



MEDIA RELEASE

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12 SEPTEMBER 2022

MEDIA RELEASE ON NATU'S 104th NATIONAL ELECTIVE CONFERENCE

1. Introduction

The Central Executive Board (CEB) of the National Teachers' Union (NATU) would like to apprise members of the public about the developments in respect of the National Elective Conference which took place at Olive Convention Centre on 7-9 September 2022.

The Conference theme was: **'In Pursuit of Better Educator Health and Wellness: Redefining the Education System to Mitigate the Negative Impact of Covid-19, Deracialise the Workplace and Enhance School Safety'** – and was attended by more than 1300 delegates and observers from all provinces and regions of NATU. The Conference was further graced by social partners, former NATU leaders, government officials and office-bearers, including the MEC for Education in KwaZulu-Natal, Ms Mbali Frazer; Minister of Basic Education, Mrs Angie Motshekga; as well as the Minister of Employment and Labour, also currently serving as Acting Minister of Public Service and Administration, Mr Thulas Thembelani Waltermade Nxesi. This was quite appropriate, considering that September marks Public Service Month in South Africa.

2. Summary of Inputs from Government Officials

MEC Frazer acknowledged the contribution that NATU has been making towards improving the standard of living of teachers and school principals. She announced that the KZN Department of Education has set a target of 80% matric pass rate for the academic year 2022. However, she lamented the issue of budget reduction which, in the main, targeted compensation of employees – resulting in her department failing to fill 365 critical non-educator posts. She informed the Conference the department that the Department will soon embark on the process of filling some of the vacancies by employing unemployed graduates.

Minister Nxesi addressed delegates on the second day of the Conference, more specifically on the Outcomes of the 2022 Public Service Summit and the Public Service wage negotiations for the financial year 2022/2023. Speaking on government's strategy for eradicating corruption, the Minister said, "Government has introduced the National Anti-Corruption Strategy wherein public servants including teachers are expected to be government's first line of defence since they are entrusted with the responsibility of managing state resources."



He highlighted the point that the Public Service Summit held earlier this year had resolved to host a Public Sector Summit in 2024, which will include local government and public entities. Regarding the public service wage negotiations, the Minister acknowledged that mistrust currently exists between public servants and the employer, principally emanating from the government's renegeing on the implementation of the last leg of 2018 resolution signed by parties at the PSCBC, resulting in more than 1,3 million workers receiving no salary increase in 2020/2021. So, on behalf of government, the Minister committed to rebuilding trust with trade unions and pleaded with public servants to accept the current offer of 3% so as to enable the State to "focus on addressing the pressing matters relating to the employment of more front-line workers such as Police, Nurses and Teachers."

The Minister of Basic Education, Mrs Motshekga, addressed the Conference on the third and last day of the Conference. In her speech, she acknowledged the urgent need "to address the occupational hazards occasioned in part by the growing learner ill-discipline and rising incidents of crime and corruption in schools." The Minister urged teachers to take advantage of, and participate in, the teacher wellbeing programmes, including debriefing after traumatic school incidents. On corruption, the Minister reported that between 2012 and 2021 there have been 3667 reports of education-related corruption incidents, including bribery, sextortion, abuse of authority and flouting of employment and procurement processes. She concluded by re-affirming her department's commitment to clean governance, economical and effective use of resources and providing services in an impartial, fair, and equitable manner.

3. Resolutions Adopted

Regarding the discussions and deliberations on the theme of the Conference and its sub- themes, the Conference resolved to work with the Department of Education at all levels where necessary develop sophisticated strategies to improve in the following critical areas:

- a) Mitigating the Impact of Covid-19
- b) Eliminating Racial Discrimination
- c) School Safety
- d) Employee Wellness
- e) Union Growth, and
- f) Strengthening NATU's organisational culture and structures

The Conference resolved to refer matters related to the review of union policies and constitutional amendments to a special conference to be convened in the near future.

4. Election of Office-Bearers

During his opening address, NATU Acting President, Mr S.V. Malinga indicated that “the most significant opportunity that delegates will get is to elect the organisation’s CEB with the mandate to take the Union to the next level in terms of recruitment of new members, representation, development and leadership capacitation in order to sustain the history and tradition of good leadership in our organisation.” In realisation of this, nominations for CEB membership were open on day 1 of the Conference (7th September). Voting and counting of votes took place on Day 3 (Friday, 9th September), after which results were announced.

Accordingly, the new composition of the NATU’s CEB for the term of office 2022-2025 stands as follows:

NO	Position	Elected Official
1.	President	Mr S.V. Malinga
2.	Deputy President	Mr G.M. Mabuza
3.	General Secretary	Mr D. Ngema
4.	Vice Presidents	Mrs B.Z. Mbatha Mrs A.N. Nhlapo Mr S.A. Dlamini Mr M.M. Mabhija

5. Conclusion

The CEB is delightful that it hosted one of the best NATU Elective Conferences ever. As the Union continues with the journey through its second centenary, the Conference noted an urgent need to review and improve its policies in order to align them with modern systems. As such, it offered an opportunity to delegates to convene and deliberate on matters that affected their day-to-day operations on the school grounds.

There is no better way to conclude this Press Release, other than to echo the closing remarks of the newly elected NATU President:

“Many commentators, in particular our rival unions in the sector, had written NATU’s obituary thinking that this organisation wasn’t going to survive after the passing away of its former President, Mr SA Thompson. Little did they know that Mr Thompson and all the previous NATU Presidents had laid a solid foundation for the Union’s continued survival, against all odds. All that the interim NATU leadership had to do was to emulate their majestic strides and follow the NATU Constitution. This Conference opened an opportunity for all of us to heal and resuscitate our structures to give a fresh mandate for organisational renewal and growth. This leadership will work tirelessly to address and root out ill-discipline and defiance displayed by some of our leaders. Leadership capacity-improvement remains our number one priority, for only competent leadership stand a good chance to service members meaningfully. No stone will be left unturned in respect of representation of members in dispute resolution and collective bargaining processes”.

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**ISSUED BY NATIONAL TEACHERS' UNION
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