

WORKERS' DAY – FEDUSA KEYNOTE ADDRESS

- **BETHLEHEM, FREE STATE PROVINCE**
- **1 MAY 2024**

Leaders of FEDUSA...

Leaders of respective Affiliates present...

Stakeholders...

Ladies and Gentlemen...

Greetings, Bethlehem, Free State!

Today, on this May Day, we come together not just to reflect on our collective hardships and victories but also to celebrate our resilience and diversity. This day is a tribute to every worker—here in the vibrant Free State and across our nation—who has stood firm in the face of adversity, contributing tirelessly to South Africa's growth and diversity.

Here, in Bethlehem, where the workforce is as varied as the landscape, we see a microcosm of South Africa's strength. From the agricultural fields that stretch across our province to the bustling trade activities in our urban centers, each worker plays a critical role. Today, we celebrate this diversity that strengthens our unity, acknowledging

that every job, from the farmhand to the factory worker, is a thread in the fabric of our nation.

Recent years have greatly tested us. Reports from credible sources like the Mail & Guardian and The Daily Maverick have illustrated ongoing challenges faced by workers—challenges like wage theft, unsafe working conditions, and the impact of economic downturns on job security. Yet, despite these adversities, you have shown remarkable resilience. You have adapted, persevered, and continued to support the backbone of our economy. This resilience is what we gather to honour today.

Amidst mines retrenching thousands of workers, Post Office workers facing possibilities of retrenchments, and high interest rates attacking workers disposable income.

As your labour federation and home, FEDUSA has stood by you, echoing your voices where it matters most. We have been at the forefront, advocating for fair labour practices and equal and improved wages. Our efforts have yielded substantial gains:

- **Improved Labour Laws:** We've lobbied for and achieved stricter enforcement of labour laws that protect worker rights

across all sectors such as the implementation of the protection from harassment act.

- **Wage Increases:** Through relentless negotiations, we've secured wage increases in sectors that long undervalued their workers. Additionally, the national minimum wage increased steadily taking about 6 million workers out of poverty.

Health and Safety Advocacy: We have pushed for better health and safety standards in workplaces, significantly reducing the number of injuries and fatalities reported annually. **However, unsafe government buildings remain an issue that should be prioritised, EMS workers are threatened with their lives whilst performing their duties. This calls for urgent intervention and we require assurance of the safety of our members.**

These are not just victories but milestones in our journey toward a fairer work environment for all.

We note and acknowledge the work by Prasa, coming on board with passenger trains that will be rolled out in phases, making commuting cheaper for workers. However, the safety of commuters on those trains remains a priority.

The struggle does not end with the achievements we celebrate today. On the road ahead, lies opportunities to further the cause of trade unions and workers. We must continue to strive for:

- **Gender Equality in the Workplace:** Ensuring that women receive equal pay for equal work.
- **Protection for Informal Workers:** Extending labour protections to the informal sector, which employs a significant portion of our population.
- **Youth Employment Initiatives:** Creating opportunities for young workers, ensuring they have a solid foundation for their careers.

A win for the workers is the Worker Share Ownership (ESOPs) will benefit 500,000 workers from shareholding in their companies. As a Federation, we are aiming to strengthen the role of workers in the economic fabric of South Africa, ensuring that they not only share in the wealth generated by their labour but also have a decisive voice in the management and governance of their workplaces.

In addition, we call on government to fast-track fixing of the ports to ensure economic development, manufacturing, and job creation. We need increased economic growth urgently to address the high unemployment rate in the country.

As we stand together in Bethlehem today, let us reaffirm our commitment to the fight for justice, equality, and dignity in the workplace. Let's continue to draw strength from our diversity and remain united in our quest for a better future for all workers.

Thank you for your indomitable spirit, your hard work, and your dedication. Happy Workers' Day, Bethlehem! Let's keep the flag of workers' rights flying high, today and every day.

AMANDLA!!!!!!!!!!