



Presidential Address
11th National Congress
Holiday Inn, Sunnyside, Parktown

02 November 2023

- [1] Congress Delegates, representing the masses; National Office Bearers who held the fort to this point and other esteemed attendees, WELCOME TO THE 11TH TRI-ANNUAL NATIONAL CONGRESS of the Commission Staff Association. The last time we met in this fashion (25-26 February 2021) we had face-masks on and social distancing was mandatory. It was difficult times indeed. We were doing a common thing in uncommon times.
- [2] Prior to riding the wave of uncommon times. The first imperative issue to address at this early stage of the address is that **of extending gratitude to the NOB and REC members who held fast and completed their terms** as urged by myself when I took the Presidency in 2021. **Ngiyabonga Maqabane!**
- [3] That was somehow an indication of the kind to Leadership that the Movement needed. We needed a Leadership that can achieve the “normal” and/or “expected” in uncommon times.

- [4] Covid-19 hit our shore in March 2020 and the country, to date has not recovered from its impact. The CSA is no exception. We find ourselves gathered at this time of year as a consequence of how the lockdown levels affected our calendar as a Movement.
- a) We are having our National Congress slightly out of tune in terms of the month that it ought to be at.
 - b) Technically speaking the tenure of the current NOB is not a full three year period (i.e. it is not 36 Months). The sacrifice of the remaining period was made in the interest of aligning the Movement to its Constitution as much as possible and to also ensure that the incoming leadership takes the reigns timeously in order to commence bargaining with the Employer while the sun still shines.
- [5] The above is how this Union has been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic in relation to its calendar.
- [6] That has not been the only thing that the Pandemic affected. On a macro-economic scale, it also ate away at what had become available in the kitty from which we bargain with the Employer (the CCMA) for improved terms and conditions of employment. From being above inflation at the close the last (3-year) collective agreement that was in place; to being below inflation for 3 years in a row is a scenario that I would never

have believed to be possible had someone told me that it was coming when we closed 2019.

[7] The beauty of the CSA though is that this grim reality did not cripple us a Movement. Our pockets were gutted, yet our cohesion as a Movement increased during these trying times. I may be incorrect, but as each year since 2021 passed, I have seen a more united CSA; which began to hold hands more stronger and started properly throwing its spears where they ought to be directed (i.e. at an uncaring Employer) as opposed to its own.

[8] I am not suggesting that the CSA membership that you represent is completely satisfied with where the Union is or how it has been served by the incumbent Leadership (especially the NOB). What I am saying is that there has been a maturity in how dissatisfactions have been addressed and in how the NOB would be called to account, as opposed to dodge bullets wherever some discontent materialized. For this (that we do not attack our own) I believe that the CSA needs to applaud itself.

[9] To manoeuvre unfavourable and unchartered waters of dealing with a financially strained CCMA, coupled with its uncaring agents (its Management Team in the main) and come out on the other side with the Union intact, is a feat and a half. We may not

have appointed “Change Managers” as does our Employer; but we have held the fort excellently in the name of the working class posterity in managing the changed environment we found and still find ourselves in. Again I submit, this achievement is to be lauded without reservations.

[10] We saw ourselves (i.e NOB and REC) steer the CSA into its 25th Anniversary, which was celebrated firstly at the Gala Dinner that was held on 14 October 2022; and later with our members at regional level. The Celebration was attended by some of the erstwhile National Office Bearers. From those who started the Movement in 1997 to those who led it during the very hostile period where CCMA was such an enemy of the Movement that it applied for the de-registration of the Union.

[11] There were also those leaders that were present when the CSA became a crucial driving force in the improvement of Employees’ terms and conditions of employment to seeing them be what they are today in relation to salary levels and other benefits that are part of our standard package as CCMA employees. Most of what we have was not graciously given by the CCMA, it was in fact fought for by the CSA.

[12] We owe a debt of gratitude for the work that those Leaders have done. The stories they shared with us were inspiring. They reminded us why the CSA exists and what

its tenets are and ought to be. The cardinal of them all being what the Logo of the Union represents (that is: **WE MUST UPHOLD THE CCMA BECAUSE WE UNDERSTAND ITS ROLE IN THE LIVES OF SOUTH AFRICANS AND OUR ROLE IN ITS FULFILMENT OF ITS MANDATE**). Hence the two hands that are holding the institution, without which it is clear that it would fall.

[13] It is can argued truly that the true soul of the CCMA actually lies with the CSA. The struggle we have had with our Management during our tenure has been for them to embrace this very fact. We have made some progress in this regards. It was through our efforts for due recognition of the bearers of the spirit of the CCMA that we influenced the removal a very destructive and evil ER Manager in the person of Steven Booysen. We were consulted when two critical appointments had to be made at very senior levels of the CCMA Management; and our recommendations were adopted in that people we preferred were indeed appointed.

[14] This was testament to us that we are heading in the right direction in terms of what it is that we must do in order to have the CCMA treat its employees the way that the CCMA should. It has been through our strategic approach to representing the interest of the members of this glorious movement that, amidst the difficulties that state-

funded entities have been going through, our member received bonuses to date without fail at the end of each year.

[15] It has been through the proper application of leadership and the necessary force that jobs were saved and in some instances instead of facing the cold of unemployment, the CSA was able to cushion its members by seeing them being retained into alternative positions, including part-time work within the CCMA.

[16] It is under this Leadership that CSA was given special audience with the Office of the Director in order to discuss means of seeing how the CCMA and CSA can strategically work together to balance the interest of both parties with the threats of budget cuts, which are now a reality, being then looming. It must be reported that the Director has come to the party on most of what was discussed in that meeting, including not opening bonus negotiations at zero or on insulting levels hoping to “Chinese bargain” until we find each other after having wasted much time.

[17] The above shows that we (all of us as Leadership) have steered this CSA ship with a fair degree of skill, intelligence, solidarity, courage and any other necessary competence to maintain, if not improve, on the status of the CSA within the functioning

of the CCMA. This must also be celebrated; of course while we embrace the fact that there is always room for improvement.

[18] We have succeeded in increasing the visibility of the CSA. We have also succeeded in improving its representativeness within the CSA, the GS will speak more to this. We have succeeded improving the systems that we have and introducing some necessary structure to how the Union machinery must operate. The Union is slowly taking shape as opposed to being seen as some formless amoeba that is subject to the will of the strongest among us. The Movement without shape or form is bound to lose sight of its purpose and will suffer the fate of either irrelevance or death/collapse.

[19] There have been areas of challenges that we have not been able to make significant dents to. Such as progresses in the finalisation of the Call Centre dispute (Equal Pay For Work Of Equal Value) and the Interpreters case (Enforcement of Settlement Agreement Entered into on 30 January 2020), which find themselves still in the pipeline of Labour Court processes to date. The one that is beyond our control currently is the Interpreter's case, which from the report that we received having last checked with the Court and I was advised that the Judge has set it down for some time around April 2024 for argument.

[20] We have not concluded the process of the registration of the amendments to the Constitution, as a result of delays on the part of DEL and at some instance auditors in relation to what was required by DEL in the audit reports. In the recent meeting held with DEL, it seems likely that by no later than end of November 2023, the amendments should be registered. Engagement on what is for CSA to do will be held on day two of this Congress. It is our hope that out of this Congress much of what has been dragging in this regard should be finalised.

[21] As I draw to a close, I wish to remind the Delegates that this occasion is no holiday. It is a very critical forum in which the recent past is interrogated to ensure that from it nothing is present that will be a real and likely to materialise threat to the Movement. Furthermore, we here to chart a way forward for the Union.

[22] It is incumbent upon us therefore to engage meaningfully on the content of this Congress. Our members' survival and wellbeing depend on the outcome of this Congress. Let us criticise constructively. Let us boldly explore directions that the Union must be steered towards to ensure not only the maintenance of its successes, but to also make strides toward the achievement of new ones. Once the direction has been set, then let us elect leadership that we will have confidence in to navigate the terrain the CSA finds ourselves in towards the set goals with all of us being fully

behind them, NOT to stab them, but to become that propelling force that ensures the achievement and manifestation of the “**Forward Ever; Back Never**” mantra of the struggle.

[23] Thank you Delegates for arriving at this Congress and thank you in advance for contributing to its success.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke, positioned above a solid horizontal line.

Mandlenkosi Zwane
CSA President