

For immediate Release

Communities occupy the street demanding acceleration for a Just Transition to a low-carbon economy.

Johannesburg, 6 December 2019 ---Earthlife Africa is occupying the streets of Johannesburg in a mock funeral symbolising the devastating impacts of climate change. We are joining millions of people around the world in sending a clear message to our governments - We Need Urgent and Ambitious Climate Action! The march also intends to serve as a reminder to the South African government, the memorandum of demands we delivered in September, particularly now, as world leaders convene at the UN climate conference (COP25) in Madrid, Spain.

March details:

Date: 06 December 2019

Time: 09h00 to 13h00

Start: Westgate Taxi Rank (corner Ntemi Piliso and Hall Street)

End: Eskom Regional Office (No. 204 Smit Street, Braamfontein)

World emissions have risen by 1.5% over the last decade and reached a record high of 55.3 GtCO_{2e} in 2018. According to the recently published annual [Emissions Gap Report \(UNEP\)](#), global emissions need to fall by 7.6% each year for the next decade, if we are to stay on track of limiting warming to 1.5 °C, a Paris Agreement goal.

The G20 countries, of which South Africa is a member, are responsible for the bulk of emissions (78%) globally. These member states especially need to pull their weight if we are to meet this goal. South Africa is the most coal-dependent country of all the G20 countries. It has a high reliance on coal for energy and still plans to build new coal-fired power stations past 2020. António Guterres in a recent press conference earlier this week said what is lacking from governments is political will - "political will to put a price on carbon, political will to stop subsidies on fossil fuels, political will to stop building coal power plants from 2020 onwards, and political will to shift taxation from income to carbon, taxing pollution instead of people."

Together with countries, fossil fuel corporates, such as Eskom and Sasol, must also be held accountable for climate change. In the same breath, these industries cannot be part of the climate talks as they greatly

undermine climate policy development, which could jeopardize plans to adequately mitigate the climate crisis. This has been criticism given over the years but also again at COP25, as it was learnt that Spain's biggest polluter, Endesa is a sponsor of the climate conference.

The UN Chief António Guterres further declared that global efforts to address climate change have so far been "utterly inadequate". According to a new UN report current pledges by member states to the Paris Agreement will lead to warming of the planet, 3.2 °C warmer than pre-industrial levels, by 2100. This will undoubtedly have catastrophic consequences for human civilization, making the world a hostile and dangerous place to live in.

Last year's [IPCC Special Report](#) on global warming pointed out the dire impact's climate change would have on people, especially the poor living in Africa and Asia. Climate change will especially affect energy, food and water sectors. We have seen this amplified already. For instance, South Africa has been in a drought for the last two years, and this has negatively impacted food production and prices. [Projected food price inflation](#) for 2019 stood at 3.4.%, and if the drought persists, inflation is projected to increase to 4.9%. The danger at present is that climate change will not only aggravate existing poverties, but it will also create new poverty trappings. The need for adaptation not only mitigation must be high on the agenda for South Africa. With global temperature increases, adaptation will become more difficult to address.

As we look at other impacts of climate change, the frequency and intensity of natural disasters are increasing. Here at home and just last week several tornados ripped through Kwa-Zulu Natal. There were also the floods earlier this year in Durban and our neighbours, in Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe suffered through the devastation caused by tropical cyclone Idai. Certainly, people are starting to wake up to the realities of climate change. Impact stories on how climate change affects ordinary people need to come to the forefront of climate discourse. Impact stories can provide a new light and meaning that dominant perspectives currently do not.

According to Nthabiseng Matsoha, Researcher and Energy Policy Offer with Earthlife Africa "People are at the heart of climate change. Giving climate change a human face may help drive climate action. Right now, it seems too abstract an idea for people's minds to grapple with its realities."

In a [statement](#) by the president Cyril Ramaphosa to the United Nations Secretary-General, following the UN Climate Summit in September, the president disclosed that South Africa would be prepared to enhance its NDC, although it made appeals to its partners in developed countries to make technology and adaptation funds available. Developed nations have a moral obligation to assist developing nations with the climate crisis as they have disproportionately contributed to the climate emergency.

Currently, providing financing to developing nations is key on the agenda of the Climate conference this year. However, in terms of South Africa's ambition, and if the Integrated Resource Plan IRP2019 (South Africa's long-term electricity plan) is anything to go by, our ambition will most likely be moderate. What we need is a bolder ambition that will deliver a rapid transition to a low-carbon economy. That means not having any restrictions on renewable energy capacity as it is currently set out in the latest IRP.

The South African government is also meant to publish a just transition document in the coming months and Thabo Sibeko, Programs and Education Officer with Earthlife Africa, had this to say "A just transition should not be a top-down approach. It should be assumed at the community level where real issues are taking place and once it evolves decision-makers will have no choice to follow what is in high demand. What is key is involving communities".

Contact details:

Earthlife Africa JHB: Thabo Sibeko, Earthlife Africa Coal Campaigner, thabos@earthlife.org.za, +27 83 358 9182 or Nthabiseng Matsoha, Researcher & Energy Policy Officer, nthabiseng@earthlife.org.za, +27 73 200 0589

Notes to Editor

The starting point of the Global Day of Action march (Johannesburg) will be at West Gate Taxi Rank (CBD) at 09h00 for 10h00. The march will end at Eskom Regional Office 204 Smit street (BRAAMFONTEIN).