



**Presidential Climate Commission (PCC)
Faith Leaders Dialogue on the Just Transition
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SAFCEI Oral Submission

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Thank you for the opportunity, for the presentations and convening the faith sector today.

The Southern African Faith Communities Environment Institute (SAFCEI) monitors and informs energy and climate policy and governance, campaigns and advocates for energy and climate justice. We are one organisation that is part of a hugely knowledgeable and engaged civil society and faith communities that work independently and collectively on energy governance. We work specifically on a number of energy governance issues and with the faith sector. SAFCEI is known, alongside Earthlife Africa Johannesburg (ELA), for taking the government to court over its nuclear energy deals in 2015. Makoma Lekalakala, Director of ELA, is one of the Presidential Climate Commission (PCC) climate commissioners. The outcome of the court case against the trillion-rand nuke deal was that the deals were declared illegal and unconstitutional. The outcome prevented a huge debt being incurred that threatened to bankrupt the country.

SAFCEI has been following the Just Energy Transition (JET) developments with interest, in particular, we have been monitoring developments in the energy policy space on nuclear, renewables, and more recently green hydrogen.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend the PCC on this first global just energy transition initiative – a north-south partnership to achieve a just transition in South Africa. It is an ambitious and far-reaching partnership that will look to develop and implement the 1.5 trillion Rand Just Energy Transition Investment Plan (JET-IP) over the next five years.

I would like to expand a bit on why SAFCEI works with and for the faith sector, it is for a number of reasons that are important to note. Finance, policy and science cannot alone fix the climate crisis and energy governance problems we face. This year we are heading to the 28th conference of the parties to discuss and negotiate a deal on climate change. If finance, policy and science had been enough to solve these issues, the world would have acted already. Instead, each year we find ourselves more and more at the mercy of political manoeuvres and corporate interests.

What is missing in these deliberations and policy negotiations are other aspects of

humanity: moral and spiritual values, cultural and indigenous knowledge systems, sources of information and wisdom that don't separate us from nature but that recognise we are part of the community of life on earth. We have forgotten our plain the web of life at our peril. The existential crisis humanity faces is of our own doing, and we, therefore, need to reach deeper into ourselves to both repair and fortify ourselves for the time ahead.

As ambitious and forward-thinking as the Just Energy Transition plans are that South Africa and the PCC have brought into being, our considered view is that it will not be enough to stem the crisis that has engulfed South Africa and our region: the widening inequality, unemployment, hunger and lack of opportunity, and these will continue to be further exacerbated by ongoing human activities that cause environmental degradation and devastation, worsening the climate crisis and its impact on society and the wider earth community.

In our view, a more detailed examination and analysis of the crises we face is needed. As we can only deal with issues if we understand their source and our role in it, and this is needed if we want to be successful in interventions like the JET IP.

Load shedding alone can be used to demonstrate the challenges we currently face before we embark on a pathway to reach a low-carbon reality. Load shedding is the tip of the iceberg of the crisis of energy governance and its impacts on society.

It is governance: preventing corruption and ensuring good spend to bring about what is needed, that is the elephant in the room.

We need to be serious about how corrupt our energy system has become, including how we plan and make preferences for the future energy mix. This issue should not be underestimated when we dream and plan for a just transition. And this is not unique to South Africa. It's the biggest global stumbling block, beyond political self-interest in the global climate negotiations. Energy access is the reason many wars have been fought and are continuing to this day.

As we are here for a faith engagement in the JET process, to hear from the faith sector about the JET investment plan, I want to touch briefly on the role of the faith communities in society. In our formal submission, we will detail more about the role that faith leaders play in society and can play in relation to a successful JET. For now, here are a few examples of what faith communities are doing. During covid they were essential workers, tending to the needs of their communities. Faith communities helped in many practical ways those who otherwise would have suffered a great deal more without them including food, vouchers and so on. Faith leaders also tend to the fabric of society, in loss and in celebration, they play a profound role in helping weave us back together into a community again. Faith leaders represent their communities and deeply understand the lived experiences of those less fortunate; they educate and inform those who cannot all be present at sessions like these. Furthermore, faith institutions oftentimes have land, buildings and communal spaces that can be used for renewable energy when there are no formal structures available to house local energy systems or lack of security makes it difficult to secure energy locally. They play a role as a community hub. So we ask the PCC to recognise the essential role that faith leaders and faith communities play, and will play in a just energy transition, as well as

the ambition that the faith community brings in order to make a truly just transition a reality.

For SAFCEI and many faith communities (we cannot speak for them, but we aim to listen and reflect on what we have heard) there is a huge disappointment when late in the planning process, last Friday afternoon, the PCC was unable to support the travel of the 63 faith leaders (despite giving us an allocation of 70 faith leader spaces for this national meeting) who had been invited to represent their communities here today. We wish that it be recorded that not everyone who had planned to be here were able to be with us today and so the diversity and wisdom in the room is less than it should be.

So I will do my best to summarise here what I have heard from faith leaders and others engaged in this process, thus far.

Bearing in mind that for this to be a truly just transition, we must use the old maxim: think globally, act locally. Hence the importance that the PCC reach as many communities as possible, esp where an interest has been expressed. Faith communities are calling on the PCC to visit them and repair what happened today.

A Just Energy Transition for faith communities includes the important issues we all know that need to be addressed:

- Jobs are needed, new jobs and more jobs;
- Part and parcel of that will mean more local manufacturing / new industry in renewables so our energy system becomes more affordable and reliable, cleaner and greener;
- Energy for South Africa **first**, so we are no longer in a state of energy disaster.
- Energy for South Africa first, so we will be able to prepare and have what is needed in place to reduce the impacts of climate change here. **Before** we look to export green energy.
- We need our own new green energy in order to reduce the devastating environmental health impacts of coal and other fossil fuels. This is not going to be easy so ensuring we prioritise our needs is critical for the success of the JETP.
- Not include any so-called transitional energy sources. These are fossil fuels or energy sources that do not meet our stated needs and urgency (i.e. no expensive deals that become vehicles for graft and prolong our energy crisis further and add to the climate crisis). We want an energy policy that prioritises affordability, transparency, graft free, accessible energy. This will mean gas, diesel and nuclear will not be a part of a JET plan and will not receive funding.
- Use modeling criteria without bias. If this was done, fossil fuels and nuclear would not fit into energy modelling for South Africa's future energy system. Especially when looking at the issues related to corruption and governance that have been causing our energy system to collapse to date.

- Analysis of the reality of energy systems in South Africa should be a part of how we plan for JET. Small pebble bed nuclear reactors (SMR) are not viable and should not be included anywhere. Safcei is happy to share more information on nuclear to demonstrate why in detail it's not the right choice for South Africa.
- It also means green hydrogen should not be prioritized, but given the appropriate place in plans, and its use where appropriate.
- Green hydrogen developed should be for use by people living here who do not have access to clean energy rather than to meet Europe's energy needs/crisis. If we create an export market before addressing energy poverty in SA, it would be allowing Europe to take advantage of South Africa for offsetting when as the 12th largest emitter globally, we have enough of our own energy transition requirements. That would be a climate injustice and could not be considered a part of a just energy transition.
- When we talk about clean energy we need to look at the costs to ensure we understand the environmental and socio-economic impacts, and empower communities to engage and be part of the energy transition through education, transparent planning and participation, and where appropriate innovative models for profit sharing for land use.
- Funds for the just energy transition need to be more in the form of grants rather than conditional loans that leave unaffordable debt and put the responsibility for a transition back with northern countries who polluted the atmosphere to this point. Terms for loans can be crippling down the line, how are we working to ensure these meet the needs of our region rather than the loan maker?
- Let's be careful to ensure that the priorities of people living here are given proper weight in the plans being developed, rather than allow business and finance to solely determine the terms of the investment plan, as is often the case when we need to raise funding.
- Any plan needs to be fit for purpose and we must remember the purpose of this exercise, what we want to achieve and who it is for, and not allow the spreadsheets and funders to dictate our actions.
- For the JET to work we need stronger and better energy planning at country level, using existing legislation like Section Six, the Integrated Energy Plan, which is a part of the Energy Act 2008, which has not been brought into operation.

We have the following questions for the PCC:

- How will these comments and inputs be incorporated? Noting green hydrogen and the questions around this, is there a possibility that the 3 top priorities change?
- What are the next steps of the consultation and when can we next engage? We heard from Joanne that you would like to have strong community level

engagement and M & E. How will that be facilitated and built into the plans and funded?

- How are these plans being translated into accessible language and into other languages so that anyone interested can understand and access this information? In other words, how are communities being involved in this process?
- Communities and faith communities will play a role in accountability, watching what happens in their environs, being a part of energy transitions, and ensuring effective delivery. How will benefits be shared with communities to right the inequalities we see growing and how will we be able to track progress?
- Beyond those of us working on climate and energy issues, how are other parts of civil society working on issues such as social grants, gender violence and so on being engaged? All of society will be deeply impacted by climate change. How can we ensure those who are most vulnerable are strengthened through this process?

For faith communities we need to get all of the above right, but our ambitions stretch and encompass more than just the above, we also need to see this as an opportunity for restoration, restorative justice to heal some of the past wounds and bring dignity to communities who have borne the brunt of injustice and systems that were and continue to be oppressive; that restore the environment, so we live in harmony with earth, no longer feeling the need to pit humanity against nature but restore us to a caring relationship of mutual respect and reverence for our home, this sacred earth and for future generations.