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Media Statement:

### **COPE Calls on Government to Prioritise Local Spaza Owners**

Immediate Release:

The Congress of the People (COPE) stands firm in demanding that the government take immediate and decisive action against the growing dominance of undocumented immigrants in the spaza shop sector.

This alarming situation has not only disadvantaged South African entrepreneurs but has also left countless local businesses struggling to survive in an increasingly hostile environment.

The time for action is now. The survival of our economy, the livelihoods of our citizens, and the stability of local communities are at stake. We cannot afford to allow our economy to be further undermined by unfair competition and exploitation that is putting South African businesses and jobs at risk.

This is no longer just a business issue. It is a matter of national priority. The government must step up and ensure that South African citizens are prioritised, providing them with the fair opportunity they deserve to succeed.

Spaza shops are critical to the survival of many communities, offering essential services and stimulating the local economy.

We also want to highlight the alarming rise in poisonings linked to spaza shops run by foreign nationals, particularly those affecting children. This is a public health crisis that cannot be ignored.

The deaths of children from the consumption of expired goods are not isolated incidents but a clear sign of a growing problem that must be addressed urgently.

“Respect for law and order must be restored. People take the law into their hands when government is weak. We call on the government to collaborate with the police to ensure that the laws of our country are upheld, and that the safety and prosperity of our people are not compromised,” said COPE Acting General Secretary Erick Mohlapamaswi.

“While the government has outlined a national action plan to address foodborne illnesses and promote public health, including the registration of businesses within 21 days, this is not enough.

“We are aware that laws are often violated by corrupt officials who are susceptible to bribery. COPE demands stronger enforcement measures to ensure that these laws are not only written but fully and fairly enforced without compromise.

The safety and future of South Africa depend on decisive action. We cannot afford to delay. The time for real change is now.

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