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To all media houses

The Congress of the People (COPE) unequivocally condemns the passing of the 2025 Budget, which includes a regressive VAT increase that will worsen the suffering of South Africa's most vulnerable citizens.

For Immediate Release

This decision lays bare the stark reality: the ANC's mask is off. Once a champion of the poor, it is now corrupt, uncaring and disconnected from the people it claims to serve.

The VAT hike is nothing less than a punishment inflicted on the poor for the ANC-led government's failures over many years, bad governance, poor economic growth and rampant corruption that bleeds our nation dry.

While millions struggle to afford basic necessities, this tax increase will drive up the cost of living, hitting hardest those who can least afford it. It is a cruel irony that a party once rooted in liberation now burdens the people it promised to uplift.

The hypocrisy is clear. The ANC presides over a bloated GNU of fact cat ministers, ghost workers and a patronage network that wastes billions, yet delivers crumbling services and stalled development.

Instead of tackling the R800 billion tax gap, clamping down on illicit financial flows, or taxing the wealthy elite, they squeeze the poor to maintain their failing system. This is not leadership, but exploitation dressed up as policy.

COPE has long opposed VAT increases as a lazy, regressive fix that hurt the poor and benefit the corrupt. As evidenced by public sentiment, we stand with the majority of South Africans who reject this measure. We call for a budget that prioritises the people, cut wasteful expenditures, recover stolen funds and invest in jobs, infrastructure and growth, not tax hikes that entrench inequality.

The ANC's choice betrays its founding values and is a slap in the face to every struggling household. COPE will continue to hold this government accountable and fight for a South Africa where the poor are not sacrificial lambs for the failures of the powerful.

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