

**PREPARATORY ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED FRONT**  
**13-14 December 2014**

**Consolidated Commission Reports**

**A. OVERALL APPROACH TO THE DEBATE**

This report seeks to capture and synthesise the diversity and richness of the robust debates that took place from the plenary sessions and the Commissions of this Preparatory Assembly.

This Preparatory Assembly is an historic moment in the history of post-apartheid struggles of workers and the unemployed. This Assembly is a rousing call for action against corruption, looting of public resources, failing service delivery, increasingly unaccountable governance, violence against women and LGBTQI people, police brutality, continuing inequality and continued control of the economy by an unelected elite.

This Assembly is unanimous that the United Front is our common strategy and fighting organ to build our solidarity, victories, confidence and power as the oppressed and exploited of South Africa. This Assembly has taken the crucial first step in the long journey where the mass of the people in our country can actively imagine, fight for, craft and construct the transformed South Africa they want from below. This Assembly acknowledges the Freedom Charter and other historic documents of our struggle as our common inspiration. But we shall also build our visions anew. We will do this through "The South Africa We Want Campaign" through which we will mobilise the mass of our people to define the vision of the country they want.

This Assembly is an important moment that started important debates to shape and build the United Front. It is not the end of the debates. The launch of the United Front planned for 25-27 April 2015 will be a key moment in the unfolding process. Even beyond the launch, this process of democratic debate must continue. This is a process of ongoing enrichment, elaboration and building our shared politics. Importantly, it is in the arena of united struggles, solidarity and action that our demands will be won and our debates further enriched.

This Preparatory Assembly is remarkable for having achieved a significant degree of consensus on the analysis of the problems we face, the need for a new vision for the South Africa we want (a new, just and equal society), our shared commitment to this vision of this new society, and the need to build towards this vision on the basis of unity of purpose, solidarity and action of workers, communities and other progressive forces.

The United Front is our common space to debate, build, unify, grow, mobilise and fight.

This document presents our significant consensus and outlines a process for further debate on this emerging consensus and other areas which require further debate.

**1. What should be the aims/objectives of the UF?**

### 1.1 Vision/strategic objective:

A democratic, egalitarian society characterised by social, gender, economic, political and ecological justice;

Without huge inequalities, disparities, poverty, the legacies of colonialism and apartheid, corruption and unaccountable government; and

A society characterised by human dignity and a decent life for all

### 1.2 The goals of the UF should be:

- 1.2.1 To mobilise a wide range of social forces to challenge major crises facing our society in the here and now - corruption, looting of public resources, failing service delivery, increasingly unaccountable governance, violence against women and LGBTQI people, police brutality, and anti-poor/pro-rich economic policies ("neo-liberalism");
- 1.2.2 To forge unity, solidarity and action of a broad mass of oppressed and exploited people in South Africa behind a common banner of sustained mass struggles and action for the above vision and immediate demands;
- 1.2.3 To strive for the deepening of democracy and the building of people's power in social, economic and political spheres where collective needs and interests of the people as a whole come before profits and other elite interests;
- 1.2.4 To strive for a South Africa that is sovereign where the country's policies are determined democratically by those who live in it;
- 1.2.5 To struggle against, and eradicate all forms of oppression, exploitation and discrimination<sup>1</sup>;
- 1.2.6 Extension of democracy and socio-economic rights so that the poor are able to meaningfully and substantively enjoy the rights in our Constitution; and
- 1.2.7 Struggling for a society free of violence and abuse in particular against women, LGBTQI people and other vulnerable people.

### 1.3 The UF commits to achieve its vision and its goals through the following roles:

- 1.3.1 Building the sustained unity of vision, unity of struggles, and unity in programmes of action, between all sections of the oppressed and exploited in the workplace and in communities - primarily, these are employed workers, informalised workers, and the unemployed in both urban and rural areas;

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<sup>1</sup> These oppressions, exploitations and discrimination include, but are not limited to based on racism, patriarchy, sexism, heterosexism and homophobia, class, tribalism, ethnicity, regionalism, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth;

- 1.3.2 Deepen and harness the strategic unity, critical consciousness, cohesion, struggles, voice and power of the oppressed and exploited;
- 1.3.3 Provide a common platform and organisational framework to unify and advance current/day-to-day/immediate working class struggles and demands (see 1.2.1 above);
- 1.3.4 Undertake popular political action to ensure accountable and clean government, accessible and caring public representatives;
- 1.3.5 Support and strengthen struggles and movements fighting for a different, transformed countryside without racism, patriarchy, feudal control by tribal chiefs, gender oppression of women, exploitation of farm workers and dwellers;
- 1.3.6 Enable, support and consolidate the activities of the oppressed and exploited to self-construct as empowered social, political and economic actors who have critical consciousness, capacity, voice and power from below;
- 1.3.7 Build strategies and programmes of action to enable the popular imagination, crafting and construction of transformative alternatives from below;
- 1.3.8 Undertake a sustained mass campaign from below to generate demands, visions and proposals of the mass of the people for the South Africa and world they want; and
- 1.3.9 Prioritise the sustained mobilisation of women as a key social base of the UF whose issues, interests, energies and capacities must shape the programme of the UF; and
- 1.3.10 Prioritise the sustained mobilisation of young working class people as conscious self-agents who are at the heart of the UF, current struggles and who actively construct and own the future.

#### 1.4 Areas of ongoing debate:

- 1.4.1 Should the United Front's vision/strategic objective and aims/mission include the goal of socialism?
- 1.4.2 The meaning of socialism;
- 1.4.3 The place of the Freedom Charter in long-term vision and the immediate mission of the United Front;
- 1.4.4 Should the United Front be South African, southern African or African?

## **2. What should constitute the minimum principles of the UF? And what should its political orientation be? Should it be socialist?**

### **2.1 Principles and approaches**

- 2.1.1 Pan African;
- 2.1.2 Ubuntu from below;
- 2.1.3 Anti-xenophobic;
- 2.1.4 International solidarity;
- 2.1.5 Anti-racist;
- 2.1.6 Opposed to tribalism and ethnicity;
- 2.1.7 Non-sexist;
- 2.1.8 Feminist;
- 2.1.9 Anti-homophobic;
- 2.1.10 Against all forms of oppression and exploitation;
- 2.1.11 Non-sectarian;
- 2.1.12 Democracy from below;
- 2.1.13 Accountable;
- 2.1.14 Transparent;
- 2.1.15 Independent;
- 2.1.16 Based on dynamic processes of constant engagement and sustained participation by all in the life of the UF;
- 2.1.17 A politics of consistency that challenges us to actively reflect on and address our own racism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia, privilege, etc.;
- 2.1.18 A politics of mutual listening and learning , where we are all open to influencing each other and being influenced;
- 2.1.19 Working class and mass in character;
- 2.1.20 Weighted towards mass organisations;
- 2.1.21 Community and workplace rooted;
- 2.1.22 Based on winnable demands whilst also constantly building for the long-term vision;
- 2.1.23 Inclusive unity within democratic plurality, diversity and respect for everyone;

2.1.24 Open-ended space and processes of discovery and evolution with each other through:

- i. Unlearning oppressive, undemocratic and problematic methods of organisation and struggle;
- ii. A collective openness to being influenced by new ideas
- iii. Listening to each other, sharing and learning from each other;
- iv. Humility to make the road by walking it instead of all-knowing permanent blueprints;
- v. Developing new ways of relating to each other and working together;
- vi. Developing democratic ways of forging new visions for what we want collectively; and
- vii. Openness to reimagine and build more democratic and emancipatory methods and forms of struggle, debate and organisation.

## 2.2 Areas of ongoing debate:

2.2.1 Non-collaboration; and

2.2.2 'African' leadership of the UF.

**3. Who should make up the UF? What should its class composition be? How broad can we go? What about the role of unions? And NGOs? Academics and professionals? And the role of political parties? Should we cater for individual members?**

3.1 All those who agree and accept the vision, aims, mission, principles, programme and affiliate duties and obligations of the UF should be allowed to join.

3.2 The core social base, engine and locomotive of the UF should be exploited, oppressed and marginalized people – primarily employed workers, informal/atypical workers and the unemployed in both urban and rural areas, as well as women and youth.

3.3 Mass organisations of the oppressed and exploited should be the main organisational expression of affiliation to the UF. These include trade unions, social movements, civics, women's organisations, student and youth organisations, and other membership-based organisations of the mass of the people.

3.4 Faith-based organisations, NGOs, organisations of academics and professionals, and other progressive membership-based organisations may also join the UF as affiliates/members. This should not dilute the working class mass character and orientation of the UF. Such organisations should not be allowed to use their social and financial power to dilute this basic character and orientation.

3.5 Critical caution against the use of UF membership and positions as a basis for opportunistic individualistic/personal interests; and

3.6 The bourgeoisie should not be part of the United Front, though there needs to be further debate as to who constitutes the bourgeoisie.

### **3.7 Areas for further debate:**

- 3.7.1 Whether political parties or political groups should be allowed to join as full members of the UF;
- 3.7.2 Whether individuals should be members of the UF;
- 3.7.3 Whether bogosi/mahosi/iinkosi should be allowed to join the UF;
- 3.7.4 The place of those progressive individual activists purged or isolated from political parties in the UF;
- 3.7.5 Whether individuals may join the UF directly as members.
- 3.7.6 The structure of the United Front and the nature of membership and/or affiliation

### **4. In addition to local and provincial campaigns, what national campaigns can we take up as a United Front early in 2015 up to the proposed launch from the 25-7 April 2015 that will unite us, have a mass appeal and popularize the UF?**

#### **4.1 General approaches to campaigns:**

- 4.1.1 Immediate campaign should focus on the period of next 4 months;
- 4.1.2 Need an approach and a methodology of struggle that allows us to have winnable demands for the first four months. It must be a small reform thing we can win that can also mobilise large numbers of people.
- 4.1.3 Need for a Day of Action;
- 4.1.4 Should be based on, and unify various current struggles;
- 4.1.5 Built on common reflection, research, debate and prioritisation by UF members from below;
- 4.1.6 Based on winnable demands in the here and now;
- 4.1.7 Combine the immediacy of needed reforms in the here and now with long-term transformative thrusts;
- 4.1.8 Should appeal to a broad constituency;
- 4.1.9 Should capture public imagination and introduce the UF as a new force in the country;
- 4.1.10 Critical campaigns should be located in key sites for impact, local mobilisation, sustained focus and building a critical mass;

4.1.11 Must be used as ongoing spaces and moments to learn, deepen knowledge, consciousness and capacity of UF members;

#### **4.2 Possible immediate campaigns in the next 4 months:**

4.2.1 Focus on the Budget:

- i. Redistribution;
- ii. Macro-economic policy;
- iii. Various sectoral demands;
- iv. Democratic participatory budgeting.

4.2.2 Sanitation;

4.2.3 Moratorium on farm evictions;

4.2.4 Labour brokers, minimum wage given the pending parliamentary hearings & the youth wage subsidy law;

4.2.5 Justice for Marikana workers – given the pending public release of the report of the Farlam Commission of Inquiry in March 2015;

4.2.6 Laying the foundation for “The South Africa We Want” Campaign by collecting demands of community members and workers - using a process similar, if not more democratic, to that which led to the creation of the Freedom Charter; and

4.2.7 Two Days of Action - Budget Day and the day of the announcement of the Marikana commission’s outcome or 21 March – on which we could consider having national protected strikes.

4.3 Possible long-term campaigns – need to set up working groups around key areas to determine what could be long term campaigns. This will allow us to prepare for the assemblies as a means for collecting concrete demands in those areas.

4.3.1 Jobs for all and a living wage;

4.3.2 Food prices;

4.3.3 Hunger;

4.3.4 Access to quality, equal and free education;

4.3.5 Safety and security;

4.3.6 Corruption;

4.3.7 Police brutality and repression (with a focus on justice for Andries Tatane and the Marikana mineworkers who were killed on 16 August 2012);

4.3.8 E-tolls;

4.3.9 Drugs and gangsterism

4.3.10 Load-shedding and energy policy issues;

4.3.11 Economic policy options informed by climate change and climate justice;

4.3.12 Privatisation;

4.3.13 Land redistribution;

4.3.14 Agrarian reform;

4.3.15 Apartheid debt and working class debt;

4.3.16 Evictions;

4.3.17 The 40 year RDP housing issue;

4.3.18 Nationalisation;

4.3.19 Concrete campaigns for the realisation of the social justice, equality and other progressive goals of the Constitution;

4.3.20 "The South Africa We Want" Campaign should include space for progressive review of the Constitution from below;

**5. What should the approach of the UF be on electoral politics? What should the UF's stance be on 2016 and 2019 elections?**

5.1 This is a question for ongoing debate. To frame this debate, the Commissions explored various options as follows:

5.1.1 No participation by the UF in 2016 and 2019 elections;

5.1.2 Endorsement of independent candidates and/or political parties that may advance UF goals;

5.1.3 Direct UF contestation of elections;

5.1.4 Developing principles and commitments for UF and community-endorsed candidates to abide by;

5.1.5 Using elections to take forward struggles, certain demands to deepen democracy and to build people's power – examples:

i. Critical audits of party manifestoes;



- ii. Raising people's demands during elections;
- iii. Democratic nomination of people's candidates;
- iv. Constituency-based systems;
- v. Direct election of the President;
- vi. The right to recall; and
- vii. Public control over the perks and wages of elected representatives, etc.).

5.1.6 Critique of electoral politics and political institutions as the main avenue for struggles for social justice;

5.1.7 Whether it may not change the character, content and form of the UF it contests elections as a political party;

5.1.8 Whether the UF would be ready for the 2016 elections;

5.1.9 The need to protect the political integrity and autonomy of the UF;

5.1.10 The implications of the possibility of the emergence of the Movement for Socialism and/or a Workers' Party;

5.1.11 The need to document, debate and learn from different approaches to and experiences of elections as part of elaborating the UF's approach to elections.

**6. What should the structure of the UF be; nationally, provincially and locally? What should be the autonomy of affiliates, the role of area-based UF structures, etc.?**

6.1 Key principles and approaches to shaping and building UF structures:

6.1.1 A democratic, plural space of dialogue that respects and promotes diversity, the right to hold and canvass for different points of view, democratically fostering common perspectives, language and strategies in an ongoing, open-ended process of debate, struggles and action;

6.1.2 Should not be bureaucratic, administrative or boring;

6.1.3 Should be dynamic, innovative and exciting;

6.1.4 Should constantly open up space to new methods;

6.1.5 Should create space for learning, reflection, debate, the development of critical consciousness and activist development all the time;

6.1.6 Should be political, programmatic and action-based;

6.1.7 Should respect diversity, difference and autonomy;

6.1.8 Should be flexible and informed by local conditions and context;

- 6.1.9 Should not be rigid and top-down;
- 6.1.10 Should develop new non-hierarchical, democratic ways of organising;
- 6.1.11 We need to find a place for NUMSA on the interim national working committee;
- 6.1.12 Should emphasise the leadership, activism and role of women and youth;
- 6.1.13 Should be shaped from doing it – from concrete action and not pre-figured from above; and
- 6.1.14 Should be weighted in favour of working class mass character of the UF.

**7 What are your commissions views on the proposal for a National Working Committee? What are the terms of reference or tasks for the NWC? Who are your recommended names for the NWC, if agreed?**

- 7.1 One Commission felt that the recommendation in plenary wasn't satisfactory as it didn't set out what criteria should guide the Assembly regarding what should constitute the interim leadership. It wouldn't be appropriate to nominate specific people for the other positions. We should rather ensure we have mass based organisations properly represented.
- 7.2 Four other Commissions endorsed the proposal and added some criteria and principles, and proceeded to make nominations.
- 7.3 One Commission did not have time and did not make nominations.
- 7.4 The 4 Commissions recommended the following principles for UF structures:
  - 7.4.1 Working class mass character;
  - 7.4.2 Progressive approach and tradition on "race" in the UF;
  - 7.4.3 Should be extended to a maximum of 25 people;
  - 7.4.4 Minimum of 50% women, and 50% young people;
  - 7.4.5 It needs to give immediate political leadership, not just practical work;
  - 7.4.6 Endorsed the need to constitute part of it from the provinces;
  - 7.4.7 Emphasis on it being an interim structure with a short-term mandate;
  - 7.4.8 We should identify categories of movements – education, unions, etc. and say we want representation from those categories;
  - 7.4.9 Provinces must agree on who their representatives are;

7.4.10 NUMSA should continue to play a leading role without dominating. And this role needs to be clarified.