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Independent Police Union of South Africa – Inaugural Congress

Dear Mr Kwinkia, and brothers and sisters of the Independent Police Union of South Africa.

It gives me great pleasure to write to you on this momentous occasion as you gather for your inaugural congress. This is an exciting time for you as you embark on the start of your journey of representation.

When workers come together and form unions they not only become stronger as a collective than as individuals, they also form bonds of trust and friendships that can last lifetimes.

The solidarity of unions should never be understated, but it is in representing the interests of members, in standing against that which is wrong, and in defence of that which is right, that unions come into their own.

Of course, it is never easy being the new kid on the block but you have already taken the hardest step – you decided to organise! Anyone who believes in the democratic freedoms police officers are tasked with upholding can only celebrate when workers exercise their fundamental human rights to organise and form trade unions.

That is not to say the road ahead will be easy for if trade union activity was easy, it would not attract the right people. Representing the interest of colleagues, defending your principles, and often in the face of hostility is no place for those who shy away from difficulty. I am confident your members will be well served by IPUSA.

The police union family is strong but even now we still have too many police officers in too many countries who cannot enjoy the rights you have chosen to exercise. As I write to you today I am blessed to be participating in the International Labour Conference on behalf of ICPRA.

This conference has heard about the struggles of many to secure their democratic freedoms, and participation at this event is truly a great achievement.

I say this not to boast, but to highlight that no matter how young or how established the trade union or trade union movement, we can never take hard fought for rights for granted.

As you gather for your inaugural congress, the ILO will be concluding its 109th. It has taken these 109 years to secure police union participation. In many ways we are taking our first steps together.

We cannot ignore the concerns that prevail around the political situation in South Africa at this time, but I remain hopeful that a country that has given so much to democracy and the rule of law, on the back of such a troubled past, can continue to contribute to the democratisation of workforces across the continent.

As I have already stated I am participating in the International Labour Conference, on behalf of ICPRA. Today's speakers include the President of the United States of America, and His Holiness, Pope Francis. I think I can safely say that if men as august as this support the International Labour organisation, and all it stands for that I am in good company in wishing you every success for the future.

On behalf of the Scottish Police Federation, The European Confederation of Police, and the International Council of Police Representative Associations, I wish you a very successful congress.

Yours sincerely



CALUM STEELE

General Secretary

Scottish Police Federation

President

European Confederation of Police

General Secretary

International Council of Police Representative Associations