



Press release

10 June 2020

Mr Cyril Ramaphosa, President, Republic of South Africa
Mr Ebrahim Patel, Minister of Trade and Industry
Ms Barbara Creecy, Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and Environmental Affairs
Ms Lindiwe Sisulu, Minister of Human Settlements, Water and Sanitation

A Call to Minister of Environmental Affairs and Fisheries to Defend the Rights of Subsistence Fishers in eThekweni Municipality

On Tuesday, 09 June, the fourth meeting of the National Food Crisis Forum (NFCF) was convened by the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign and the Cooperative and Policy Alternative Center (COPAC), a vibrant alliance partner of the SAFSC and which is currently coordinating its response to Covid-19.

We applaud the decision of Minister Creecy to open the ocean commons to subsistence fishers by passing regulations for 'recreational fishing' at level 3 of the lockdown. This reflects a willingness by the Minister to listen to subsistence fisher organisations and affirm their rights. Thousands of subsistence fishers have gone out to fish as a result, practicing public health guidelines. They are feeding their families. However, it has been reported to the NFCF by subsistence fishers in eThekweni Municipality that they are being brutally prevented by SAPS, Metro Police and the municipality from fishing. This is a violation of the regulations passed by the Minister. It also reflects the crisis of this municipality which is financially bankrupt and out of touch with the needs of the people. We would like to appeal to the Minister to speak to her cabinet colleagues dealing with local government to address this matter and to also speak directly to the eThekweni Municipality. We also call on the media to report on this injustice. We look forward to hearing from the Minister on this issue.

We also acknowledge the willingness of the Minister of Trade and Industry to engage in dialogue with the NFCF on increasing food prices, particularly essentials for poor households and the need for solidarity buying and pantries in supermarkets. As this engagement unfolds we will report accordingly.

Water Conflicts and Crises During Covid 19

Water conflicts are continuing during the Covid 19 lockdown. We stand with Ayanda Kota, leader of the Unemployed People's Movement, who has been at the forefront of confronting water mismanagement in Makhanda and who has been receiving death threats. We say 'hands-off' Ayanda Kota. We are all watching.

On our mapping of water stressed communities we are continuing this process. We believe our mapping tool is crucial to democratise the water commons in South Africa and ensure peoples voices are heard by Minister Sisulu, planners, policy-makers and local government. The lack of responsiveness from Minister Sisulu and her advisors to our water stress reports on 79 communities has not deterred us from ensuring peoples water rights are recognised and affirmed. We are now in dialogue with the South African Human Rights Commission on how we deal with the dismissive

attitude of the Minister. We also believe Minister Sisulu's Master Plan for South Africa's (estimated at R900 billion) water needs will not work if it does not include people's voices and participation in such a process. Top-down, technocratic management of water needs is a recipe for conflict. Moreover, we are now shifting our focus to schools and call on parents, pupils and civil society organisations to report on the lack of water in schools. Please use this tool to highlight water stress in schools: <https://www.safsc.org.za/water-stressed-communities-map/>

Worsening Food Crisis

The food crisis is worsening from all accounts. Government's shift to vouchers, the Covid-19 Relief Grant and other initiatives are not working. In this regard we will continue building a consensus in progressive civil society for a substantive and universal basic income grant. We will be releasing a '#BIGNOW consensus framework' document shortly.

In addition, we need to work together to scale up community led food relief efforts. In this regard, the NCF would also like to share with the public the roll out of our food relief mapping tool. This tool will draw attention to community led food relief initiatives and will be used to engage the Solidarity Fund, government and other donors to support such initiatives directly. We are going to meet the Solidarity Fund soon to take this forward. We call on activists, movements, community organisations and the public to support the promotion of this tool. Here is the link: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfz0t1KhuglqzxikWNT-5fD05n0Dp2VNj3mKR-11FLhGK9eQ/viewform>

A Food Sovereignty Strategy for South Africa

The NCF will be releasing a Food Sovereignty Strategy for South Africa, shortly. This document will be championed in engagements with the Solidarity Fund and government. We will also compliment this with an online popular education program. We need to ensure we build local food sovereignty pathways, now, to feed communities, villages, towns and cities. Again we appeal to agroecologists, community gardeners, small scale farmers, subsistence fishers and informal traders to share details about their activities on this food commons map available here: <https://www.safsc.org.za/food-commons-map/>

June 16 is About Inter-Generational Climate Justice

Finally, the Food Sovereignty Campaign and the Cooperative and Policy Alternative Centre (COPAC) invites all allies, activists, movements, community organisations and the public to join us on June 16th for a Peoples Climate Justice Assembly, in which we will finalise a People's Climate Justice Charter for South Africa. This is a transitional compass to guide urgent socio-ecological restructuring of South Africa to confront a hotter and drier future. Like the Covid-19 emergency, the worsening climate crisis is also an emergency which we have to act on together and immediately. You can register here: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_eQsJisbdR4WSrT8jH9_omw

For more information, contact:

Dorah Marema, Gender CC Southern Africa – Women For Climate Justice, 073 177 1817

Desmond D'sa, South Durban Community Environmental Alliance, 083 9826939

Ayanda Kota, Unemployed Peoples Movement, 078 6256462

Vishwas Satgar, Board Chairperson COPAC and SAFSC activist, 082 775 3420