

TRADE UNION  
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# WOMEN WORKERS

*In South Africa the majority of women workers are oppressed and exploited as workers, blacks and as women. Our resolution says that one of the key ways women can take up their rightful place as active members and leaders of our society is through ac-*

*tive policies of affirmative action at the workplace and within our own organisations. The resolution calls on employers to work towards ending discrimination at the workplace as quickly as possible and for an end to discrimination within our own organisations.*

## Noting:

1. That women workers are the most politically oppressed and economically exploited section of the working class.
2. The partial success of the CWIU in implementing the CWIU and COSATU resolutions.
3. That problems still exist in the CWIU and especially in COSATU in many areas:
  - there are still very few women in leadership positions;
  - the number of women shop stewards is small and is not in proportion to the number of women members;
  - there is discrimination against women in the workplace and society at large;
  - women workers are still being sexually harassed;
  - there is a tendency in union meetings to drop women's issues out of the agenda or not to take these issues seriously;
  - there is a low level of awareness of men in the workplace, union/federation and society of the need to take affirmative action to change the oppressed and exploited position of women.

## Therefore resolves:

1. To fight against all forms of discrimination against women, and to promote affirmative action in the workplace, union, federation and society. The Workers Charter and the new democratic constitution must include these principles.

2. To actively promote the participation of women workers and the development of women leadership in union structures, federation structures, and in the wider struggle in South Africa.
3. To defend women workers against sexual harassment and educate them about their rights in this.

### **Further resolves in order to achieve the above:**

#### **1. In the Workplace:**

1.1. To forward the following demand on non discrimination and affirmative action in every negotiation, and to fight for agreement by the employers:

"The company commits itself to eliminating all forms of discrimination against women in the Company within a period of one year.

It further commits itself to investigating forms of affirmative action to reverse the effects of past discrimination. The investigations will be designed to lead to an agreed programme of affirmative action, which will result in:

- all jobs in the company being open to women workers, and women workers being employed in 50% of the jobs;
- appropriate training programmes, including literacy training, for all women workers and which do not unfairly discriminate against male workers;
- equal pay for work of equal value."

1.2. To do research into forms of affirmative action in the workplace.

1.3. To continue to fight for the implementation and upgrading of parental rights in all factories. This will include paid maternity leave, paternity leave, child care leave, and child care facilities.

1.4. To actively campaign around health, safety and environmental issues affecting women workers - in particular, cervical cancer, aids and working conditions for pregnant women.

#### **2. In the Union:**

2.1. To take the following steps to encourage participation and leadership of women in all our activities and structures:

- Actively campaign for the election of women shop stewards.
- Actively campaign for the election of women to leadership positions and give women proper responsibilities.
- Encourage the appointment of women organisers.
- Step up our education of both men and women on women's issues. Step up the special education of women in such areas as skills training, broad union issues.

- Fight for paid time off for women workers to participate equally in all union activities.
- Take disciplinary action against men in the organisation who sexually harass women workers and staff.
- Ensure the proper discussion of women's issues at all union meetings and structures.
- Increase the budget for the women's forums and seminars.

## 2.2. Build our women's structures as follows:

- 2.2.1. Elect women representatives (preferably shop stewards) at every factory where there are women members.
- 2.2.2. Encourage the setting up of local women's forums.
- 2.2.3. Set up regular women's forums in all branches.
- 2.2.4. Establish women's planning committees in all branches.
- 2.2.5. In each branch elect a Women's Coordinator, to be elected by the branch women forum and whose election will be endorsed by the BEC.

### 2.2.6. The Branch Women's Coordinators will:

- be accountable to and sit on the BEC and the Branch Office Bearers Committees;
- monitor progress in factories, locals and branches, including visits to factory general meetings;
- convene branch women's forums and planning meetings;
- ensure educational and other relevant activities in branches, locals and factories;
- liaise with the appropriate COSATU structures;
- liaise with other appropriate women's organisations as decided by the union;
- check all agendas and reports to make sure women are properly represented;
- be assisted by a full time official in each branch.

### 2.2.7. The Branch Women's Coordinators will meet at a national level at least twice per year in order to coordinate and follow up branch activities. As activities in branches increase, this national committee may expand.

#### The National committee will:

- from amongst itself elect a national coordinator who will sit on NEDCOM, NEC, NCC and all other relevant national committees;
- be assisted by a full time official nationally.

2.2.8. All delegations to CWIU or COSATU Congresses, Conferences, seminars shall include women delegates in proportion to the number of women in the Union/Branch but at least 12 %.

2.2.9. At least one office bearer at branch and national level should be a woman.

### 3. In COSATU:

3.1. At union level all unions should:

- elect women shop stewards;
- build women leadership;
- build women's forums;
- send women delegates to COSATU meetings in proportion to the number of women in the union.

3.2. At local level Regions should initiate the establishment of local women's forums.

3.3. At regional level regions should:

- establish women's forums;
- encourage unions to attend;
- elect a women's representative to sit ex officio on all committees of the region;
- appoint a staff member to assist in the coordination of the women's forum;

3.4. At national level COSATU should:

- employ a full time women's coordinator;
- elect at least one woman as a national office bearer;
- build a national women's forum representative of all unions;
- elect from the women's forum a national coordinator who will sit ex officio on all major COSATU committees.

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**A Woman's place is in the union!**