



CLIMATE
JUSTICE
CHARTER
MOVEMENT



SAFSC
SOUTH AFRICAN FOOD
SOVEREIGNTY CAMPAIGN

12 February 2021

TO: President Cyril Ramaphosa

A Climate Justice Response to SONA 2021

On October 16, World Food Day, 2020, activists from the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign and the Climate Justice Charter Movement peacefully gathered across the country, in 68 local actions to call for an end to hunger, thirst, pollution and climate harm! Thereafter, we hosted an online national assembly which was attended by Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Lechesa Tsenoli and political parties. At this assembly we handed over the [Climate Justice Charter](#) (CJC) (now endorsed by 238 organisations), a [Climate Science](#) document and a set of demands from communities to the parties and Parliament.

We demanded that Parliament adopt the Climate Justice Charter as per section 234 of the constitution, which provides for charters to be adopted. However, we are disappointed as we have still not had a response from Parliament and you did not make mention of our submission to parliament. The CJC calls for a break with a 'business as usual' approach to the climate crisis and strikingly the SONA merely affirmed the same. It was not informed by the urgency of climate science, mainstreaming climate justice policy across government and the need to address the climate crisis directly as the basis to resolve several other crises facing the country at the moment.

Mr. President, alongside Covid-19, the worst drought in the history of the country continued late into 2020 having devastating impacts in the Eastern Cape, prompting the poorest to scavenge for food including 'eating dogs and cats', according to Gift of the Givers. Extreme rainfall has impacted through flooding in parts of the country and cyclone Eloise also had negative socio-economic impacts within South Africa. All of these realities, together with the Covid-19 pandemic and worsening economic crisis, have to be tackled together through addressing systemic causes. Leadership that doesn't grasp these interconnected challenges is failed leadership.

Mr. President, your emphasis on externalising the economy and geopolitical positioning around global competitiveness is the same supply side emphasise we have had for over 25 years. You, your advisors and your cabinet are misreading the dramatic changes that are taking place in the global political economy. The obsession with Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) as the silver bullet is a mistake. We have learned that FDI does not necessarily create jobs, it worsens inequality, it skews our national priorities and will not enable a deep just transition. Sending signals to credit rating agencies is not the same as meeting the urgent needs of the country. Instead of FDI and its constraints, we need leadership to build national savings and the political will to steer capital to ensure the deep just transition is advanced now.

While the SONA mentions that Eskom has to meet a net zero carbon emissions target by 2050, we are not sure how your government has arrived at this target. Climate science is saying we are facing a 3° Celsius reality this decade in the region and in the country. The 2050 net zero target is not

ambitious enough from the standpoint of climate science. More importantly, the detail of Eskom's Just Transition Plan is not transparent. Essentially, your commitment to increasing renewable energy generation is a reaction to a failing Eskom. It is crisis management. If your announcements on renewable energy were serious about a deep just transition, we would have heard: embedded generation must mean decent climate jobs in workplaces; local government procurement would be about feed-in tariffs for households and incentives to promote community/socially owned renewable energy; and an end to the renewables energy ceiling in the Integrated Resource Plan.

The SONA's mentioning of the climate crisis and the Paris Climate Agreement is typical lip service and fraudulent leadership. The Economic Recovery Plan calls for more off-shore extraction of oil and gas. Mr. President, if you are serious about the climate crisis you would have announced that such fossil fuel extraction was off the national agenda. You would have also made it clear that nuclear energy plans are also off the national agenda. In this context we would have taken your climate change commission more seriously. The climate crisis does not need more tedious policy making commissions that waste tax payers' money. We have had a Tax Commission, Land Commission, Zondo Commission and more but what has this yielded in terms of concrete outcomes and transformation. We are not convinced about the value of your Climate Commission and will continue championing the Climate Justice Charter in society and as the basis for deep just transitions from below in communities and workplaces.

The SONA also fell short in the following respects in relation to the Climate Justice Charter:

- An 'African Free Trade Area' is not the same as advancing the renewal of radical Pan Africanism, debt cancellation and a Climate Justice Deal for Africa which the CJC envisages
- The CJC calls for an end to corruption including in the state. We are still baffled by the failure of the Zondo Commission and the Constitutional Court to order the arrest of President Jacob Zuma for violating their rulings. An anti-corruption strategy is only going to work if there are no double standards in the application of the rule of law to all in the country without fear or favour;
- The emphasis on supporting small scale and subsistence farming is welcome but we want support for agro-ecology and food sovereignty pathways in every community, village, town and city now. In the midst of Covid-19 the government failed in its response to the hunger challenge and instead it was communities themselves that rallied with solidarity. That needs to be strengthened now and the CJC calls for such;
- The water agency mentioned in your address can potentially take the country in the direction of democratic planning and management of the water commons. But this potential is undermined when licenses for water are going to be fast tracked to mining houses and other business that have not taken care of our water resources. The CJC calls for the affirmation of citizens' rights in relation to the water commons and we want to see that at the centre of a new water regime;
- Car manufacturing is not the same as mass clean energy public transport systems and eco mobility which the CJC calls for;
- While we welcome your extension of the Covid relief grant of R350, for another 3 months, instead of leaving the poor twirling in the wind of uncertainty you should have affirmed recognition of the societal consensus for a universal basic income grant now (#UBIGNOW) and signalled a firm commitment to a policy transition for a UBIG. Your temporary employment and youth entrepreneurship programs are just not adequate to address the

needs of over 6 million that are unemployed. The #UBIGNOW is crucial as a social policy and transformative measure for the deep just transition which the CJC calls for;

- A 'smart city' is not the same as eco-social housing, buildings and transition towns based on ensuring we can handle the extremes of worsening climate crisis. We call for the latter in the CJC;
- The economics of FDI is still mainstream thinking and worse it marginalises the need for wealth taxes and high taxes on the high income earners and corporations. The entire SONA is premised on austerity thinking. We reject this. The rich must pay their ecological debt which we call for in the CJC;
- Announcing vaccines and a roll out plan does not go far enough to address the possibility of a 4th wave of Covid-19 and the complex transition we face. The roll out plan must be democratised to involve progressive civil society. Moreover, now is the time to strengthen and integrate our entire health care system into one single and effective national public health system based on progressive taxation. We will need such a system with worsening climate crisis. The CJC envisages such a public health care system;

We cannot wait for our government to act on climate change decisively. The SONA has revealed that South Africa does not have a people driven Climate Justice State. We will continue to struggle this year with affected communities for an end to hunger, thirst, pollution and climate harm. We will return to Parliament again on 16 October, World Food Day, to confirm the CJC has been adopted by parliament. We will promote alternatives, we will host national days of action, we will launch a Climate Justice Deal for South Africa and we will continue to campaign for a universal basic income grant (#UBIGNOW) and for food sovereignty. We will be taking our climate science document, the CJC and the Peoples Food Sovereignty Act to all local and provincial governments for adoption. We demand climate justice local government elections this year. In this regard, we call on all citizens to only vote for parties and candidates that support the urgency of climate science, the Climate Justice Charter, the Peoples Food Sovereignty Act and the needs of local communities.

We urge civil society to support the Climate Justice Charter Movement by signing the online [petition](#), and for organisations to also [endorse](#) the Charter. Let's go to parliament together on 16 October 2021, a national day of action and international solidarity for climate justice, with a serious show of strength and peoples power!

The Climate Justice Charter calls for peoples' systemic alternatives, which provide the only viable way forward for our country. The measures presented in the SONA are not sufficient, they don't represent thinking that will rise to the challenge of addressing multiple systemic crises, of which the climate crisis is the most pressing.

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