



ON BOARD. Zwelinzima Vavi briefs media ahead of the launch of the SA Federation of Trade Unions in Boksburg. Picture: Neil McCartney

New kid on union block

SAFTU: FEDERATION IS NOT AFFILIATED TO ANY POLITICAL PARTY

» **Represents 23 unions and doesn't back 'capitalist' Ramaphosa for president.**

Eric Naki

The newly inaugurated South Africa Federation of Trade Unions (Safu) is not affiliated to any political party at the moment.

Safu said an internal commission would discuss what political stance it would take.

This was the message from the new 700 000-member federation, which concluded its three-day inaugural congress in Boksburg, Ekurhuleni, yesterday.

The socialist-oriented Safu rejected Deputy President

Cyril Ramaphosa as the next South African president because he is a capitalist.

It said that if he were to lead SA, the working class would continue to be exploited.

Deputy general secretary Moleko Phakadi said there was no difference between Ramaphosa and mining billionaire Ernest Oppenheimer, except the colour of their skins, as both represented the capitalist class.

Former finance minister Pravin Gordhan was not spared either.

The federation said Gordhan and Ramaphosa were "capitalists with no interest in the people".

Safu's general secretary is Zwelinzima Vavi.

Mac Chabalala is president, Nomvume Ralarala is first

deputy president, Thabo Matose is second deputy president and Motswarei Letshego treasurer.

The union umbrella body is the second-largest federation in the country after the Congress of SA Trade Unions and represents 23 unions.

It resolved to fight for the restoration of land to the majority.

It said land dispossession must be addressed fully, including extending property to the landless black majority.

The federation has been mandated to fight for the dismantling of sector bargaining councils in the public service and for those to be replaced by a single, central bargaining structure for all civil servants.

Safu wants the Expanded Public Works Programme to be abolished and replaced by quality jobs for the poor.

Vavi said Safu-affiliated unions would be worker-controlled, but not apolitical, adding that all political and economic matters raised would be interrogated by an internal team.

"We dare not disappoint those workers," he said.

Political analyst Patrick Bond said Safu's vibrant, clear politics would be welcomed by progressives after poor and working-class people have been sharply divided in recent years.

Another political analyst, Zamikhaya Maseti, said the new federation would definitely build a strong base for a workers' party, as it was nonaligned and would be worker-controlled.

"It is through this party that it will access power," Maseti said. — erican@citizen.co.za

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