

Zuma: divided Cosatu risks another Marikana

BALDWIN NDABA

baldwin.ndaba@inl.co.za

ANC PRESIDENT Jacob Zuma has urged the SACP to continue its role as the “vanguard” of the working class to ensure the ANC played its historical role of serving the country’s national interests.

He also warned warring Cosatu leaders that they risked a repeat of the Marikana massacre if they did not sort out their differences.

Zuma made his remarks while

addressing workers at a Workers’ Day rally at the Galeshewe Stadium in Kimberley yesterday.

Addressing the same rally, SACP general secretary Blade Nzimande and Cosatu president S’dumo Dlamini blamed big business, the DA and the media for divisions and infighting in the labour federation.

“We urge the labour movement to unite the labour federation and resolve whatever differences that may exist within it. Workers are the cornerstone of our democratic

forces. They are the creators of our country’s wealth. These workers must get an equitable share of that wealth,” Zuma said.

While he did not comment extensively on the events that led to the massacre, Zuma said the killings were the symptoms of a divided federation.

He also appealed to Cosatu members not to join rival trade unions when they were unhappy with their branch and national leaderships.

“We must commit ourselves to

building unity of the working class. Any attempts to divide Cosatu must be resisted. You must not agree to any imagination aimed at dividing Cosatu as it would weaken the workers’ struggle. The SACP must continue its role as a vanguard movement of workers. This would ensure that the ANC plays its historic role to serve the national interest of society,” Zuma said.

While Zuma urged unity in Cosatu, he launched an indirect attack on metal union Numsa’s

general secretary, Irvin Jim, for his outspoken opposition to the National Development Plan (NDP).

“Many who are speaking against the NDP never come up with alternative policies better than what we are doing,” Zuma said.

“How can you follow a person who continually says ‘I do not like this. I want to do something else’ but fails to explain what is that something else?”

See pages 4 and 10

Ugly scenes mark May Day around world

Pope Francis condemns 'slave labour' and hits at those only out to make a profit

SAPA-AFP

Athens

GREEK workers angry at austerity brought Athens to a standstill yesterday as May Day rallies around the world saw tens of thousands in Bangladesh protest poor labour conditions and violence flare in Turkey.

In Dhaka, the Bangladeshi capital, protesters held red banners and flags chanting "Hang the killers, hang the factory owners" after the devastating collapse of a garment factory.

Rescuers have warned that the final toll could be more than 500.

At a mass in the Vatican, Pope Francis condemned as "slave labour" the work conditions of the victims of the collapse, who were making clothes destined for retailers in the West.

Police put the number of protesters at the main rally at more than 20 000, and there were smaller-scale protests elsewhere in Dhaka and in other cities.

In Istanbul, Turkey's biggest city, police fired teargas and water cannon at stone-throwing protesters trying to gather for a banned demonstration.

Clashes erupted in three neighbourhoods leading to Taksim Square — a traditional hub for leftist May Day protests where the authorities had blocked off the streets.

"Death to fascism. Long live May 1," shouted protesters rallying to calls of defiance from leftist parties and unions.

The Turkish government had banned May Day gatherings on the square, blaming renovations.

Amid the scuffles, the Istanbul office of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan was barricaded and defended by dozens of policemen backed by anti-riot armoured vehicles.

By midday, tension had abated and the protesters slowly dispersed as protests in other parts of the Turkish city went without incident.

In neighbouring Greece, a strike

stopped ferry services and disrupted public transport in Athens as workers went on the march against austerity in a country where the jobless rate reached 27.2 percent in January.

Police said 13 000 protesters had assembled in Athens and Thessaloniki.

Unusually, hard-pressed businesses stayed open to allow for shopping in the run-up to Orthodox Easter on Sunday.

Greece is caught in its sixth year of recession and has become a symbol of the painful costs of austerity policies imposed by Brussels on bailed-out euro-zone members.

In Spain, where the government has so far managed to avoid a full-blown international rescue, unions called for dozens of protests across the country.

Spanish unemployment is at a record 27.16 percent, and the UGT union called on workers "to make perfectly evident the total failure of the austerity policies... which in our country is confirmed by the facts".

Unions in France, the second biggest economy in the euro zone, marched divided — with union leaders in disagreement over government efforts to make the French work code more flexible.

French unemployment has hit a record 3.2 million people, and the party of extreme rightist Marine le Pen, which also traditionally marches on May 1, called for a light of hope in a France "locked in the darkness of Europe".

As recession continues to sap the euro zone and wider EU, the Eurostat data agency on Tuesday reported unemployment across the euro zone climbed for the 23rd consecutive month, hitting a record 12.1 percent in March.

At the Vatican, the pontiff urged political leaders to fight unemployment in a sweeping critique of "selfish profit".

"Not paying fairly, not giving a job because you are only looking at balance sheets, only looking at how to make a profit. That goes against God!" he said in his strongly worded address.