

Civil Society Joint Statement

Trade liberalization leads to job losses – civil society says

SANGOCO and the South African Council of Churches (SACC) meeting in a workshop of the current negotiations underway at the World Trade Organisation (WTO), came out in support of COSATU's campaign on protecting jobs and stopping job losses.

The workshop was called to discuss the world trade negotiations on NAMA – the non-agricultural market access, which strongly promotes trade liberalization.

Leaders of SANGOCO, SACC and COSATU addressed the workshop, held today. COSATU's Deputy President Ms Violet Seboni, called on all present to organize against job losses, by "taking action and drawing a line to say that unemployment and poverty are too high. We must draw a line now and say that job loss as a result of trade liberalisation must stop, and must stop now. The NAMA proposals at the WTO will only exacerbate trade liberalization and job loss. They will also prevent us from developing our economies as the developed countries did. This can only be disastrous for us."

She added "that any trade union worthy of being called a trade union must defend members jobs. All progressive organizations must defend the working class in the workplace and the communities, and stop multinational and corporate interests pushing for trade liberalizations through undemocratic processes in the WTO – because these will only open the door to job losses and increased poverty." COSATU called for increased unity of all civil society organizations to stop the "jobloss bloodbath."

COSATU members will come out in protest against job losses, poverty and inequality on Monday 27 June.

The workshop organized by COSATU and SANGOCO agreed that South Africa's trade negotiators must do an audit of the negotiations "past and present" to determine who the winners and losers are. "In all cases –the workers and the poor were the losers" the workshop concluded. Participants from different sectors organized by COSATU testified to the negative impacts of trade liberalization.

- Furniture sector workers reported that in the sector, jobs have been lost due to increased imports and relocation of firms in the sub region.
- Clothing and textile workers have incurred massive job losses with the footwear industry being decimated, due to "tariff liberalization and a massive surge in imports."
- Food and sweets sector workers reported a steady decline in jobs as a result of cheap imports and subsidized sugar available to foreign manufacturers

SANGOCO's executive director Zanele Twala, said that it is necessary to build civil society capacity and public awareness around the complex trade negotiations. "It is important to be informed and fight the unfair issues at the negotiations, as failure to do this will make our fight against Apartheid look like a picnic."

Desmond Lesejane – said that the SACC Executive Council "came out in support of COSATU's jobs campaign." The people and families are losing jobs and dying because of the scourge of poverty – which are not covered by the "statistics" he added.