

Weakened unions face 'skorokoro' scenario

Cosatu's expulsion of the National Union of Metalworkers of SA has left the union federation fragmented, factionalised and weak, a shadow of the force it was in the 1980s and 1990s. But, according to a **Financial Mail** report, the perfect storm facing SA unions is a global phenomenon. Daniel Levy, managing partner at Andrew Levy Employment, says research shows that union membership has declined worldwide. His firm has been tracking union density in SA over the past decade and the numbers show it has declined to 25% – meaning one in four workers are unionised today against around one in two a decade ago. Also, the report says, Employment and Labour Minister Thulas Nxesi **is visibly vexed as he describes unions as 'weak' and 'not nearly as strong as they used to be'**. The report says in 1996, Cosatu commissioned a report on how it should adapt to post-democratic SA. In her report-back, former Cosatu deputy president Connie September sketched three scenarios of what SA would look like in the future – the desert, the *skorokoro*, and pap; *vleis* and gravy. Looking back, the report says, September hit the nail on the head with some key elements in her *skorokoro* (a beaten-up old car) prediction. It says her peek into the future shows Cosatu being weakened by the divisions in society, with a culture of enrichment eroding trade union solidarity. The report says the only way forward for Cosatu is reform and adapt – unless it wishes to limp along as in the '*skorokoro* scenario', which is now upon us.