



23 October 2018

Open Letter to President Cyril Ramaphosa

Demand for an emergency sitting of Parliament to deliberate on the recently issued UN report on 1.5°C increase in planetary temperature and its implications for South African climate change policy

The Cooperative and Policy Alternative Centre, through and with alliance partners in the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign (<http://www.safsc.org.za>), has been linking the climate crisis and right to food since 2014. We have made efforts to educate the public about the connection between hunger, the drought and price increases in a corporate controlled food system. Our hunger tribunal together with the Human Rights Commission in 2015, food sovereignty festival and activist schools were all about this. Similarly, in 2016 we attempted to make the link between the drought, water inequality and the need for a food sovereignty system. This we did through our drought speak outs, bread march and coal filled coffin left outside the Gupta compound. Through our Peoples' Parliament we also adopted a Peoples' Food Sovereignty Act for South Africa. The latter was handed over to seven government departments and to parliament earlier this year when we also launched a water and climate justice charter process for the country at a Peoples Dialogue on the Water Crisis in Cape Town. Out of nine portfolio committees invited to this dialogue only one person, the Chairperson of the Water Portfolio Committee, attended. Our activism has confirmed a lack of responsiveness and leadership from the South African government regarding the drought and climate change. There is a total disregard for the disproportionate impacts of the drought, as a climate shock, on the unemployed, the working class and the rural and urban poor. This is a crisis of leadership and does not bode well for a climate driven South Africa in which we will be having more extreme weather including droughts, heat waves, floods, wild fires and sea level rise.

The recent UN report (<http://www.ipcc.ch/report/sr15/>) on Global Warming of 1.5°C draws attention to the rapidly changing science on global climate change. It also underlines the imperative of bringing down carbon emissions to prevent catastrophic climate change through a 1.5°C overshoot. The report is clear that we are running out of time and decisive leadership is needed over the next 12 years to prevent such a dangerous shift in the Earth's climate. We believe this report needs to be deliberated through an emergency sitting of parliament as it impacts on the future of all human and non-human life forms in South Africa and on the planet. This is a matter of national interest for all present and future generations and we would like you to consider this demand.

We also believe this parliamentary sitting must consider the implications of the UN report for ensuring South Africa is placed on a climate emergency footing through the following:

- Adjusting its peak, plateau and decline scenarios, which are out of step with the current science on a 1.5°C increase. Drastic reductions in carbon emissions are required now;
- Adjusting the Integrated Resource Plan by removing the ceiling on renewable energy to enable an accelerated shift to socially owned renewable energy;
- Amending the Climate Bill to ensure people driven sustainable development planning is enabled;
- Going beyond government's 'death spiral' of ESKOM approach to restructuring ESKOM to protect the interests of workers while prioritising an end to the climate driven 'death spiral of society' through advancing the deep just transition;
- Immediately ending all new investment in coal mining and fracking;
- Scrapping the existing National Development Plan and developing, in a bottom up manner, a Climate Emergency Plan for South Africa as part of the deep just transition to advance the water, food, energy, production, consumption, transport, financial and health systems that will sustain life.

Your predecessor Jacob Zuma, turned his back on Africa, which has and will continue to be hardest hit by climate shocks. Instead he bought into Obama's stillborn 'pledge and review mechanism' entrenched in the Paris Climate Agreement which has not worked. The US, under Trump, has undermined this climate regime through promoting increasing eco-cidal carbon extraction and currently according to the International Energy Agency carbon use and emissions are still accelerating (<https://www.euractiv.com/section/climate-environment/news/bad-news-and-despair-global-carbon-emissions-to-hit-new-record-in-2018-iea-says/>). We need a new way forward that affirms climate justice, generational justice and the future of non-human life forms. In the spirit of Nelson Mandela and radical non-racialism, South Africa needs to display climate justice leadership that can unite every human being to face the difficult challenges of climate change.

Having a parliamentary debate on the UN report on Global Warming of 1.5° C also enables similar engagements to happen at provincial government, local government and ward committee level. The failure to act on our demand unfortunately will leave us with the conclusion that your government is either in climate denial or captured by fossil fuel interests or irrational about the current science of climate change. We look forward to your response.

Endorsed by the following organisations:

Children's Resource Center
WoMin: WoMin African Gender and Extractives Alliance
GroundWork
Friends of the Earth, SA.
Unemployed People's Movement
Young Women's Forum
Sustainable Innovations Africa
African Center for Biodiversity
Alternative Information and Development Centre
Media Monitoring Africa
Itumeleng Youth project

Batlabine Foundation
Ntinga Ntaba kaNdoda
Wits Inala Forum for Climate Justice and Food Sovereignty
Natural Justice
African Climate Reality Project
Earthrise
Earthlife Africa, Johannesburg
Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance
Active Citizens Movement, Pietermaritzburg
West Coast Food Sovereignty and Solidarity Forum
GreenHouse Project
PHA Food and Farming Campaign
African Earth Rights
Ecobrick Deep South
Support Centre for Land Change
Karoo Environmental Justice Movement
Consumer Action Network
Inspire Elsie
The Land Rights Organisation of South Africa
The Association for Water and Rural Development
SEED
Gender CC Southern Africa- Women For Climate Justice
Landless Peoples Movement South Africa
Biowatch South Africa
Project 90 by 2030
Noordhoek Environmental Action Group
South Durban Community Environmental Alliance
Environmental Monitoring Group
Market Users Committee
Sustaining the Wild Coast (SWC)
South African Faith Communities Environmental Initiative (SAFCEI)
Midrand Solidarity Economy Education and Communication Cooperative (MSEECC)
Global Environmental Trust (GET)
EarthLore Foundation
Save Our Imfolozi Wilderness
Mfolozi Community Environmental Justice Organisation
Youens Attorneys
Mining Affected Communities United in Action
Southern Africa Green Revolutionary Council
Assembly of the Unemployed South Africa
Middleburg Environmental Justice Network

Additional Endorsements:

Federation of Unions of South Africa (FEDUSA)
South African Federation of Trade Unions (SAFTU)
Active Citizens Movement
Equal Education
Newcastle Environmental Justice Alliance
Greenpeace Africa

Loreto Sisters
Waterberg Environmental Justice Forum (WEJF)
Waterberg Women Advocacy Organization
Southern African Faith Communities' Environment Institute

For further information, contact:

Dr. Vishwas Satgar, COPAC Board Chairperson/ SAFSC Alliance Partner, 082 775 3420
Ferrial Adam, COPAC /SAFSC Alliance Partner, 074 181 3197
Itumeleng Mogatsui, GreenHouse Project / SAFSC Alliance Partner, 073 601 7078