



## **SEIFSA AND TRADE UNIONS ADOPT HISTORIC, STAND-STILL MAIN AGREEMENT**

**JOHANNESBURG, 1 SEPTEMBER 2020** – The 19 employer associations affiliated to the Steel and Engineering Industries Federation of Southern Africa (SEIFSA) and the industry’s five trade unions today formally adopted the historic 2020-2021 stand-still Main Agreement concluded last month.

The collective agreement, adopted in line with the Labour Relations Act, now enjoys the status of a collective industry agreement and marks a watershed moment in which business and labour together recognised the devastating impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on companies and employees across the Metals and Engineering (M&E) sector.

The five trade unions that are signatories to this agreement are:

- The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA);
- Solidarity;
- United Association of South Africa (UASA);
- The Metal and Electrical Workers Union of South Africa (MEWUSA); and
- The South African Equity Workers Association (SAEWA).

Collectively, the membership of these trade unions accounts for 49,8% of all workers employed by employer organisations on the bargaining council. The SEIFSA-affiliated employer associations represent 56% of all workers employed by employer parties on the bargaining council.

SEIFSA Operations Director Mr Lucio Trentini, who represents the federation on the MEIBC Management Committee, said the agreement was significant because it was an

SEIFSA – Steel and Engineering Industries Federation of Southern Africa • Reg. No. 1949/034221/08  
6th Floor, Metal Industries House, 42 Anderson Street, Johannesburg, 2001 • PO Box 1338, Johannesburg, 2000  
Tel 0861 SEIFSA • +27 11 298 9400 • Fax +27 11 298 9500 • Email [info@seifsa.co.za](mailto:info@seifsa.co.za) • Web [www.seifsa.co.za](http://www.seifsa.co.za)  
Directors: E Monage (President), KM Nyatumba (CEO)\*, A Ngapo (Vice President), N Penson (Vice President), N Ngwenya (Vice President),  
M Moodley, S Lutchmana, R Bester, E Veldhoven, A Moz, T Tsehlo, L Trentini\*,  
\* Executive Directors



acknowledgment by all the negotiating parties of the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on companies and on the livelihoods of employees in an economy that was already in recession.

The pandemic and the resulting nationwide lockdown to curb its spread have pushed many businesses to the brink of collapse, with unemployment reaching a record 30,1%.

“In response, we have all agreed to lock in existing terms and conditions of employment over a 12-month period, freezing the current wage rates until 30 June 2021 to enable the industry to adjust to a post-COVID-19 reality. This is unprecedented not just in this sector, but in the country in general,” Mr Trentini said.

The agreement, he said, was the result of a collective bargaining partnership founded on understanding, respect and trust, which SEIFSA has played a key role in nurturing since its founding nearly 80 years ago.

“The agreement gives our industry an opportunity to preserve jobs while seeking solutions that will help to turn around not only the fortunes of the sector, but the economy as a whole,” Mr Trentini concluded.

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Issued by:

Mpho Lukoto

Communications Manager

Tel: (011) 298 9411 / 082 602 1725

Email: [mpho@seifsa.co.za](mailto:mpho@seifsa.co.za)

Web: [www.seifsa.co.za](http://www.seifsa.co.za)

SEIFSA is a National Federation representing 21 independent employer Associations in the metals and engineering industries, with a combined membership of 1,223 companies employing around 167,000 employees. The Federation was formed in 1943 and its member companies range

from giant steel-making corporations to micro-enterprises employing fewer than 50 people.