

Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières > English > Africa > South Africa > Labour, community protests (South Africa) > Cosatu (South Africa) > **ANC (South Africa): Ramaphosa pulls off month-long truce in warring Cosatu**

ANC (South Africa): Ramaphosa pulls off month-long truce in warring Cosatu

Tuesday 29 April 2014, by [MARRIAN Natasha](#) (Date first published: 9 April 2014).

AFRICAN National Congress (ANC) deputy president Cyril Ramaphosa on Tuesday persuaded leaders in the warring Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) to cease hostilities for a month to allow the party to facilitate a lasting truce.

As a result of the intervention, the “ceasefire” in the federation will save the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (Numsa) and Cosatu general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi from suspension for now.

Time will tell how long it will last. Cosatu has a poor track record, with a number of attempts at unity having failed over the past two years.

According to sources present at the gruelling day-long central executive committee meeting on Tuesday, union leaders acquiesced to Mr Ramaphosa’s request to put their differences aside, and for a month postpone the critical decisions they were to take at the meeting.

These decisions included the fate of Mr Vavi and Cosatu’s largest affiliate, Numsa, which has about 330,000 members. During this period, the ANC would talk to various affiliates to understand the divisions in the federation and help leaders steer towards unity.

The ANC’s last-gasp intervention comes less than a month before the national election and at a time when it has become clear that the situation in Cosatu is spiralling out of control, with each of the federation’s 19 affiliates deeply divided along factional lines.

Cosatu president Sdumo Dlamini, President Jacob Zuma’s close ally in Cosatu, has been jeered and shouted down by Cosatu structures at shop steward councils, including some in Gauteng. A number of Cosatu meetings have been disrupted by the factionalism in the federation in recent months.

Insiders say many unions who wanted Numsa and Mr Vavi out of the federation grudgingly accepted Mr Ramaphosa’s proposal. Many unions were opposed to Mr Ramaphosa’s participation in Cosatu processes.

“But the DP (deputy president Ramaphosa) is a seasoned negotiator. He pinned the proposal to the strategic objective of unity in the federation.... No one can say they do not want unity,” said a union leader who wished to remain anonymous.

Unions opposing Numsa and Mr Vavi, such as the National Union of Mineworkers and the National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union (Nehawu), were adamant ahead of the meeting that Cosatu processes had to be followed, implying that Numsa and Mr Vavi should be suspended.

However, Nehawu general secretary Fikile Majola — one of Mr Vavi’s staunchest detractors — is also a member of the ANC’s highest decision-making body, the national executive committee (NEC), as is Mr Dlamini.

This would make it difficult for the leaders to defy a request by the party. Numsa's enemies were well prepared to suspend the federation's largest affiliate — they had received legal opinion on the best way to deal with the matter.

It was a tough day for Numsa. It brought about hundred members to picket outside Cosatu House in a bid to persuade the federation not to act against it. But leaders in the central executive committee told Numsa's top brass its members should quieten down because it was "too noisy" for the meeting to proceed.

Mr Ramaphosa and ANC deputy secretary-general Jessie Duarte arrived at the meeting shortly after 10am. It is understood they waited in an adjoining room as Cosatu leaders battled it out over the agenda and credentials until about 1pm.

The status of second deputy president Zingiswa Losi was debated after she had resigned as a Numsa shop steward — the position from which she was elected to her top post in the federation. No decision was taken after the parties agreed to listen to the ANC leaders.

Once Mr Ramaphosa had presented the ANC's case, he departed, leaving the Cosatu leaders to take a decision.

Cosatu had already taken a "preliminary view" that Numsa should be suspended or expelled from the federation in February.

Numsa subsequently provided a 59-page submission to Cosatu on the reasons it should not be suspended or expelled. Numsa's transgressions, according to Cosatu, were the decisions it had taken at its special national congress in December last year. Among these were a call for Mr Zuma's resignation and a resolution not to campaign for the ANC.

In the submission Numsa argued that as a founding affiliate it was an integral part of the federation. Cosatu unions were not meant to be a "flock of sheep led by the federation and other alliance partners", but rather were autonomous unions.

The union said in the past other affiliates had called for a break from the alliance, including the South African Municipal Workers Union. Another union, Sasbo, had also been allowed to take a contribution holiday from the demands of the financial coffers of the alliance's partners.

Numsa reminded Cosatu that a move to expel or suspend it would amount to a "fundamental federation policy change".

"It would also be catastrophic to both the federation's numbers and the affiliates themselves," Numsa's submission said.

NATASHA MARRIAN

P.S.

* BDlive. 09 AVRIL 2014, 06:57:

<http://www.bdlive.co.za/national/labour/2014/04/09/ramaphosa-pulls-off-month-long-truce-in-warring-cosatu>