

TUCOSWA needs cops permission to host COSATU

BY STANLEY KHUMALO

MBABANE – The Trade Union Congress of Swaziland (TUCOSWA) will not be allowed to host the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) members on Sunday unless they seek authority from the police.

Assistant Superintendent Khulani Mamba, the Police Information and Communications Officer, said TUCOSWA had to adhere to the Suppression of Terrorism Act. "They also have to notify us when they are to hold a meeting so that we can provide security," Mamba said.

However, Vincent Ncongwane, Secretary General of TUCOSWA, said his federation would not report that they would host guests over refreshments and discussions on issues that affected them to the police. "How can I tell the police I have guests if they are less than 20?" he wondered.

Ncongwane then dared the police to stop the meeting, saying they risked denting the country's image to the world. He said such acts were the ones

that were denting His Majesty King Mswati III's efforts to spread a positive outlook of the country.

TUCOSWA had earlier indicated that they feared the visit could be botched by the State and were doing all possible to keep it under wraps.

An impeccable source within the organisation said: "We wanted to keep things under wraps until they finish their business because we fear that they might be banned from visiting the country."

The Sidumo Dlamini-led federation was expected to be in the country over the past weekend but their trip had to be postponed due to undisclosed reasons.

Meanwhile, Ncongwane will miss the meeting scheduled for Sunday because he has to leave for London under the invitation of Chatham House (the Royal Institute of International Affairs), which is an independent policy institute based in London and whose mission is "to help build a sustainably secure, prosperous and just world".

Founded in 1920, Chatham House engages governments, the private sector, civil society and its members in open

debate and confidential discussion on the most significant developments in international affairs. Each year, the institute runs more than 300 private and public events – conferences, workshops and round tables – in London and internationally with partners. The event to which Ncongwane has been invited to is titled 'Prospects for Democratic Reform in Swaziland'.

He said his visit would entail a general exchange of views and what his federation was dealing with in Swaziland.

TUCOSWA, after being banned with other federations by the Minister of Labour and Social Security, is yet to host a successful meeting.

Worth noting is that last weekend, the Royal Swaziland Police foiled the mass meeting convened by the deregistered TUCOSWA. About 150 members of different organisations affiliated to the congress had gathered at the SNAT Centre for the meeting but police officers denied them entry. There was almost a scuffle when the police arrived at the SNAT Centre and ordered that the meeting should not proceed.