

# Youth Statement on the Presidential Climate Commission's Draft Framework for a Just Transition (2022)

We, as the youth of South Africa, applaud and support strides made by the Presidential Climate Commission (PCC) tackling the just transition. We notice with deep concern South Africa's reliance on a carbon intensive economy as well as the ingrained challenge of socio-economic inequalities which has largely shaped the labour market and socio-economic institutions affecting the current economic model. We stress the need for a just transition to an inclusive, sustainable economy that would aid development and allow us to be global competitors. As such, we would like to put forward the following recommendations:

## 1. "At-Risk" Groups

We would like to acknowledge the focus on "At-Risk Groups" within the framework for a Just Transition in South Africa. The needs highlighted in the framework show a clear priority to center people.

We appreciate the recognition of social intricacies that many At-Risk groups face such as: lack of skills, knowledge disparity, various forms of education, as well as gender inequalities, racial divide and more.

However, the lack of specific timeframes and processes in the framework leaves one to wonder if this priority and the identified vision will be met, and to what level of satisfaction it will be met with. Further highlighting concern that the word disabled or any variation of it is mentioned once throughout the entire document. Actioning a just transition that does not actively consider or factor in disabled persons is not possible. We demand a framework that adequately addresses the social, economic, and environmental injustices that all at-risk groups face, enabling a transformative and incorporative transition that truly benefits people and protects our environment.

## Coal Value Chain

It is crucial that we undergo just transition with much haste, but also essential that we have a well-planned and implemented "phase out" approach that still falls in line with the targets set out in our Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) that leaves no one behind. There is also a need for mitigation strategies such as training, retraining, and upskilling within the sector to ensure that jobs are retained and recreated ensuring At-

Risk groups within the sector are well equipped, enabling them to obtain employment and relevant opportunities through the transition.

We call and advocate for a framework that recommends actions:

- employment creation opportunities that are assessed on their own merit.
- a focus on restorative and transformative justice that not only serves youth, local municipalities, and various public and private institutions but actively includes them.
- all sectors of society to research and implement initiatives that invigorate and support new economic activities that could be established
- communities and districts in high-risk coal affected areas to be consulted adequately to ensure lived reality guides the implementation strategies.

### **Auto Value Chain**

*“The largest employment impacts will be in support industries rather than auto production itself”.*

*(Presidential Climate Commission Framework for a Just Transition in South Africa (Draft).*

*23 Feb 2022, pg. 11)*

It's clear that under qualified workers will face greater job loss through the transition as it requires significant skills. We advocate for innovative opportunities and alternatives to be developed and implemented to ensure job retention and/or reassignment. A just transition within the sector calls for accessible and disability-friendly infrastructure that caters to the basic needs and requirements of the disabled community, as well as intensive skills development for formal and informal workers within the sector.

We, therefore, call for:

- public and private investment in green growth opportunities which offer significantly more employment within the industry and bridges the gap in opportunities for underqualified people, empowering them to shift in the transition.
- a framework that unpacks how South Africa can transition infrastructure without being able to manage the existing traditional infrastructure? Noting it will be more difficult as we have no existing examples and industries to learn from in the country.
- education and skills development in secondary, tertiary, and community initiatives and institutions to develop, adapt, and change their existing syllabus to support more green growth avenues and opportunities.

## **Agriculture**

The impact of climate change varies by region. This is important to note when implementing the Just Transition. Black farmers are disproportionately affected by natural disasters brought on and worsened by climate change, as well as intensive animal and crop farming, we see degraded and eroded land. We need to prioritize access to innovative information and communication as well as the prioritization of locally available inputs and technical capacities, with the support of the public and private sector as well as relevant stakeholders.

We call for a framework that:

- highlights and calls for a bridging of the significant gender pay gap in South Africa's agriculture industry. We also seek more clarification on the ratios of race, age, and gender within the agriculture industry as this could highlight further social inequalities.
- addresses the concern surrounding market access following statistics that are highlighted in the framework stating that in 2019, 55,000 commercial farmers registered for VAT, although the top ten companies accounted for over a quarter of total production. This is of major concern to us as the youth as the agricultural industry has numerous small and medium size businesses that are not profiting.
- that we stand in solidarity to initiate the process of restoring degraded lands and do acknowledge that it is a significant job creator. We must ensure that these jobs are not just temporary but are long term, thus ensuring job security to laborers.

## **Tourism**

Tourism makes up a large sector in South Africa's economy. It is also heavily impacted by climate change. Human behaviour plays a massive role in causing climate-driven degradation and disruption to cultural and natural heritage which negatively affects the tourism industry as a whole and directly impacts small businesses whose livelihoods and communities are dependent on it. We advocate building a more climate-resilient tourism sector that includes income-generating activities.

- Women and youth participation does exist in the tourism sector, but more must be done to address the mismatch between the skills provided by the education and TVET sectors, and those that are in demand, which limits the participation of young women and men.
- South Africa's rich history and profuse biodiversity have been appreciated worldwide and this has been reflected in our thriving tourism industry. It is therefore

of utmost importance that our history and diversities are protected from climate-related perils.

- catastrophes in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and South Africa are evident that our region is on the leading edge of climate impacts

## **2. Planning Elements**

We acknowledge the path set forth to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as well as the relevance in discourse that structure should be set to transition the country's economic competitiveness, labour force and the social welfare implications thereof. We condemn the mismanagement of climate-allocated funds and resources. This is linked to issues of good governance and lack of accountability by stakeholders which subsequently affect inclusive economic sustainable development and progress towards just transition goals. We believe that as a nation, we ought to rally accountability from the state-owned agencies who are failing to carry out their mandate towards aiding in just transition goals and sustainable development. There cannot be an assumption that individuals as well businesses will be able ease into just transition equitably, instead an earnest effort in planning must be made to assist in effect.

### **a) Active labour markets**

- Call for prioritised investment into practical skills development in the context of climate education to ease transition into the green economy and foster a stable labour market.
- Request to recognise the importance of diversifying and pursuing equality within current basic education syllabus across regions in order to broaden entry into various labour markets that will inevitably assist futuristic and sustainable transition.
- Call to action for increased funding of youth, grassroots and NGO initiatives which provide skills and entrepreneurial development that filter into sustainable development goals.

### **b) Social protection**

- Strongly request for environmental disaster programmes and aid that cater to people in underprivileged communities.
- Emphasise the need for welfare measures put into place, to protect the vulnerable are suited for them.
- Insist on the environmental remediation of former mining and industrial communities.
- Support the need for subsidies and relief networks to small-scale farmers in the case of natural disasters.

c) Economic diversification

- Promote the induction of tourism activity in agricultural industries to encourage alternative economic activity.
- Encourage community garden initiatives to equally distribute and trade resources to promote a barter system.
- Request the localisation of key manufacturing materials and resources
- Emphasise the need for active public and private coordination in green investments development of the circular economy.

d) Effective governance

- Applaud the provision of policy and planning coherence by government and relevant stakeholders regarding achieving short- and long-term goals.
- Draw attention to the cross-cutting nature of the distribution or lack thereof of public services and resources to the impending climate crisis.
- Recognise the importance of fiscal accountability on all government levels regarding climate resource allocation in just transition goals.
- Urge for manufacturers to be held accountable by their peers and authoritative figures for their sustainable production processes.

e) Climate finance

- Government investment in alternative modes of energy production
- Encourage reassessment of localised and national government budgets to reconstruct an economy geared towards just transition.

### **3. Policy Measures**

We commend the PCC for putting forward far-spread policy measures that encapsulates and embodies the essence of the sections of this draft framework for a just transition in South Africa. There are, however, certain aspects that could be expanded upon and as such, we have put forward the following comments for each response area as highlighted in the '*Policy Measures*' section:

a) Need to shift to cleaner and more competitive generation technologies

- Encourage all parties involved in decreasing greenhouse gas emissions to exercise accountability and openness by emphasising the need for good governance between national departments and Nersa.
- Call for a review of the most recent IRP for further clarity due to the inclusion of additional coal-powered stations.

- Further recommend utilising the investments secured at COP26 to reduce the strain on national energy supplies rather than resorting to coal power.

b) Coal mining and coal-based electricity plants continue to downsize and retire

- Applaud the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy (DMRE) and Department of Employment and Labour (DoE&L) in developing transition pathways for workers in the coal value chain, securing the livelihoods of workers.
- Request for an increase in the availability of economic opportunities along with necessary support to mine workers in the four coal districts of Mpumalanga, namely eMalahleni (Witbank), Steve Tshwete (Middelburg), Govan Mbeki (Secunda) and Msukaligwa (Ermelo).
- Calling upon the economic diversification of eMalahleni due to its heavy reliance on coal mining.
- Encourages a tailored upskilling programme for workers to transition by assessing each region's strengths and competitive advantages.
- Concerned with the possibility of mass immigration to coal mining communities, thus unemployed locals should be prioritised to avoid high competition from newly arrived residents.
- Further requests for increased financial capital and organisational capacity of small business so that they respond constructively to the transition, leading to growth of coal communities.

c) Shift to cleaner energy for transport

- Commend the collaboration between the Department of Tourism (DoT) and PCC in responding to the shift to cleaner energy for transport and encourage an interdepartmental approach to develop transit-oriented strategies.
- Recognize the importance of taxis in South Africa's economic development and express concern over the incomprehensive definition of alternative livelihoods for affected workers. We acknowledge the agency given to these affected workers in shaping their new career paths but cannot support the lack of proper structure from the DoT and PCC.
- Calls for collaboration between the transportation unions and corporations to protect rights of workers in coal-reliant sectors during the just transition.
- Recommends that the employment dimension of the just transition be considered, as well as securing existing jobs to prevent additional job loss.
- Suggests upskilling affected workers and small businesses for greener sectors of industry, thus building resilience in affected communities.

d) Other value chains with high emissions (cement, agriculture, gas, etc)

- We recognize the long-term goals for other sectors to reduce their emissions intensity on the economy to achieve net zero CO<sub>2</sub> by 2050, however caution against immediate reduction of emissions without a tangible timeline to which heavy reliance on these value chains will be
- We call for a feasible solution for poverty alleviation and the Just Transition Framework to investigate the socio-economic sector holistically.
- We urge the consideration of human dignity and agency in identifying priority sectors.
- We call for shared responsibility between government and various stakeholders at sectoral level to combat deadlock on just transition.

e) Climate change affects agricultural production

- We applaud the decision to improve understanding of climate trends by region and impacts on farm workers and communities in previous regions where the communities were sustained by farmworkers that were sent off to find work in the agri-sector, enabling identification of affected communities.
- We recognize the potential risk in deadlock over responsibility and resourcing for the just transition in agriculture and call for a merit and demerit system that will assist in implementing and sharing this responsibility amongst various stakeholders with a direct or indirect impact on agriculture.

f) Climate change affects other industries, including tourism

- We call for the PCC, together with the Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Environment (DFFE) and the DoT, to recognise the need for monitoring and information on regional climate trends to include and be paired with improved and inclusive sectoral data reporting. This is to ensure that those most vulnerable to the impacts of harmful climate trends on the sector are accurately represented.

g) Just transition requires substantial investment in new technologies and industrial clusters to generate alternative livelihoods

- We suggest that under the proposed activities of local development finance institutions, the inclusion of establishing accountability and commitment structures be considered. This would serve to mitigate the risk of finance institutions not committing to the regular publishing of the investment impact reports or acting upon identified just transition investments and finance mobilisation.

h) Limited success to date of efforts to diversify the economy and promote engagement by working people on economic policy

- We urge that more specificity be used when referring to “capacity needs” and “improved capacity” and that it is inclusive of human and social capital that works with/for vulnerable and marginalised groups.
- In the establishment of networks and forums to “improve learning processes around industrial policy and the mobilisation of working people and their communities for the just transition”, we ask that the communities and its constituent groups, i.e., gender, youth, disability, be specific. This is to avoid the exclusion of important groups in the implementation process.

*The comments to the Just Transition Framework was created members of the Youth Policy Committee (YPC). The YPC is a convening group that brings together youth organisations and young individuals to understand, comment and participate in policy processes that affect young people. The comments were submitted to the Presidential Climate Commission on 30 March 2022. For any queries, please do not hesitate to email [youth@saiia.org.za](mailto:youth@saiia.org.za).*

