-based violence (GBV) has to be addressed to advance women’s and people’s rights – in the economy, in society, in politics, in the judiciary and in the world of work. International Labour Organisation Convention 190 for the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work, described as the first international instrument to comprehensively deal with the protection of *all* workers against violence and harassment – ensures that “the right of everyone to a world of work free from violence and harassment” is established as a new labour right that can be drawn on to pro-

tect workers around the globe, including workers in the informal economy and new forms of work such as platform work and the gig economy. The definition of “the workplace” goes beyond traditional formal workplaces, making specific mention of public space, where street vendors, waste pickers, and taxi drivers work. The convention goes even further and mentions measures to support workers who are survivors of domestic violence.

The discussion paper concludes by proposing the following way forward in fighting patriarchy:

- Upscale the fight against patriarchy in our struggles for the socialism we want;
- Upscale our struggles for socialist feminist economic transformation:
 - Analyse the changing world of work and its impact on the gender division of labour;
 - Build working-class women’s lead-

ership in the productive sectors of the economy;

— Strengthen the recognition, counting and mainstreaming in the reproductive sectors; and

— Build a strong social & solidarity economy led by working class women;

● Engage with the independent emerging mass feminist self-organisations led by young women and LBGTI+ activists with strong focus on intersectionality – as part of the left popular front of working class and progressive forces the SACP has committed to form strategic alliances with; and

● Intensify our struggles for the elimination of all forms of violence against women and GBV. ●

Cde Horn is an SACP Central Committee member, veteran trade unionist and International Coordinator of Streetnet International

A century of General Secretaries

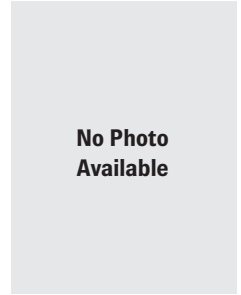
South African communist party general secretaries from the creation of the CPSA, though its first turbulent decades, years of clandestine organisation underground and relaunch as the SACP, to the building of a mass party and key role in the NDR in the political overground after the victory over apartheid. The history of the ideological and organisational contributions of the Party's general secretaries down the decades reflects the struggles and triumphs of the Party as a whole



William H Andrews
1921-1925
Active unionist after emigrating from Britain. Left SA Labour Party (he'd been an MP) to join the ISL. Founding GS



Jimmy Shields
1925-1929
Journalist & CPGB militant emigrated briefly in 1925. Became GS just months after joining CPSA. Represented CPGB at CI



Douglas Wolton
1829-1933
After election as GS, he stood down to attend CI. Jailed twice as GS – for articles in *Umsebenzi* & organising a strike



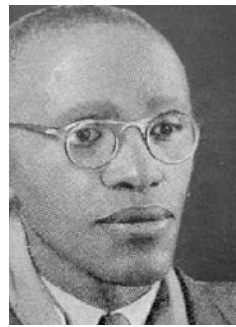
Albert Nzula
1929-1932
Former mineworker, joined ANC (as an organiser) in '21 and, later, the CPSA. Studied in Moscow.



JB Marks
1932-1933
Joined CPSA in '28 after hearing SDP Bunting address mineworkers. Lost position during CI-initiated purges, but later chaired SACP



Moses Kotane
1933-1936
Active in both Party and ANC (serving as ANC treasurer in exile) and a Lenin School graduate, longest-serving GS



Edwin Thabo Mofutsanyana
1936-1938
Former mineworker, joined the ANC (as an organiser) in '21 and, later, the CPSA. Studied with Nzula in Moscow



Moses Kotane
1938-1978
(See previous entry)



Moses Mabhida
1979-1984
Recruited by Harry Gwala, joined CPSA in '42, unionist and underground SACP member, until going into exile in '61, served on ANC NEC



Joe Slovo
1984-1991
Renowned Marxist theorist, joined Party in his teens. Key figure in MK in SA and later in exile. Party chair from '91-'95. Died of cancer (1995)



Chris Hani
1991-1993
Joined ANCYL at 15 & SACP in his 20s. Active in MK from formation as operative and leader. Assassinated 18 months into his term as GS



Charles Nqakula
1993-1998
Journalist & underground activist in both ANC and SACP, and in the UDF. In exile from '84, returned secretly for Operation Vula



Blade Nzimande
1998-present
An industrial sociologist, Nzimande became active in UDF structures & underground SACP and ANC networks