

1 December 2023

President Ramaphosa

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Dear President Ramaphosa,

The Hypocrisy of South Africa's Just Energy Transition

We note that on 13th November 2023 Minister Gwede Mantashe tabled legislation to establish a National Petroleum Company. As we are head into COP28, we, the undersigned, **request that South Africa withdraws the South African National Petroleum Company Bill** and immediately stops all further oil and gas exploration off the South African Coastline.

It is no secret that the **Global Stocktake (GST) synthesis report** has found that **collective action to address the effects of climate change is "not on track"** and that emissions reductions were not at the scale required to meet the Agreement's long-term goals. The State of Climate Action 2023 concurs **'global efforts to limit warming to 1,5degrees Celsius are failing across the board.'** And the UN Chief warns us that **'Humanity has Opened the Gates to Hell'**.

In **South Africa**, we are **extremely vulnerable to climate change** and the impacts have already been affecting us as people. We have seen our **Loss and Damage costs escalate** over the last decade and with this escalation, a loss in lives and livelihoods. For example, During the period from 2015 to 2017, the Western Cape faced a severe and prolonged drought event that had significant socio-economic and environmental implications. While the drought's repercussions were felt across various sectors, agriculture was particularly hard hit. This included substantial job losses and a noticeable dip in farm income.¹ It has been estimated that the direct economic impact of the drought to the Western Cape's economy was roughly ZAR15 billion, representing 3.4% of provincial Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 0.3% of national GDP in 2018.²

In April 2022, Durban was struck by a flood event which has been subsequently described as the most catastrophic natural disaster (in terms of lives lost, homes and infrastructure damaged or destroyed

¹ Pienaar, L., & Partridge, A. 2017. Economic Impact Assessment of the Natural Disasters on the Western Cape Agricultural Sector. Available from: <https://www.elsenburg.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/2017-Natural-Disasters-Impact-Assessment.pdf> [Accessed 14 October 2023]

² The World Bank. 2023. Hydro-Economic Study Shows Economic Benefits of Climate-Resilient Water Systems for South African Cities. Available from: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2023/06/29/hydro-economic-study-shows-economic-benefits-of-climate-resilient-water-systems-for-afe-south-african-cities#:~:text=The%20direct%20economic%20impact%20of,World%20Bank%20in%20Southern%20Africa> [Accessed 15 October 2023].

and economic impact) yet recorded in KwaZulu-Natal.³ The floods caused the loss of 459 human lives, left approximately 40 000 homeless and 45 000 individuals temporarily without work or an income. Furthermore, over ZAR40 billion in losses to business and infrastructure was recorded in the wake of the event.⁴

In June and then September 2023 many parts of the Western Cape experienced severe flooding. The estimated costs of the damage totalled over ZAR1 billion (in June 2023) and the total costs associated with loss and damage emanating from the September 2023 event are still unclear, although the Western Cape Government estimates nearly ZAR1.4 in damages to the agricultural sector following the floods.⁵ Furthermore, a number of news agencies have stated that the present assessment of damage to the provincial road network excluding that of the South African Roads Agency Ltd, amounts to approximately ZAR500 million.

African countries, in particular, have a significant adaptation gap, meaning that generally they have far fewer resources and fiscal space required to incur the costs of implementing the adaptation required to limit loss and damage.⁶ It is **estimated that by 2030 developing countries will require annual financial support ranging from \$200 billion to \$580 billion to address the costs associated with loss and damage.**⁷

Loss and Damage is a key focus on this COP. How then can South Africa lead the political element of the GST and ask for funding to support our Just Transition while at the same time we are copying the hypocrisy we condemn in the developed countries? South Africa must urgently fill the leadership void at COP28 and take the lead on phasing out fossil fuels while not falling into the trap of false solutions like Carbon Capture and Storage.

We call on you Mr President to take this decisive lead and to leave a legacy for all our children that you will be proud of: Withdraw the South African National Petroleum Company Bill with immediate effect and lead the rest of the African countries at COP28 in phasing out all fossil fuels and thereby take the path out of poverty and towards a just transition.



Bobby Peek Des D'Sa Jonathan Deal Makoma Lekalakala Liziwe McDaid

Winners of the [International Goldman Environmental Award](#).

³ Grab, S.W., & Nash, D. 2023. A new flood chronology for KwaZulu-Natal (1836–2022): the April 2022 Durban floods in historical context, South African Geographical Journal, DOI: 10.1080/03736245.2023.2193758.

⁴ Wits University. 2023. The 2022 Durban floods were the most catastrophic yet recorded in KwaZulu-Natal. Available from: <https://www.wits.ac.za/news/latest-news/general-news/2023/2023-04/the-2022-durban-floods-were-the-most-catastrophic-yet-recorded-in-kwazulu-natal.html> [Accessed 14 October 2023].

⁵ Charles, M. 2023. 'Counting the losses: Cape storm causes crop and infrastructure damage worth an estimated R1.4bn'. News24. 27 September 2023. Available from: <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/counting-the-losses-cape-storm-causes-crop-and-infrastructure-damage-worth-an-estimated-r14bn-20230927> [Accessed 15 October 2023].

⁶ Gilder, A., & Rumble, O. 2022. An African Perspective on Loss and Damage. Available from: <https://saiia.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Policy-Insight-130-gilder-rumble.pdf> [Accessed 14 October 2023].

⁷ Gilder, A., & Rumble, O. 2022. An African Perspective on Loss and Damage. Available from: <https://saiia.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Policy-Insight-130-gilder-rumble.pdf> [Accessed 14 October 2023].