

The Congress of South African Trade Unions

The Congress of South African Trade Unions has noted the agreement signed by the leaders of the political parties in Zimbabwe on 15 September 2008.

We stand by our view that it is only the people of Zimbabwe who must judge whether or not this deal is in their interests. We are therefore awaiting the comments of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions and will be guided by them.

Meanwhile, while awaiting the ZCTU's response, only insofar as the people accept it, we give the agreement our cautious support, but note that many of the demands raised by civil society and supported by COSATU have not been met, including:

- Civil society has been shut out of the negotiations and it has thus been an agreement between the political leaders;
- The agreement does not recognise the result of the 29 March elections. As a result the loser has become the winner and the winner the loser;
- MDC leader, Morgan Tsvangirai is effectively in charge of a cluster of ministries, while President Mugabe still has extensive powers;
- The agreement is not for an interim government until new elections have been held but for a normal full-term government;
- All Mugabe's draconian laws remain in place, which give him, for example, the power to arrest political opponents.

The agreement marks a dangerous spread of the Kenyan virus that sends a signal to dictators that they can defy the will of the people by force and then retain power through negotiations, brokered by other African leaders. It marks a retreat from the principles that the African Union and SADC are supposed to uphold and a return to the bad traditions of the Organisation of African Unity that sacrificed the interests of the people to protect dictators.

Meanwhile COSATU waits to hear from the ZCTU, after which it will consider their advice as to whether to continue with the proposed programme of boycotts. If they ask us to proceed we shall do so.

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