

Submission

to the

National Assembly

on

Climate Change Bill

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A) INTRODUCTION

About the Centre for Applied Legal Studies

- 1. The Centre for Applied Legal Studies ("CALS") welcomes the opportunity provided by the National Assembly to make comments on the Climate Change Bill ("the Bill").
- 2. In the event that Parliament hosts public hearings on the Bill, CALS hereby requests that it be placed on the roll to make oral submissions.
- 3. CALS is a human rights organisation and registered law clinic with the Legal Practice Council of the Northern Provinces, based at the School of Law at the University of the Witwatersrand. For over 40 years CALS has been committed to the protection of human rights through partnering with individuals and communities in the pursuit of systemic change.
- 4. CALS' vision is a country and continent where human rights are respected, protected and fulfilled by the state, corporations, individuals and other repositories of power; the dismantling of systemic harm; and a rigorous dedication to justice. It fulfils this mandate by
 - 4.1. Challenging and reforming systems within Africa which perpetuate harm, inequality and human rights violations;
 - 4.2. Providing professional legal representation to survivors of human rights abuses; and
 - 4.3. Using a combination of strategic litigation, advocacy and research, to challenge systems of power and act on behalf of vulnerable persons and communities.'
- 5. CALS operates across a range of human rights issues, namely home, land and rural democracy, business and human rights, environmental justice, gender justice, as well as civil and political justice. It adopts a gendered and intersectional approach to interpreting, implementing and where necessary promoting the development of the law.



6. The environmental justice programme aims to counter this injustice and make environmental rights a reality for all who live in South Africa. We aim to change the behaviour of both the corporate actors, that make use of natural resources, and the state, which regulates this process. Our focus remains on the mining sector, which is a major contributor to economic growth in the country, but is also responsible for a great deal of environmental harm and exploitation. We work specifically on the social and labour plan system and other models for community benefit sharing, placing the issues of voice, participation and transparency at the centre of our work.

Background and focus of our comments

- 7. The Climate Crisis is perhaps the most severe crisis humanity has faced. Projections of the leading climate scientists in the International Panel on Climate Change ("IPCC") are that if the increase in global temperatures is not limited to below the 1.5 degrees¹ planetary conditions will change irreversibly to a state no longer supportive of human existence and extinctions of species will occur on a scale not seen in millennia.
- 8. The impacts of climate change are unevenly distributed on gender, race and class racism is cruelly manifested Environmental with impacts disproportionately felt within historically colonised societies whose land and natural resources were plundered by global north states and corporations whose fossil fuel-generated path of accumulation is responsible for the present climate crisis. In South Africa and the rest of sub-Saharan Africa, we are already seeing the catastrophic human impacts. One example is the recent floods in KwaZulu-Natal ("KZN"), which claimed the lives of an estimated 443 people with nearly 4000 left homeless.² Drought, famine and floods are becoming endemic features of life. These climate change impacts jeopardise the realisation of possibly all rights enshrined in the South African Constitution (and in international and regional law). These include, but are not limited to the right to life, dignity, socio-economic rights and, of course, the environmental right enshrined in Section 24. Section 24 imposes a duty on the state to:

¹ IPCC [Masson-Delmotte, V., P. Zhai, H.-O. Pörtner, D. Roberts, J. Skea, P.R. Shukla,A. Pirani, W. Moufouma-Okia, C. Péan, R. Pidcock, S. Connors, J.B.R. Matthews, Y. Chen, X. Zhou, M.I. Gomis,E. Lonnoy, T. Maycock, M. Tignor, and T. Waterfield (eds.)] Summary for Policymakers. In: Global Warming of 1.5°C. An IPCC Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above preindustrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and

efforts to eradicate poverty. At 7-10.

² https://reliefweb.int/disaster/fl-2022-000201-zaf.



- 'b) to have the environment protected, for the benefit of present and future generations, through reasonable legislative and other measures that -
- (i) prevent pollution and ecological degradation;
- (ii) promote conservation; and
- (iii) secure ecologically sustainable development and use of natural resources while promoting justifiable economic and social development.'
- 9. The enjoyment of fundamental human rights depends on a physical environment capable of sustaining life and livelihoods. Climate change, by dramatically altering the physical environment, therefore threatens the enjoyment of a host of rights under the Constitution. These include, citing just a few examples, the rights to life³ (given the death tolls from extreme weather events), food and water⁴ (given impacts on rainfall patterns and food security) and adequate housing⁵ (given the destruction of homes from extreme weather events).
- 10. Further, because the South African economy is based upon the highly carbon-intensive minerals-energy complex marked be an over-reliance on coal as a source of energy. Drastic and immediate action is required to ensure a rapid transformation to a carbon neutral economy that guarantees a decent work and living standards for all. It is therefore imperative that South Africa develop an effective legal framework for the required measures for a just transition to an economy compatible with the 1.5°C threshold and for adaptation to the impacts of climate change.
- 11. We therefore welcome the tabling of the Bill as an important step forward in tackling this decisive challenge facing South Africa, humanity and the planet.
- 12. The stakes surrounding the Bill are therefore very high the Bill needs to provide an effective legal framework for the rapid reduction of greenhouse emissions and for effective adaptation to the impacts of climate change on lives, livelihoods and infrastructure. Further, the Bill needs to promote a just transition to a climate neutral economy in such a way that workers communities, women enjoy a living wage and ownership and control over their workplaces and development paths.

³ Section 11 of the Constitution, 1996.

⁴ Section 27 (1) (b) of the Constitution, 1996.

⁵ Section 26 of the Constitution, 1996.



- 13. Given the wide scope of proposed framework legislation like the Climate Bill, it is not feasible to do justice to all aspects of the Climate Bill in the scope of these comments. Instead, we wish to focus on a smaller number of aspects that fall within CALS' focus and expertise. These comments, in particular, will focus on access to information, public participation, just transition issues (skills development and gender), timeframes, and enforcement and penalties.
- 14. While these comments are critical regarding aspects of the Bill, we commend the introduction of the Bill as well as its inclusion of mechanisms that are vital for the limiting of climate change and adaptation to its unavoidable impacts.

B) THE IMPORTANCE OF BROAD-BASED PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE LAW-MAKING PROCESS

- 15. The process by which a law or policy is developed is as or more important than its content. The Tanzanian legal theorist Issa Shivji's elegant argument for the opportunities for raising levels of public consciousness in the context of Constitution making is equally applicable to all legal and policy instruments including the Bill:
 - '...the very process of making a constitution is as, if not more important than the outcome. This is because full participation of the people has pedagogical effect. The process serves as a school of democratic struggles.'⁶
- 16. This is especially the case with an issue such as climate change, which is both science laden and vastly impactful in an unprecedented manner. It is therefore an issue for which a level of public awareness is important and one complex enough that requires significant levels of engagement to generate that awareness.
- 17. The Bill therefore merits an especially intensive public participation process. Participation should never be treated as a tick-box exercise but the implications of climate change and the Bill are so significant.
- 18. Public participation should occur in all areas of the country, especially areas especially affected by either climate change itself e.g. KZN and agricultural areas and/or the transition away from a fossil fuel-based economy e.g. (areas near coal mines and coal-fired power stations). There needs to be a bias towards the broader working class including workers, communities, women, youth,

⁶ Issa Shivji 'The Pitfalls of Constitution-making in Tanzania: the lessons so far' (Lecture to the University of Dodoma Convocation, November 2013) at 16.

⁷ I.e. the communities and workers for whom a just transition is especially needed.



unemployed people and persons living with disabilities and not towards elite interests.

- 19. The sessions should be conducted in a spirit of listening and engagement, with an open mind to questions and inputs of the afore-mentioned groups in particular. Facilitators need to be knowledgeable about the Bill and the subject matter and be able to answer questions. All inputs need to be recorded and made publically available. Public participation meetings should be tailored to enabling people to participate in a language of their choice, including through knowledgeable interpreters. Language and terminology to be used at meetings should be clear, accessible with technical jargon kept to a minimum. There needs to be adequate notice for each meeting. Notice should be clear and in advance to enable people to prepare for the meeting. It needs to be designed to reach people and therefore needs to use multiple forms of notice including community radio stations and notifying community-based organisations. Finally, there needs to be logistical support to enable communities to participate including the provision of transport and data.
- 20. We will later return to the theme of public participation under heading D, which discusses the public participation processes provided for in the Bill itself.

C) THE BILL PROVIDES FOR A RANGE OF PLANNING AND REGULATORY MECHANISMS NECESSARY FOR ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE

21. The Bill puts in place a number of important planning and regulatory mandates and processes and mechanisms for ensuring considered measures for both prevention and adaptation are taken. While these comments are not intended to be exhaustive in this regard, we will cite a few key examples. First, the Bill recognises the importance of co-operative governance, for example requires for provincial⁸ and local⁹ intergovernmental forums established in terms of the Intergovernmental Relations Framework Act, 2005 to constitute themselves as forums on climate change. Second, the Bill requires the Minister to periodically determine and update a greenhouse emissions trajectory, which specifies the greenhouse gas reduction objectives of the country as a whole.¹⁰ Third, to ensure sectors and individual emitters fall in line with the trajectory, the Bill provides for sectoral emissions

⁸ Section 8 of the Climate Change Bill [B9 – 2022] ("the Bill").

⁹ Section 9 of the Bill.

¹⁰ Section 21 of the Bill.



targets¹¹ as well as carbon budgets¹² for entities that conduct activities identified by the Minister as likely to cause climate change and/or emit greenhouses gases as listed by the Minister. Fourth, the Bill requires a National Adaptation Strategy¹³ to adapt to climate change impacts and further requires both provinces and municipalities (District and Metropolitan) to develop their own Climate Change Response Implementation Plans based on local needs and vulnerabilities.¹⁴

22. The Bill mandates local government with a significant planning and implementation role, in accordance with its Constitutional mandate. This is important for promoting adaptation and other measures that are responsive to local needs. Given the broader need for climate change education, and in the context of already-existing capacity and other challenges at local government, a programme for resourcing and training local government is required for these responsibilities to be carried out effectively.

D) THE BILL COULD GO FURTHER TO PROMOTE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN MANAGING CLIMATE CHANGE

23. The principle of participatory democracy more broadly and in the context of environmental management is established in international and domestic law. It however remains a struggle for the majority of workers, communities, women and other oppressed groups to convert tick-box exercises into real influence over decisions that affect them. The participatory as well as representative nature of South African democracy was recognised by the Constitutional Court judgment of *Doctors for Life International v Speaker of the National Assembly and Others*, which concerned the duty of parliament to facilitate public involvement in law making.¹⁵ The Environmental management principles in the National Environmental Management Act include the following:

The participation of all interested and affected parties in environmental governance must be promoted, and all people must have the opportunity to develop the understanding, skills and capacity necessary for achieving equitable and effective participation, and participation by vulnerable and disadvantaged persons must be ensured^{'16}

¹² Section 24 of the Bill.

¹¹ Section 22 of the Bill.

¹³ Section 18 of the Bill.

¹⁴ Section 15 of the Bill.

¹⁵ 2006 (6) SA 416 (CC).

¹⁶ Section 2 (4) (f) of NEMA.



'Decisions must take into account the interests, needs and values of all interested and affected parties, and this includes recognising all forms of knowledge, including traditional and ordinary knowledge'¹⁷

- 24. The same considerations apply equally to questions of climate justice and of a just transition to a carbon neutral economy that meets the needs of the majority and not small elite. It is a critical that all law, policy-making, decision-making and implementation be driven by those most impacted. Groups particular impacted include:
 - Workers and communities in sectors rendered obsolete or impacted by the just transition (e.g. coal mining and energy generation)
 - Workers and communities in new green sectors
 - Workers and communities who bear the brunt of the lack of availability of free and reliable electricity
 - Communities most vulnerable to natural disasters as we tragically saw recently in Kwa-Zulu Natal; and
 - Women, youth, persons living with disability and other marginalised people in all the above groups who bear the greatest burden of climate change associated impacts
- 25. Given significant disparities in resources, education and access to expertise multipronged education, capacitation and resourcing strategies are required to enable meaningful participation. There is an especially stark imbalance between communities and fossil fuel companies with their array of specialists, public relations specialists and lawyers.
- 26. At the level of principle, the Bill shows a laudable understanding and acknowledgment of the above by the legislator. There are two especially prominent examples in its principles section. Subsection 3 (f) provides that 'the need for decision-making to consider the special needs and circumstance of localities and people that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change...'18. Subsection 3 (k) provides that 'integrated climate change response which requires the enhancement of public awareness of climate change causes and impacts and the promotion of participation and action at all levels.'

¹⁷ Section 2 (4) (g) of NEMA.

¹⁸ Key vulnerable groups are identified in Section 3 (f) of the Bill as follows: 'vulnerable workers and groups such as women, especially poor and rural women, children, especially infants and childheaded families, the aged, the poor, the sick and the physically challenged.'



- 27. At a concrete level, the Bill prescribes a standard notice and comment process for key exercises of prescribed planning, decision-making and regulation making under the Bill.¹⁹ These include but are not limited to the following:
 - Local and provincial climate change needs and response assessments;
 - National adaptation objectives;
 - The national adaptation strategy and plan;
 - Sectoral emissions targets; and
 - Regulations under the Bill.²⁰
- 28. The Bill further provides the decision-maker with the discretion to allow for oral representations or objections:

'The Minister, MEC or mayor may in appropriate circumstances allow any interested person or community to present oral representations or objections to the Minister, MEC or mayor, or to a person designated by the Minister or MEC or mayor.'21

- 29. The forms of notice are, unlike those prescribed in the National Environmental Management Act, not particular tailored to ensure broad-based participation of the impacted sectors of society workers, communities, women, people living with disabilities and others that the Bill intends to empower. Unlike, for example under the 2014 NEMA EIA regulations, there are no requirements for use of community radio, alternative forms of notice tailored to particular needs, and requirements to ensure forms of notice are in all predominant languages.
- 30. In addition, despite the acknowledging this need at the level of principle, the Bill does not create or provide for any concrete mechanisms for addressing the aforementioned barriers to meaningful involvement in key processes relating to climate change prevention and adaptation.
- 31. We recommend that the Bill provide for a multi-pronged resourcing programme, possibly financed through carbon taxes or a levy on companies that profit from fossil fuels i.e. the same sectors who stand to be listed by the Minister as greenhouse emitting sectors for the purposes of determining sectoral emissions

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¹⁹ Section 29 of the Bill.

²⁰ The full list of powers who exercise triggers the public participation process are those provided for in Sections 15(1), 16(1), 16(2), 17(1), 17(2), 18(2), 19(1)(b), 19(1)(c), 20(1), 20(3), 21(1), 21(4), 22(1), 22(2), 22(3), 22(7), 22(9), 22(10), 23(1), 23(2), 23(5), 23(6), 25 or 27 of the Bill.

²¹Section 29 (3) of the Bill.



targets.²² It would need to consist of a range of interventions including the capacitation of schoolteachers in collaboration with the department of education, public messaging on the range of traditional and social media, and community workshops. The subject matter of this programme would include the scientific basis of climate change, its impacts, the legal framework and remedies. In mandating the development of this programme, the Bill should lay out some basic principles. An example is gender parity in the beneficiaries of workshops and other capacitation initiatives.

E) A LACK OF MECHANISMS FOR ADDRESSING GENDER AND OTHER SOCIETAL INEQUALITIES TO ACHIEVE JUST TRANSITION

- 32. The above section on participation and the need for public education and capacitation reveals a broader silence in the Bill a lack of prescribed concrete measures to address societal inequalities to promote a just transition. An example is the need for a comprehensive reskilling plan especially target at workers and communities in sectors and value chains deemed particularly at risk (whether from climate change impacts or from the transition to a carbon neutral economy). The Presidential Climate Commission, in its draft Framework for a Just Transition in South Africa identifies the coal, automotive, agriculture and tourism as especially vulnerable.²³ While the details of such a plan will need to be contained in regulations and policy frameworks, the development of a mass reskilling plan in partnership with the Department of Higher Education and Training, the Department of Monitoring and Evaluation, other relevant departments, SETAs and other role players within a timeframe needs to be a legislative mandate. Further, the Bill should specify basic principles the plan should adhere to including gender-parity of beneficiaries.
- 33. In spite of the reality that women's disproportionate reproductive/care labour burden and economic marginalisation means that climate change impacts are heavily gendered, there is no mention of the facilitation of gender justice in relation to climate change prevention or adaptation. The only mention of gender in the Bill is in relation to the composition of the Presidential Climate Commission where gender parity is required. The capacitation of women as well as the prioritisation of women in the creation of alternative livelihoods is critical to ensure that the climate crisis is addressed in a manner that prioritises the overcoming of gender oppression.

²² Section 22 (1) of the Bill.

²³ At 9.



F) ACCESS TO INFORMATION

- 34. Transparency is another hard-won and well-established principle of environmental and climate justice and one that is a pre-requisite for meaningful public participation. Given the severe and widespread impacts of environmental harms on multiple rights, there is a clear public interest in complete transparency of information relating to environmental impacts. Climate change is a clear example since the impacts of climate change impact on the whole of humanity, with a disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable. The framework legislation for environmental management National Environmental Management Act provides as a principle of environmental management that 'Decisions must be taken in an open and transparent manner, and access to information must be provided in accordance with the law.' There is a line of cases including Biowatch Trust v Registrar Genetic Resources & Others²⁴ and Company Secretary of Arcelormittal South Africa vs VEJA²⁵ that have affirmed the importance of the role of public interest groups (e.g. Non-governmental organisations and community-based organisations) in the protection of environmental rights. In the latter case, the Supreme Court of Appeal affirmed the right of the respondent, a community-based organisation, to access the appellant's environmental master plan in the context of this role.26
- 35. Unfortunately, as is widely documented in research reports (including the South African Human Rights Commission), access to much environmental management and compliance information (in particular in sectors such as mining) remains a significant challenge.²⁷ This body of research shows that the process of requesting information under the Promotion of Access to Information Act, 2000 ("PAIA") serves to obstruct rather than enable access to information. In a form of environmental racism, those most impacted by decisions often face an uphill battle simply to obtain comprehensive information regarding the nature of impacts on their rights.

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²⁴ 2009 (6) SA 232 (CC).

²⁵ 2015 (1) SA 515 (SCA).

²⁶ At paras 71-75.

²⁷ A few examples include: South African Human Rights Commission *Hearing Report on the Underlying Socio-Economic Challenges of Mining-Affected Communities* (2018) at 66-61; Centre for Environmental Rights *Barricading the doors* 2013; Centre for Applied Legal Studies, Sekhukhune Combined Mining-Affected Communities and Amnesty International *Unearthing the truth: how mines failed communities in the Sekhukhune region of South Africa* (2022) at 32-33.



- 36. A far more effective manner of making information available are forms of proactive disclosure including an online data portal and climate change indicators dashboard and other interactive platforms.
- 37. The access to information provision found in Section 31 of the Climate Bill unfortunately does nothing to address these concerns. The section tersely states that information be made available 'subject to the provisions of the Promotion of Access to Information Act, 2000²⁸ and the Protection of Personal Information Act, 2013.'²⁹ It therefore does not add anything tangible to the legal status quo. It reaffirms the processes under PAIA whose deficiency in ensuring a free flow of information has been widely documented and persistently raised by communities and civil society. PAIA, it must be remembered, also contains multiple grounds for refusing access to information that are often abused and POPIA adds a significant layer. A provision that just says information be made available subject to PAIA therefore does nothing to guarantee access to information.
- 38. The Bill should instead provide a timeframe for a comprehensive online platform encompassing a database, a dashboard and other interactive platforms. The information contained in the platform must be easy to find comprehensive and understandable. This could take the existing National Climate Change Information System as a starting point.³⁰ This information would include:
 - Mitigation measures;
 - Greenhouse gas emitters' carbon budgets and greenhouse gas mitigation plans, any exemptions and emitters' compliance status;
 - Any reporting as prescribed in the Bill, for example the annual reporting to the Minister by emitters on progress with carbon budgets;³¹
 - Climate finance deals;
 - Climate adaptation strategies and plans from different sectors, ministries, provinces and municipalities;
 - Simplified information and toolkits to ensure the information is accessible to the broader public.
- 39. The Bill should also specify the above and other set of records that are public documents and that will be included in the platform. Further, it should explicitly affirm that, in the instance in which documents in the listed categories are not yet

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²⁸ Act No. 2 of 2000.

²⁹ Act No. 4 of 2013

³⁰ This can be accessed at https://ccis.environment.gov.za/#/

³¹ As provided for in 24 (6) (d) and (e) of the Bill.



uploaded, the regulator holding the information is duty bound to release the information on request without the requestor having to resort to the PAIA process.

G) EMISSIONS TRAJECTORY FALLS FAR SHORT OF NECESSARY AMBITION TO LIMIT CATASTROPHIC CLIMATE

- 40. Section 21 of the Climate Bill provides that the Minister must develop a national greenhouse gas emissions trajectory but that in the meantime the trajectory contained in Schedule 3 prevails. This is of concern, as this trajectory is the one determined in 2015 that is based on a target of far above the 1.5°C threshold identified by the IPCC. The inclusion of this trajectory potentially contravenes South Africa's international commitments such as in terms of the Paris Agreement.³²
- 41. The Bill also fails to reference the IPCC's projection that meeting the 1.5°C limit requires the reduction of emissions by around 45% of 2010 levels by 2030 and net zero by 2050.³³

H) TIMEFRAMES IN THE BILL

- 42. The time to stave off the most severe scenarios of the climate crisis is rapidly running out. The catastrophic loss of lives and homes in the recent Durban flooding underscores the urgent need for co-ordinated adaptation measures to respond to the impacts of climate change that are already present and will persist even under the best-case emission reduction scenarios. Given this urgency, both prevention and adaptation measures need to be undertaken as rapidly as possible based upon clear timeframes in legislation and in line with the above-mentioned IPCC targets of 45% reduction by 2030 and net zero by 2050.
- 43. There is room for improvement in the Bill with respect to timeframes and deadlines for measures. In particular, there are no timeframes for crucial actions assigning

³² Article 2 (a) of the Paris Agreement commits parties to the objective of limiting the global average temperature increase to well below 2°C with aim of limiting it to 1.5°C; Article 3 requires each countries' nationally determined contribution to represent a progression.

³³IPCC (note 1) at 12.



carbon budgets to emitters, sectoral emissions targets, or determining the greenhouse gas emission trajectory.

I) OFFENCES AND PENALTIES

- 44. Given the interest of companies profiting from fossil fuels in emitting as much as possible, there need to be a range of mechanisms of accountability. As discussed above, increasing the capacity of impacted workers, communities and women through access to information and capacitation (education and resourcing) is one such lever for accountability. Of equal importance is the formulation of offences and penalties that can impose significant costs (direct and reputational) on companies that fail to comply with obligations under the Bill, including their carbon budget and greenhouse gas mitigation plan.
- 45. The Bill correctly makes it an offence for those undertaking listed activities not to develop a greenhouse gas mitigation plan to give effect to their carbon budget. The penalties are those prescribed in Section 49B (2) of NEMA namely up to R5 million in fines of 5 years in imprisonment.³⁴
- 46. Unfortunately, this is the sole offence under the Bill. It is therefore, for example an offence not to develop a greenhouse gas mitigation plan but not to fail to comply with the plan or exceed one's carbon budget.
- 47. Creating offences and penalties for failure to comply with duties under the Bill would significantly strengthen its effectiveness. There should also be provision for especially steep penalties for significant and repeated non-compliances.

J) CONCLUSION

48. Thank you for providing the opportunity to provide input. For queries and further information, please contact Robert Krause (Researcher) at Robert.Krause@wits.ac.za or 081 427 7818 or Dr Louis Snyman (Head of Programme) on Louis.Snyman@wits.ac.za or 083 355 6482. CALS would welcome any opportunity for further engagement on this Climate Change Bill, including the opportunity to make oral representations.

³⁴ And up to R10 million or 10 years imprisonment for repeat offences.