

National Development Plan: Pathways for a Just Transition

Concluding Conference Report 29 May 2019

Midrand Convention Centre, Johannesburg

Purpose of this Report

This report provides a summary of the inputs and discussions that took place at the National Planning Commission's (NPC) Pathways for a Just Transition Concluding Conference held on 29 May 2019. The Concluding Conference was the culmination of dialogues with key stakeholders across the country, undertaken by the NPC over the course of a year on the topic of the Just Transition. The dialogues took the form of nine provincial social-partner workshops, other stakeholder engagements and bilateral meetings. The aim of these dialogues was to build consensus on a vision and pathways for a Just Transition to a low-carbon, climate resilient economy and society in 2050. The Concluding Conference served to validate the information gathered from the various engagements, and to build further consensus on a vision and pathways for a low-carbon economy and society.

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Mr Tshediso Matona, Head of the NPC Secretariat welcomed participants, representing business, government, labour and civil society, and thanked the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ) and the European Union (EU) for supporting the conference. He also acknowledged and thanked the convenors of the stakeholder engagements, Sustainable Energy Africa (SEA) and OneWorld Sustainable Investments.

Mr Matona recalled the journey that began a year ago, when the first high-level dialogue was held at Constitution Hill in Johannesburg, and the evolution of the process and dialogues since then. He said that the NPC was deeply humbled by the constructive response of stakeholders from government, business, labour, civil society, communities and the youth to the workshops, and their contributions to the pathways for the Just Transition. He commended Commissioner Tasneem Essop for leading the process with a strong sense of vision, conviction and dedication, which was about fostering deep and honest dialogues with all social partners. As a result, despite the potentially divisive nature of the topic of a Just Transition, the dialogues had been an exercise in learning and collaboration towards “making South Africa a better place for all”.

Mr Matona spoke of how the transition to a just, climate-resilient society and economy must be informed by a principal desire to use the country's resources sustainably and equitably (land-use, energy and water) in order to address poverty, inequality and unemployment – and that the transition experience will be different for different sectors.

The outcome of the well-documented, year-long process was a draft Vision and Pathways for 2050, which, Mr Matona noted, had been shared with everyone who had participated in the process and was open for comment. He reminded participants that the Concluding Conference was an attempt to reach a consensus on the Vision and Pathways so as to contribute to making South Africa a better place for all.

Commissioner Tasneem Essop, commissioner for Environmental Affairs at the NPC, invited the Head of the European Union (EU) delegation to share the EU's experiences and lessons learned from a Just Transition, as the EU has had similar challenges but within a different context to South Africa.

Presentation on the EU Just Transition Experiences

Mr Massimo De Luca, The First Counsellor – Head of Trade and Economics Section, Delegation of the European Union to South Africa, expressed his delight in partnering with the NPC and in sharing experiences from the EU member states. He noted that the EU was committed to implementing the Paris Agreement and was preparing a zero carbon emission strategy, with incremental targets, aimed at achieving net zero emissions by 2050 and negative emissions thereafter. He spoke of the strong signals given by the EU Parliament for member states to go beyond carbon neutrality in order to avert a climate catastrophe. Although the power sector was the focus of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reductions, all sectors were working together to achieve maximum reductions, and energy was treated as a cross-cutting issue. He said that research has shown that achieving the EU targets would result in the creation of up to 900 000 jobs and the improvement of the health of citizens. However, in order to achieve this, significant investment would be needed, and jobs would be a challenge for some regions.

He explained that the EU's overarching approach was to "leave no region behind". Therefore, the EU was tackling the transition regionally. He used the example of coal, which will be phased out but within different timeframes depending on the regional situation of the highly coal-dependent countries (i.e. Poland, Germany, Romania, Bulgaria and Greece). Less coal-dependent countries, such as France, intended phasing out coal by as early as 2022, while Germany was looking at between 235 and 2038. In contrast, Poland, which was as dependent on coal as South Africa, did not have a date for zero coal yet. Mr De Luca noted that the EU had developed sophisticated regional responses to the Just Transition, set up several multi-stakeholder platforms to coordinate the Just Transition, established a dedicated secretariat and developed a strategy. The required funding was anticipated to be €4.8 billion, including capacity-building activities.

Mr De Luca closed by thanking the NPC for the opportunity to share lessons from the EU, and expressed the hope that South Africa can work together with the EU on this difficult path. Commissioner Essop thanked Mr De Luca for sharing the EU experience that highlighted the importance of having a strong institutional basis, an inclusive process and funding.



Overview of the Vision and Pathways for a Just Transition Process

Commissioner Essop explained how the year-long initiative had initially sought to bring together a group of high-level representatives of social partners (from government, civil society, business, labour) and experts, to engage in a series of high-level dialogues that would deal with some of the contested issues and determine the best *Pathways for a Just Transition*. The intention was to run this process in parallel with three wider stakeholder engagements. However, at the first social-partner dialogue, the social partners called for a bottom-up approach, engaging with communities in a much stronger and more direct way, rather than focusing on “elitist”, top-down, high-level dialogues.

Therefore, the form of these engagements shifted to open-invitation stakeholder workshops, including labour, civil society, communities, government and business, in every province. The process was enriched through bilateral engagements with youth, the Energy Intensive User Group (EIUG), Sasol, labour, affected communities, and business. However, although the process tried to be as inclusive as possible, the approach was not truly bottom-up, as not all communities and grassroots organisations were reached, and key sectors (labour and the mining sector) were under-represented. The NPC’s hope is that, moving forward, the dialogues would include the stronger voices of labour.

Commissioner Essop reminded participants that the Concluding Conference was not a symposium, but a working conference aimed at continuing the process of building consensus on a Vision 2050 and the Pathways to achieve that vision. In preparation for the conference, the **draft Vision and Pathways document**, which was a consolidation of all of the dialogues conducted thus far, had been sent to all participants. The NPC had identified key areas of convergence and divergence, which were the issues that needed to be resolved and managed, to ensure a just transition that leaves nobody behind, particularly the vulnerable. She acknowledged that the Concluding Conference might not resolve all of these issues, but that the discussions did need to happen.

Much work has been done on the Just Transition, from research to symposiums and dialogues, but planning for a Just Transition is not just a technical exercise. In South Africa, it is a deeply political process. Commissioner Essop pointed out that the transition must address issues of power, vested interests and fears. This is why the Just Transition process is about dialogues, so that agreements can be reached – the NPC believes that inclusive dialogue is the key to achieving a Just Transition.

Commissioner Essop compared the Just Transition and the sustainable development concepts – Just Transition is now trending both globally and in South Africa, in the same way that sustainable development did in the past. Although the Just Transition concept was started about a decade ago, it only took centre stage during the preamble to the Paris Agreement. The NPC’s duty is to continue this work and ensure that it is implemented. The energy transition in South Africa and globally is already happening, and it is the duty of the social partners to make sure that the transition is just, starting by unpacking what this means for South Africa as a society.

The NPC definition of Just Transition

A Just Transition is one where working people, and in particular the poor and vulnerable, are protected and do not have to shoulder the burden of shifting to a low-carbon, cleaner and more climate-resilient society.

The origins and evolution of the “Just Transition”

Commissioner Essop explained that trade unions in the USA originally developed the “Just Transition” concept, as a way to protect the rights and secure the jobs of workers in periods of big shifts affecting employment. Since then, the concept has become mainstream, to include society at large, especially the most vulnerable, i.e. women, children, and unemployed and disabled people.

Stakeholder feedback from provincial dialogues

Commissioner Essop summarised the key points raised in the stakeholder workshop process:

- **Governance:** Governance needed to be seriously strengthened, and government capacity and knowledge improved. Corruption and political will were deep concerns.
- **Economy:** The general consensus was that an economic shift was needed, as a capitalistic economy would not support a Just Transition – a new model needed to be identified. In addition, there was a need to acknowledge that the world’s resources are limited. Socially, unemployment, particularly for the youth, needed to be at the core of the Just Transition, and inequality needed to be tackled.
- **Themes of water, energy and land-use:** The NPC had adopted an economy-wide approach to planning for a Just Transition, but at the first high-level social-partner dialogue, participants proposed a focus on the three primary sectors of energy, land-use and water – as these three areas were intertwined, they should be tackled through a nexus approach. The challenges associated with these three sectors are:
 - Water: Inequitable access, pollution, unfair use, water resource management and water conservation.
 - Land-use: Unequal distribution of land, the large-scale intensive agricultural model, massive urbanisation, private and high-emitting transport systems.
 - Energy: Fossil fuel-based energy systems, emissions and poor air quality, no future for oil in global economy, increasing energy prices, a lack of access, and uncertainty about Eskom.

The 2050 Vision for South Africa

The Vision 2050 for South Africa was developed by the stakeholders during the NPC Just Transition dialogue process. The Vision goes well beyond an energy transition, although energy is perhaps the most fundamental challenge to overcome, particularly in achieving low or no carbon development.

Vision 2050

South Africa will have achieved a [zero carbon][net zero] economy by 2050. We have built the resilience of our economy and our people through affordable, [decentralised], [diversely-owned], [renewable] energy systems; conservation and equitable access of our water resources and sustainable, equitable, inclusion and sustainable land-use for all, especially for the most vulnerable. The high value we place on healthy ecosystems, land, water and air, underpins our future, and ensures a better life for all South Africans.

Commission Essop noted that achieving the Vision would require collaboration, partnerships and good governance, as well as information, knowledge and data sharing, along with education, awareness and communication. She also highlighted the common and divergent perspectives found among stakeholders. Common perspectives were those views that were brought up in multiple dialogues and so were seen as points of consensus. Divergent perspectives were those views and opinions that were brought up either in isolation or in conflict with earlier dialogues or stakeholders.

Common Perspectives	Divergent Perspectives
Building of trust between government and people	The pathways for reducing emissions
Strengthened and productive cooperation among government, labour, business and civil societies	State vs private ownership of resources
Corruption-free governance	Balancing conservation of natural resources and equitable access
Alignment of government policies	Future of coal
Maximising job creation	Decentralised resource governance
Training and reskilling	Energy mix
Enabling regulations	Economic system for the future
Localisation	The future of Eskom

These perspectives were taken into consideration when developing an action plan that included timeframes for the actions and targets, as well as the trade-offs raised by stakeholders. The potential pathways for land-use, water and energy were drafted based on the inputs of multiple stakeholders across the various dialogues. Commissioner Essop informed participants that part of the day's purpose was to agree upon these pathways and the timeframes. For example, the Presidential Climate Change Coordinating Commission (that the stakeholders attending the 2018 Job Summit agreed on) could be made the oversight, statutory body for taking the Just Transition Visions and Pathways implementation forward.

Commission Essop went on to emphasise the urgent need to have plans in place for workers when coal power plants are decommissioned. She cited the various institutions that were conducting research on the Just Transition: the Department of Environmental Affairs was doing a risk assessment, while Trade and Industrial Policy Strategies (TIPS) and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) were analysing the job loss and job absorption opportunities. Another idea on the table was that of a hotspot, meaning a deep dive into a vulnerable community to explore their particular vulnerabilities and potential solutions for them in light of the Just Transition.

In concluding, Commissioner Essop advised that the NPC would be using climate change as a cross-cutting theme throughout the revised National Development Plan (NDP), which will solve the problematic contradictions that are in the current NDP. This was decided in light of the recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 1.5°C Special Report.



The Vision and Pathways: Breakaway Group Discussions

Participants were split into six breakaway groups, with two groups discussing one of three critical resources: (i) land-use, (ii) water and (iii) energy. Each group was asked to consider the Vision and give feedback on the Pathways, which are the action steps for the three critical resources to enable a Just Transition so that the country can reach the 2050 Vision. The discussions are summarised hereafter.

LAND USE

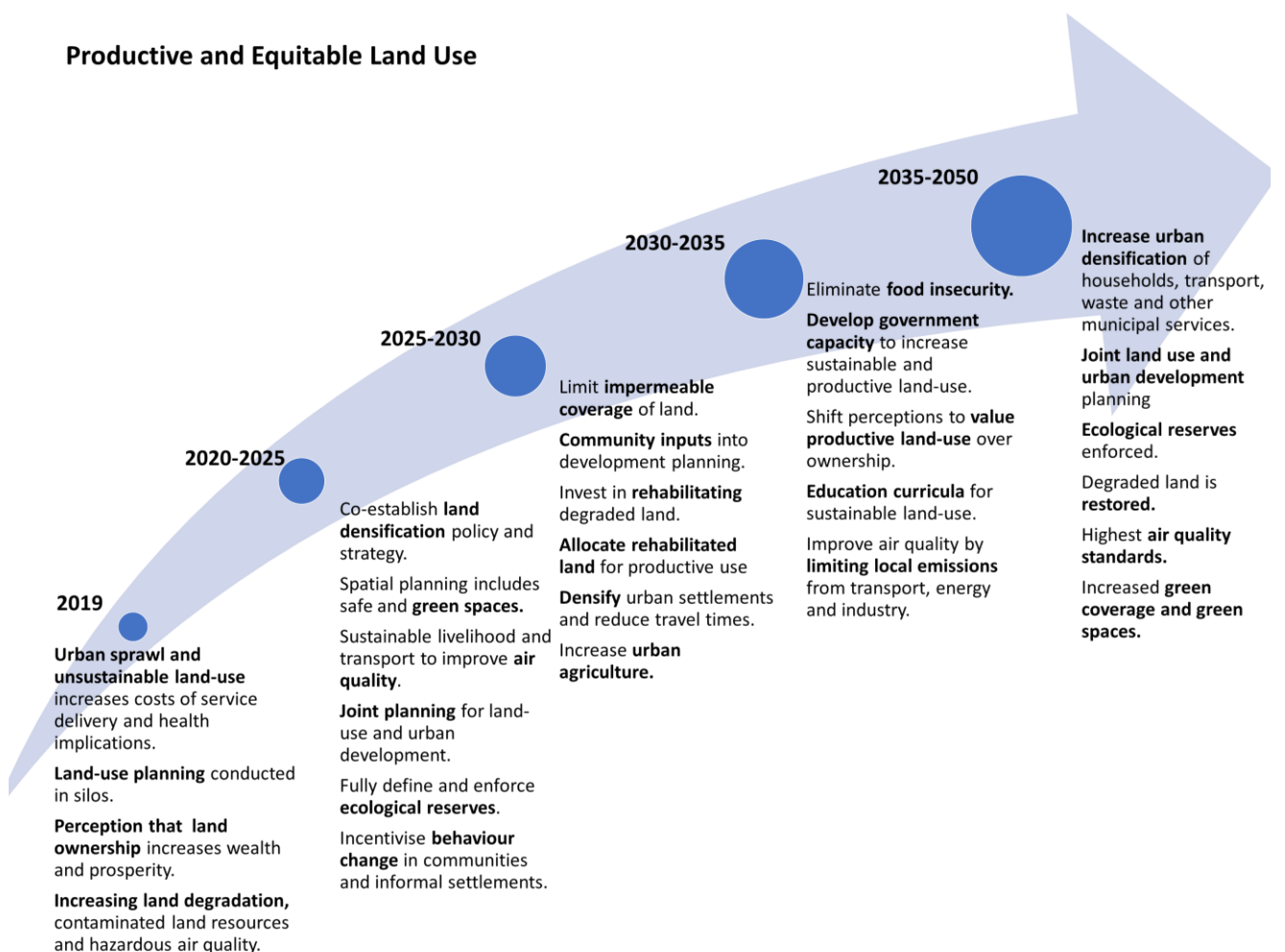


Vision 2050

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Pathways

Productive and Equitable Land Use



GROUP 1

Facilitated by Peta Wolpe

A general comment was that the Vision and Pathways document need to be made simpler, less academic and clearer, so that everybody understands it.

Vision

After much discussion, the group reached consensus that there should be zero carbon emissions by 2050. Also by 2050, land-use should be sustainable, equitable and inclusive and contribute to a climate-resilient economy. The following comments were made.

- “Sustainable land-use” needs to be defined, as it can be interpreted differently.
- The terms “decentralised”, “diversely owned” and “renewable” should all be included in the vision for energy, and more clarity is needed on the term “decentralised”.
- The last sentence “The high value we place on healthy ecosystems, land, water and air, underpins our future, and ensures a better life for all South Africans” should be at the beginning of the vision.

Pathways

Agreement/consensus reached

- Decisions need to be made inclusively with communities, especially where the benefits are skewed towards corporates and against surrounding communities who depend on the land and ecosystems.
- Capacity-building, skilling and reskilling, is critical to achieving community ownership of energy projects.

Clarification needed

- What does the term “ecological reserves” refer to? It can refer to a patch of land in a township, or any land space, but is not a specific privatised nature reserve. Clarification is needed, so that it doesn’t lead to the poorest people being dispossessed of land.
- What is meant by the references to green coverage, green spaces, etc.

Sequencing of/missing actions

The pathways do not demonstrate a coherent set of steps, and the sequencing of events does not appear to be building towards an objective or goal.

Certain actions need to start earlier.

- The 2019 milestone should include how to tackle land programmes and the forced removal of informal settlements.
- The 2019 timeline does not identify any rural issues, such as the political economy of agriculture and inequitable access to land and water.
- Youth education needs to begin now. There needs to be a coherent plan for training and education.
- A training of trainers (teachers) is needed and should come before teaching of learners.
- Mining and oil and gas licensing arrangements need to be reviewed.
- Rural communities need to be included in the pathways.
- Political buy-in and commitment, with budget allocation from government, is not in the timeline.

Gaps/issues for consideration

- Policies need to be aligned urgently.
- Decision-making needs to be differentiated and vertically aligned among the three spheres of government. This is because land-use and spatial planning must start at the macro level, as what happens in one area could potentially affect an entire region. Decisions on ownership and spatial justice also need to be made at a national level. This applies to water rights as well.
- Local government needs to be sufficiently capacitated and resourced for decentralised decision-making.
- A question was asked as to where land ownership lies. The concern was that if those without ownership were left behind, there would be no just transition.
- It's important to be careful in articulating land-use and valuing land-use, to avoid appropriating land without compensation, which also risks food security.
- Land tenure should be included as a key deciding factor in debates about the value of land and wealth-building .
- Land-use must be tackled together with the energy and water sectors, and how can this be done? Land-use also intersects heavily with transport, energy, urbanisation, water, farming and biodiversity. The document needs to reflect a goal of balancing biodiversity protection and other land-use needs.
- Urban land-based livelihoods should include informal traders who operate from pavements – the focus should not be solely on agriculture.
- The document does not articulate fiscal reforms. What aspects of land-use change should be incentivised and dis-incentivised. Specific incentives need to be identified and subsidies need to be shifted. This needs to be coordinated through a central process.
- The country needs to focus on how land-use can eradicate unemployment, focusing on Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga, which have the highest levels of unemployment.
- A working group is needed, to ensure that the voices of the rural communities, decision-makers, and all stakeholders are engaged.
- The idea of a pilot in a hotspot area could be a way of trialling inclusive planning.

GROUP 2

Facilitated by Ashraf Kariem

Vision

- The vision is realistic and we should work towards zero carbon. This would include phasing out coal and introducing renewable energy.
- The vision makes no mention of human rights.
- The vision is based on short-term interests and excludes long-term goals. The use of coal is assumed to be a short-term way of generating energy because it does not cater for future generations, while renewables energy system focuses on long term goals.
- Land use should be reflected in the vision.

Pathways

Agreement/consensus reached

- There was consensus on renewable energy, decentralisation of electricity as well as energy diversity.

Clarification needed

- “Incentivise behaviour change in communities and informal settlements” needs to be modified, as the current phrasing implies that certain people are blamed, whereas everyone is responsible for the poor use of land.
- “Joint planning for land-use and urban development”. An example is needed to showcase how successful community involvement in urban planning has resulted in better access to employment, health and human development.

Gaps/issues for consideration

- The following gaps were identified:
 - Framing of the land-use must cover human well-being
 - Land-use policies need to be sensitive to the needs of the poor
 - Traditional areas also need to be densified. A link between rural land and densification is missing, and there is a bias towards the urban space.
- To achieve the vision, policies must be aligned towards a green environmental agenda.
- Decentralisation will ultimately lead to renewable energy being included in the energy mix because of its low cost and available funding, despite the risk of compromising energy security.
- Solar energy still requires water for washing of panels and large amounts of land.
- Rural communities who do not have access to the grid should be the focus of decentralised energy.
- Insufficient land for development and housing must be added in the discussion because in Eastern Cape for example, energy infrastructure is focused in the urban areas (leading to people moving to urban areas), but the shortage of affordable lands and housing in urban areas mean that people are forced to live in informal settlements with no access to basic services.
- The Just Transition needs to ensure that a job is created for every job that is lost.
- There is a need to incentivise behaviour change that replenishes and protects the Earth and drives sustainable land management practices through agriculture/agro-ecology while creating jobs.
- Land distribution (e.g. The 1 hectare 1 house project by the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform) restricts farmers from gaining from economies of scale, which is a challenge to food security.
- People are in conflict because they know that land needs to be protected, but they are also looking for employment and so support mining activities.
- Stronger community participation is needed, to ensure that beneficiaries of initiatives are involved in the decision-making process. Plans such as the Integrated Development Plan (IDP), need to be simple and understandable, so that communities do not get misled.

WATER

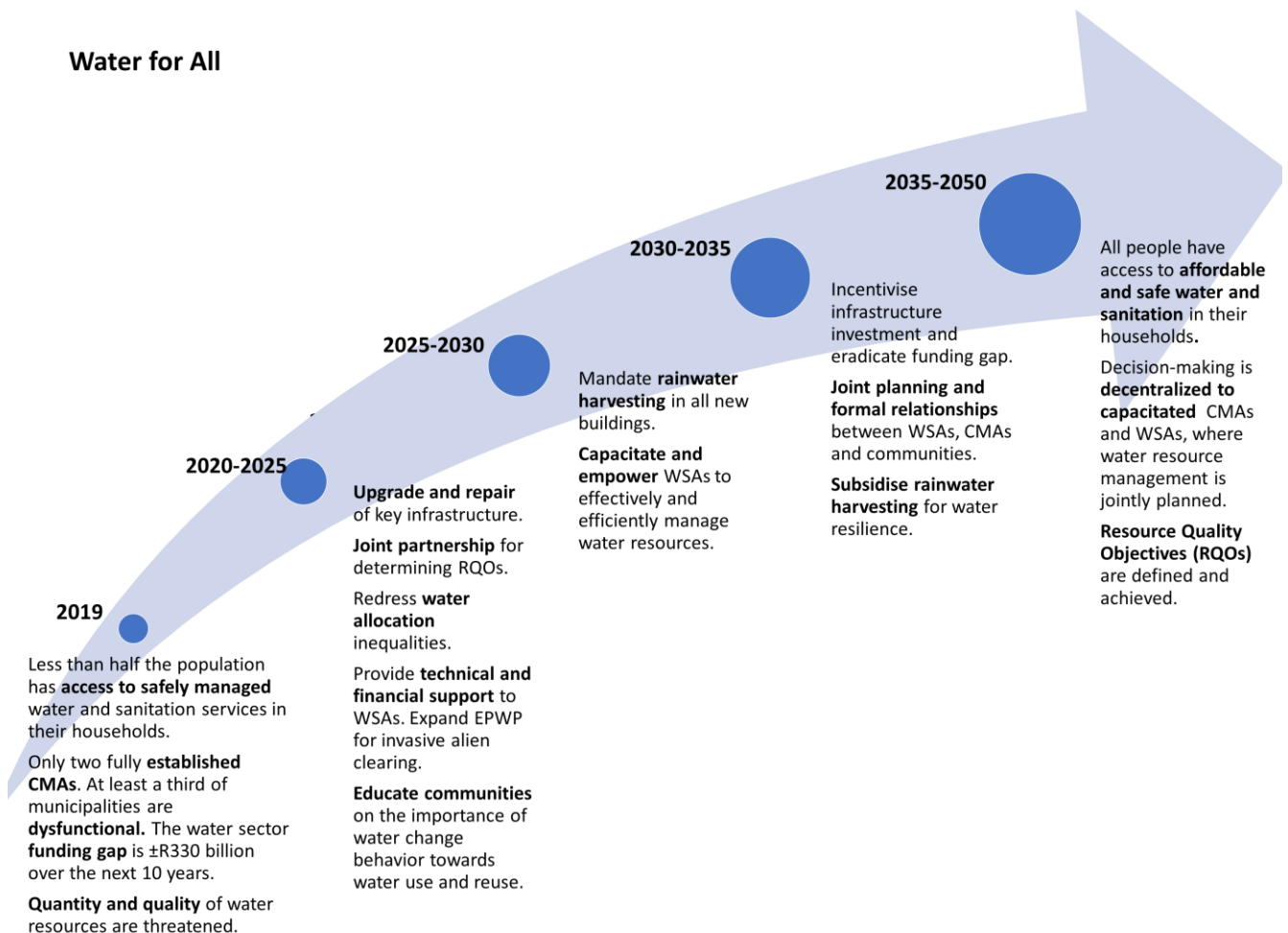


Vision 2050

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Pathways

Water for All



GROUP 1

Facilitated by Belynda Petrie

Vision

- The vision should be as ambitious as possible, talking to the ultimate goal, which is that South Africa will have a zero carbon economy.
- The vision should be shorter, talking to the ultimate goal (i.e. zero carbon by 2050) followed by the pathways section that could act as a mission.
- The vision emphasises carbon and energy, but a stronger focus is needed on the entire environment and natural resources through ensuring sustainable resource flows.
- The vision is focused on addressing consumption, yet it also needs to concentrate on creating a circular economy and addressing waste.
- The triple challenges should be more explicit in the vision because the Just Transition is about people, and so there should be an emphasis on the most vulnerable.

Pathways

Agreement/consensus reached

- Corruption needs to be eradicated. Stronger governance measures need to be put into place before any projects can be implemented. The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) needs to be ‘fumigated’.
- Inclusive decision-making of how water resources are managed.

Sequencing of/missing actions

- Baseline 2019 does not mention agricultural water users who use around 60% of allocated water.
- Phase 2020–2025 needs to address water poverty and water allocation, as response measures especially in times of water scarcity.
- Move earlier (from 2025–2030) and amend to “Capacitate and empower district-level WSAs to effectively and efficiently manage water resources and sectors” and add “enhance water use efficiency/ demand in all water resources”.
- Move decentralised management earlier (from 2025–2030), as the structures are in place for this to happen sooner than 2035.
- Joint planning starts too late in the pathway timelines. Also, add the word “integrated”, as joint planning and integrated planning are different, but are both critical.
- Move (from 2030–2035): Subsidise rainwater harvesting (RWH) for productive use before it becomes mandated.
- Add (in 2030–2035): Address sources of pollution. It is currently not explicitly addressed in the pathways. Sanitation and water treatment are critical, but the whole water system must be set up to address pollution.
- Add (in 2035–2050): People have access to reliable, affordable and safe water as well as access to sanitation; integrated water management systems from source to sea, managed at a regional or national level; monitoring and evaluation of water for all; increased enforcement and monitoring/management of our water resources, including boreholes.

Gaps/issues for consideration

- Ensure accountability of the Catchment Management Agencies
- Upgrading of current infrastructure is desperately needed, and also presents an opportunity for the use of alternate solutions.

- Explore other revenue models/sources for local government. Municipalities need to be incentivised to reduced water consumption in the customer base.
- Strengthen the DWS regulations, so that licences, allocations, claims and disputes can be settled more effectively and efficiently by the water tribunal. Strengthening such regulations will also provide a platform for better monitoring and evaluation of water resources and can help enforce water rights.
- Ring-fence 30% of the water budget to fund the Just Transition. This fund must be used to set up community ownership focusing on women and youth, which includes education and capacity development to enable them to make decisions on water management. Is 30% appropriate and affordable? Alternatively, build ownership on localised sources of water, e.g. communities could be taught to manage boreholes and sustain them at little cost to the government.
- Reduce water consumption through awareness campaigns, especially those citizens who live in the most vulnerable regions.
- Rainwater harvesting should not be for households only. The current storm water systems are outdated as they do not contribute to any sort of rain water harvesting and are not adequately managing floods. Thus storm water systems should be redeveloped to contribute to harvesting rainwater for use. Additionally the current storm water system is often insufficiently developed to handle heavy downpours and prevent flooding.
- Water limitations. Water needs to be conserved and used efficiently, but how to limit water use in households that have not benefitted from piped water previously? In fact, water (and other resource consumption) needs to increase in many low income households, to increase their adaptive capacities to climate change
- Penalising over-consumption. While price signals are a very effective way of reducing consumption, what about those who cannot afford to pay more for water?
- How to hold polluters accountable? The UN empowers people to exercise their rights and to hold others to account when their rights are being compromised. In South Africa, this currently does not happen, even though the legislation is in place.

GROUP 2

Facilitated by Mukondi Masithi

Vision

- The vision should include oceans, coastal areas and marine life – the marine environment forms a huge economy that is largely based on tourism and fishing.
- The focus should be on the water value chain, which includes ground water, surface water and oceans.
- The vision should use inclusive words such as “for all who live in South Africa”, as in “healthy ecosystems, land, water and air, underpins our future, and ensure a better life for all [who live in] South Africans”.
- The focus should also be on the importance of flora and fauna.
- No consensus was reached on net zero carbon versus zero carbon emissions versus low carbon development. One participant said that net zero carbon should be replaced with “carbon neutral” as the preferred terminology. At least 16 participants agreed to a carbon neutral concept and future, whereas 13 participants opted for a zero carbon future. Developed countries are aiming to be net zero carbon.
- The word “affordable” should be taken out of the vision, as affordable is subjective and relative. The vision should rather speak about eradicating energy poverty.

- The vision is missing the human element, as it focuses only on healthy ecosystems, land, water and air, and should include “a better life”.
- The vision should also be measurable in terms of its economic contribution.
- The terms “decentralised” and “diversely owned” may be very problematic and the suggestion was made to remove these concepts from the vision, as they are regarded as mechanisms for the energy space only.
- South Africa is water dependent on its neighbouring countries, and so the vision should include something about South Africa having to be water self-sufficient and government needing to ensure proper water infrastructure.
- The inter-sectoral competition for water and competing priorities should be clearly stated in the vision as part of “Water for All” (page 18).

Pathways

Sequencing of / missing actions

The sequencing of the events should be carefully looked at. The pathways need to align with the five-year plans.

- The baseline does not cover the whole water value chain including the ecological infrastructure and the water mix.
- The 2019 baseline needs to include polluted rivers and wetlands; dysfunctional municipalities, and the lack of access to water.
- In 2020–2025: “Joint partnership for determining Resource Quality Objectives (RQOs)”. The RQOs must be defined before having joint partnerships. The definition should occur in 2019 (and what will be achieved in 2035). The joint partnership may not be clearly understood by other institutions, and so communities should be seen as partners and not only as beneficiaries.
- Revisiting water and municipal water legislation/Constitution may be a good starting point (in 2020–2025), as there is no strategic water resource management.
- Governance issues and targets should be included in the 2020–2025 period.

Gaps/issues for consideration

- Missing some behavioural patterns that need to change. People’s value of water and the responsibility of the citizens within the water sector remain critical.
- Focus more on the natural environment, resources, ecology (flora and fauna), alien vegetation, etc.
- Oceans and coasts to be captured separately.
- The document should contain clear definitions for all concepts. There should be a table of acronyms.
- The importance of oceans and coasts on South Africa’s economy and the responsibility for humans in ensuring their maintenance should be highlighted in the report. In South Africa, 70% of the land but only 2% of oceans and coasts are protected. A suggestion was made that at least 20% of the oceans and coasts should be protected and include the role of Operation Phakisa. Oceans and coasts should be visible throughout the document.
- A communication strategy is needed on how to empower communities.
- All sources of water should be included - ground water, water re-use and desalination in order to reduce our dependencies on national water reserves and transboundary water.
- Monitoring and evaluation should be captured under the recommendations section and should include water indicators. Monitoring and evaluation systems should be in place for all three themes (water, energy and land-use).

ENERGY

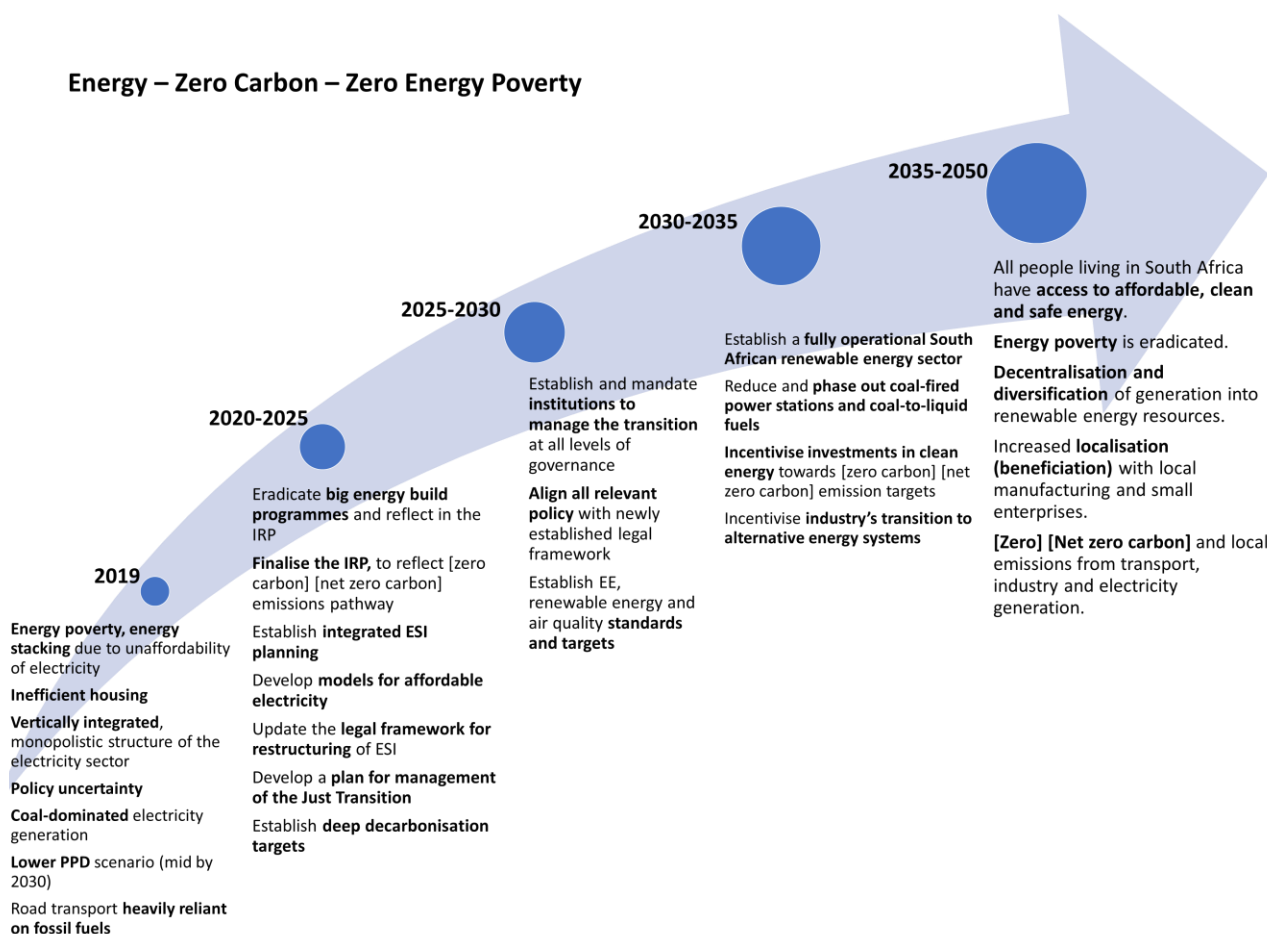


Vision 2050

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Pathways

Energy – Zero Carbon – Zero Energy Poverty



GROUP 1

Facilitated by Jarrad Wright

Vision

Zero carbon is ambitious, but research by the University of Cape Town shows that this is possible. The vision needs to be explicit that coal and fossil fuels cannot be part of the 2050 end state and that power needs to be electric from clean energy sources and from biogas, especially in rural areas.

Pathways

Agreement/consensus reached

- It was agreed that actions need to be accelerated, as South Africa does not have the luxury of time. The pathways timeline needs to bring goals and actions closer to 2025–30.

Clarification needed

- The document needs to be consistent with terminology for low carbon – be clear about what low carbon refers to, i.e. net zero versus zero carbon emissions.

Sequencing of / missing actions

- The phasing-out of coal to liquids at year 2030-35 does not align with DEA's GHG emissions pathways which states year 2040 – and the agreement from the Talanoa Dialogues was for net zero to be attained by 2060. Need to clear about how this work aligns with previous efforts.
- Co-generation from big mining and manufacturing plants should be included as a source of energy.
- By 2020: Incentives for electric cars should be in place, including manufacture and importation.
- By 2025, we need to have consensus on the Just Transition and managing job losses.
- The IRP is meant to be updated regularly but only one IRP update (2018) is included here. The energy plan for the country needs to be divided into smaller packages to make it more attainable.
- The following need to be achieved earlier than 2025-30: policy certainty and alignment with associated legal frameworks; mandates to manage the transition; energy efficiency and renewable energy targets and air quality standards.
- By 2025-30, energy poverty must be eradicated. This work should not be constrained by inadequate work done already.
- Many of the risks of the energy transition are not prominently included in the document. For example, energy security is only mentioned once. The pathways need to consider and plan for dealing with the risks. This is important for political buy-in from the start.

Gaps/issues for consideration

- The Integrated Energy Plan, which considers liquid fuels not just electricity, should be included as a key policy that needs to reflect our emissions goal.
- The vision and pathways are not realistic, and South Africa has inadequate plans and regulations. Of concern is the current state of energy in the country, which does not align with future plans for zero carbon emissions. Two coal-fired power plants are coming online that South Africa will be locked into for many years past 2050. Should they be decommissioned? Europe is also dumping diesel cars in developing countries including South Africa, and nothing is being done to stop this.
- The draft Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) 2018 includes natural gas, which is flexible and complements the volatility of renewable energy. Gas is needed to replace coal to liquid.
- The Department of Trade and Industry should lead on skills development and provide an enabling environment and incentives for such initiatives.

- The document does not mention the “no-regret” options and the resiliency or flexibility of pathways. This is critical in a changing climate and a rapidly changing world, with new issues and technologies constantly emerging.
- The document does mention setting up a monitoring and evaluation system to check if objectives and milestones have been achieved.
- A bigger focus is needed on strengthening the broken education system and skilling people for a future economy.
- Energy security must also be viewed on a spatial scale. Some technologies and approaches work better on a regional, rather than national or local, scale.
- There is a strong emphasis on renewable energy to mitigate climate change. Other potential technologies should be considered, such as clean coal and carbon capture and storage, if found to be practical. It was noted that the only clean coal is coal kept in the ground. Should nuclear be an option?
- An industrial policy is needed to deal with hotspot areas. However, a representative from the Minerals Council of South Africa said that industrialisation is not the answer; industries should be cleaning up water and piloting the return of land for agricultural purposes. Regional industrial development has not worked – the cost of setting up these industries has been far greater than the benefits reaped from the industries overall, if the externalities are taken into account.
- Government and the private sector need to partner with communities to assist with community-owned projects through creating an enabling environment to capacity building and funding.
- Labour and social plans, together with a jobs and a competitiveness programme, are important to keep energy prices low for poor households.
- Cities must play a bigger role and take the lead in the Just Transition, as this is where the challenges of poverty and inequality are experienced.
- Institutions need to be set up to manage the transition. There was strong support for the Presidential Climate Change Committee to lead on the Just Transition.

GROUP 2

Facilitated by Gaylor Montmasson-Clair

Vision

There was no consensus on net zero and zero carbon emissions. The following comments were made:

- The majority of the participations did not support the zero carbon definition and possibility; net zero appeared to be more realistic. Given South Africa’s consumption, zero carbon will be hard to achieve, and so net zero needs to be linked to sustainable development.
- Other participants felt that net zero carbon is a low target that will not make major changes to the Just Transition process. Only zero carbon will make changes to the economy. Mind sets and approaches need to change.
- The vision is limited to energy but should include the multi-dimensional issues of health care, decent and meaningful work, basic rights, socially owned energy systems and the transport sector. This is what is needed to transform a social sector and to equip people with a means to be less reliant on the state.
- “Healthy ecosystems” must be replaced with “wildlife and biodiversity”.
- Rephrase the vision to “Strive to achieve a net zero carbon”.
- There should be a stronger focus on transport, as it is linked to the economy.
- In the net zero approach, the process of off-setting needs to be factored in. Offsetting needs to consider a balance and synergy between energy and land-use.

- Position the vision on the spectrum of change within society “institutional changes, political changes”.
- The energy sector needs to be diversified.

Pathways

Clarification needed

- What does it mean to “eradicate big energy build programmes”.
- Zero carbon needs to be clearly defined.
- Just processes in the transition: consider what the difference is between “equitable” and “just”.

Sequencing of / missing actions

- The transition is already happening but is not reflected in 2019 timeline.
- Activities on the timeframe need to be restructured, as some activities need to start now/ immediately. Pathway needs to be changed/reviewed – everything post 2025–2030 needs to occur now.
- A full monitoring system should be in place post 2025–2050.
- The energy pathways diagram does not include reskilling. Start with reskilling in 2019. The human impact of the loss of jobs will be felt immediately on the economy and in municipalities. Other actions can follow after reskilling. Local government also needs upskilling on planning for a green economy.

Gaps/issues for consideration

- Pathways are incompatible with the level of ambition.
- The pathways must be linked to research, technology trends and the 4th industrial revolution, as well as to the global policies developed around zero carbon and sustainable development.
- Resilience strategies need to be factored into the pathways.
- There needs to be an understanding of the various sources of emissions and the expenses related to them. What are the contributing factors to emissions and what are the costs related to addressing the emissions?
- The pathways should align with carbon budgets.
- Change must come through mobilising the political power to change the system.
- The development of a vision is a process and should evolve through a transition process/plan. That plan should include the empowerment of people to enable them to have socially owned projects.
- The energy system needs to be equitable and inclusive.
- It’s important to find and understand South African or SADC examples of dealing with the Just Transition.
- Mining companies and Eskom should be mandated to release data on how communities will be affected – environmentally and socially – by operations.
- How does the Just Transition factor in migrant foreign workers?
- There should be a separate plan for the most vulnerable groups.
- Social and labour plans must be implemented.
- There needs to be social protection for those who will be affected by job losses.
- The discussion on a Just Transition is only being discussed at a national level. What is the role of the three spheres of government?
- Government needs to be set up to a better method of “experimentation” and ensure that knowledge and information sharing happens vertically and horizontally. This methodology must form part of implementation plans.

Plenary Feedback

At the plenary, a representative from each group gave feedback of the discussions to all the stakeholders. The following emerged from the feedback:

1. Unfortunately, participants could not reach a definite consensus on whether the country should strive for a zero carbon or for a net zero economy by 2050. Four of the six groups had a firm consensus that zero carbon was the ultimate goal for South Africa and so should be in the vision. However, clear divisions in the remaining two groups prevented a consensus from being reached, although both groups talked about a process and aiming for net zero.
2. Participants agreed on decentralised, diversely owned renewable energy systems, but the term decentralised needed further unpacking before everyone could get behind it.
3. Many groups raised an important area that was missing: the concept of decent work and the upholding of basic rights for people. In essence, the triple challenges (unemployment, inequality and poverty) needed to be more explicit in the vision.

Commissioner Essop noted that there was consensus on achieving a net carbon future and thanked the groups for their inputs, which would assist in further refining the Vision and Pathways document.



Final Consensus for the Just Transition: The Hard Questions

Participants were again split into six breakaway groups, to focus on areas of disagreement that emerged from the stakeholder engagements. The groups were asked to grapple with making difficult, bold and courageous decisions when considering the following questions:

1. What is the future of coal in South Africa? This includes mining and the phasing out of its use. Is there a role for clean coal? If so, what is it?
2. Diversification of ownership. Does electricity remain in state hands? Is socially-owned renewable energy an option?
3. Which institution should hold the next stage of the Just Transition process. Should it be the Presidential Climate Change Coordinating Commission?

GROUP 1

Facilitated by Peta Wolpe

There was considerable discussion and debate on the three questions. Where consensus was reached or where the majority of the group agreed on points, these were noted.



Future of Coal

- There is no future for coal in South Africa, due to the declining health of people, and pollution.
- Big companies are divesting from coal and so should the country.
- Eskom can still exist, but energy must not be coal based.
- What is needed is to discuss how to assist workers who will lose their jobs. A renewable energy industrialisation plan is needed that includes ecosystem rehabilitation and a social insurance plan to protect communities.
- Public training on renewable energy is needed.
- Social protection systems need to be developed for those who will be affected by a no-coal future.
- There has to be a plan to rehabilitate land and towns, as coal mines closes.



Ownership of energy

- The move needs to be towards socially owned renewable energy and to an energy sector that creates decent jobs and reduces energy poverty.
- Every household in the country should have the right to be an energy producer, and mechanisms should be in place to ensure that poor people get a better rate for the electricity they produce.
- Functional policies and regulations are needed to ensure that all households and municipalities can be involved in energy provision.
- The financing needs to be carefully considered, to ensure that the poor do not suffer disproportionately, particularly as the middle class goes off the grid, crippling the financial mechanism that municipalities depend upon.
- Incentives should be developed to encourage households and communities to generate energy from renewable sources.
- An industrialisation plan is needed that links investment in renewable energy and the rest of the economy.
- Municipal by-laws should facilitate community generation of energy.



Institutionalisation of the Just Transition

The group did not have time to discuss this in detail, but the general sentiment was that the group was not confident in the Presidential Climate Change Commission becoming the custodian of the Just Transition.

GROUP 2

Facilitated by Ashraf Kariem



Future of Coal

- Participants felt that the discussion was too scientific.
- Relying on renewables only and completely removing coal runs the risk of energy shortages.
- One participant called for a balance between coal, agriculture and the environment – the use of coal could be minimised using price instead of being completely eliminated by 2050.
- Planning for the future must include planning for the current challenges, using current laws and policies.
- Successfully implemented policies on renewable energy can provide useful lessons.
- South Africa needs to be less reliant on coal, but the variables that are affected by coal (value chain) need to be considered.
- Beneficiation policies need to maximise resource efficiency
- If there is a no future for coal, investing in education for all, and research and development, is needed to prepare for the future. Long-term development requires investing in human capital and new knowledge.
- Moving from coal will not result in economic losses if coal is substituted with hydrogen by making use of the country's platinum resources.



Ownership of energy

- Some participants supported the unbundling of the energy sector, which should remain state owned, while others felt that electricity should be privatised and ownership diversified – i.e. not a monopoly.
- The system must be corruption free.
- Municipalities must be the energy supplier and provide electricity, but should work in collaboration with the private sector for financial support.
- Others felt that municipalities should not distribute electricity given the challenges of non-payment to Eskom.
- Municipalities should be governed by strict regulations that prevent them from underperforming.
- Given the poor state of municipalities and their inability to provide basic services and electricity, communities must be allowed to provide their own electricity.
- A recommendation was made to appoint an entity to take ownership of electricity that is not Eskom.



Institutionalisation of the Just Transition

- The group supported the proposal that the Just Transition work be institutionalised in the Presidential Climate Change Coordinating Commission.
- First, sources of funding need to be identified, and National Treasury should be responsible for funding all developmental activities.
- The platform chosen must be representative and inclusive, and must include rural dwellers.

GROUP 3

Facilitated by Belynda Petrie



Future of Coal

- The country cannot shut down coal mining and coal-fired generation immediately because the economy and energy system are highly dependent on coal – new coal further entrenches a coal-dependent future.
- A renewable energy industrialisation pathway needs to be developed, and the timing and sequencing of the plan is pivotal to the success of this pathway.
- The country should start implementing key aspects of the draft IRP2018, to ensure energy security and prevent another coal-fired power station being developed in a rush. Certain elements within the IRP can be implemented gradually and phased in, as coal is phased out. This timing and sequencing is critical for a just and efficient transition. Renewable energy can be phased in to meet the energy demand when a coal plant gets decommissioned.
- Political will, governance, enabling vertically integrated policies, and enforcement of regulations are needed.
- Coal can be phased out through pricing and applying the true costs of coal (externalities). Once the social and environmental damages are internalised in the cost, and subsidies removed, coal will be significantly more expensive than renewable energy options.
- Coal power stations are aging and parts cannot be replaced as they are not being manufactured anymore. This is a high risk issue, as there are serious maintenance issues that need to be publicised more.
- There is no compelling argument for coal to be in the future, and so no new coal plants should be built.
- Given that the country is locked into two big coal builds for 30–50 years, and that thousands of jobs are at stake because workers have not been reskilled, alternative technologies, such as clean coal and carbon capture and storage, need to be looked at, until these power plants reach the end of their lives. Another alternative is retrofitting old power stations, but this hasn't been costed.
- How will the government take the focus away from coal? The private sector is already going that way, many companies are looking at off grid options (partly due to load shedding and the unreliability of electricity), while other companies like Sasol are lining up non-coal options.
- Eskom was not created to be a profitable institution and the electricity sector was not established to generate profits – it was created to provide extraordinarily cheap power to support heavy industry and mining and is still locked into pricing agreements for extremely cheap power which is unaffordable for them to run profitably. This has never been re-evaluated.



Ownership of energy

- It was agreed that energy should be decentralised, but there needs to be a strong steering body that takes into consideration all the upstream and downstream activities and impacts on ecosystems.
- Decentralisation does not mean removing all the departments, but rather that the system will have better structures and mechanisms with accountability.
- Perhaps ownership and management should be separated: the government should own the energy system, but an independent body should manage it to keep government in check.



Institutionalisation of the Just Transition

The group did not have time to discuss this.

GROUP 4

Facilitated by Mukondi Masithi



Future of Coal

- Coal needs to be phased out. A plan with targets needs to be set, to ensure that it aligns with the zero carbon 2050 future.
- Coal jobs need to be absorbed into the renewable energy sector.
- Investment in coal should cease immediately. The Just Transition should commence in 2019. The government should stop issuing coal mining rights to prevent the country from being trapped with coal for decades.
- What alternatives for coal are being proposed? Is there sufficient budget? How long will the construction of new power stations take? How is South Africa planning to achieve zero coal and deal with reduced coal export (currently, a number of countries are reducing coal dependencies) and local consumption?
- The Department of Education needs to change the curriculum, particularly in universities, to help create awareness of coal, the environment and Just Transitions.
- The government should prioritise coal mining affected communities in the Just Transition.
- Communities should be made aware of the Independent Power Producers (IPPs) implementation and Just Transition project currently underway.
- Renewable energy requires large tracts of land. The government should safeguard a balance between food security and energy. A concern was raised that the government is prioritising energy over food – a proposal was made for a plan which will aim at ensuring a balance between food security and energy.
- What are the financial implications of installing solar panels on buildings? Would this be a better option than large power stations that take up large amounts of land?
- Energy-intensive users should be encouraged to reduce emissions and be energy efficient.
- What is needed is to develop case studies and best practices on decommissioning coal generation plants with regard to its impact on the country.



Ownership of energy

- Regardless of ownership, what is needed is accountability and transparency, so that everyone is well informed.
- Some participants felt that energy generation should remain under the control of national government but should now extend to local government.
- Others felt that community ownership reduced the chances of creating monopolies and noted cases where certain individuals end up owning more energy than others.
- A question of who has access to land was raised. How will communities set up energy projects without access to land?
- Solar panel investment and maintenance are both expensive. How will communities fund it?
- Should communities produce energy for themselves or share with others on the grid? Some felt that a balanced ownership was needed, shared between the private sector (big business and communities) and the public sector.



Institutionalisation of the Just Transition

- Various options were suggested: DEA with climate change unit; the Presidency as a central coordinating structure or body (The Presidential Unit); National Treasury; interdepartmental collaboration, e.g. the NPC and the Presidency to identify key role players and departments in ensuring the implementation of a Just Transition, and include water; energy; environment; Treasury; land; state institutions; representations from community.

GROUP 5

Facilitated by Jarrad Wright



Future of Coal

- South Africa is dependent on coal and so needs to keep coal in the short term, but phase it out due to the diminishing quality of coal being mined. Coal power and coal for export should be phased out.
- Big mining companies including Sasol are not investing in new coal operations. Coal is becoming a liability in the global context. Three of South Africa's commercial banks will not fund new coal. Only black empowerment companies are investing in coal.
- The World Bank provides funds for "turning carbon into assets", i.e. financial mechanisms are available that incentivise and prevent fossil fuels from being extracted.
- Counter to this, National Treasury, the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) and pension funds are still funding fossil fuels. These funds should rather be used for the Just Transition and to support social ownership.
- Research by the Energy Research Centre (ERC) shows that coal needs to be phased out if South Africa wants to achieve zero carbon emissions by 2050.
- Government has still not enforced emissions standards, and air pollution from coal is putting pressure on our health systems.
- Clean coal is not an answer. Even if the technology is developed, coal power consumes a significant amount of water.

- What about the future of gas? The externalities of coal and gas should be used in the decision-making process.
- It was noted that Eskom is now receiving climate funding to reduce its emissions.
- Participants stressed that this decision should be based on alleviating the triple challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment.
- Most participants felt that the conversation should rather be about planning for a Just Transition than about whether coal should be part of our future.



Ownership of energy

- Ownership should be mixed, as in the German case that was cited. The generation component should be open to all South Africans, and small-scale embedded generation should form part of generation and be open to all. Generation could include social ownership of small- and large-scale renewable energy plants. Large-scale generation could also be owned and run by the state and labour unions (parastatal).
- Transmission can only be controlled by one entity. This should continue to lie with Eskom.
- Distribution can be through municipalities and the private sector.
- Transparency and good governance is needed. The private sector is profit driven, but government (Eskom) has not been transparent either.
- Government and the private sector (pension funds) should be investing and supporting social ownership.



Institutionalisation of the Just Transition

Participants supported the Presidential Climate Change Coordinating Committee for this role.

GROUP 6

Facilitated by Gaylor Montmasson-Clair



Future of Coal

- Although coal is abundant, it is important to focus on cleaner and cheaper technologies.
- Others felt that coal can be used with carbon capture and sequestration technologies.
- There is no such thing as clean coal, as mining practices inherently pollute and alter the landscape.
- Who will fund coal? The big commercial banks are not funding new coal. Should the country (National Treasury) invest in coal when there are cheaper technologies?
- Coal is only important in the short term as South Africa is highly dependent on it. It is difficult to justify a future with coal. It is more expensive in the long term, meaning that electricity tariffs will be higher than for renewable energy.
- There is a lack of awareness of the implications of a coal future. Huge corporates are selling coal plants to BBBEE businesses without their knowledge about the future of coal and its non-viability. Awareness-raising and advocacy is needed.
- Some renewable energy sources have financial constraints and storage capacity challenges.
- The narrative should be about the future of energy and renewable energy as opposed to the future of coal.



Ownership of energy

- How should the country move from a monopoly to creating a free market? South Africa has never had a free market for energy, and so skills are required in order to undertake this.
- Is the unbundling accompanied by the selling of assets? How will environmental management be dealt with?
- Transmission should remain publicly owned.
- Who will take responsibility for Eskom's debt?
- What models/examples can be drawn from to learn about the critical factors in dealing with ownership and diversification? Are there South African models as opposed to only focusing on the international models?
- Municipalities should procure renewable energy and sell it to communities and vice-versa.
- Municipalities need alternative revenue models in order to sustain themselves.
- Institutional and legal frameworks are needed to support diverse energy sources (e.g. solar power).
- Municipalities need to contextualise and localise the interventions and be informed by local systems and solutions.
- With the potential use/involvement of IPPs in the transition, municipalities should be deeply involved in the process – what is important is to standardise the process to avoid each municipality adopting its own system.



Institutionalisation of the Just Transition

Options discussed included:

- NEDLAC and the Presidential Climate Change Coordinating Commission were the two primary options discussed. Stakeholders felt that both these forums represent top-down approaches.
- Localised options include the provincial coordinating committees chaired by the MECs – in line with the Climate Change Bill; that it should remain with the NPC Secretariat; that a Ministry of Climate Change and Energy be developed.
- Wherever it is institutionalised, local government must play a strong role, and the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) needs to be involved.

Plenary Feedback and Discussion

Each group presented the key points from their discussions based on the three questions regarding the future of coal, the ownership of energy and the next steps on institutionalisation of the Just Transition. Feedback from the groups is summarised below.



Future of Coal

All the groups agreed that coal has no future in South Africa, and this needs to be squarely addressed before or by 2050. The timing of sequencing/phasing out coal and careful prioritisation of assets need to be planned for, to ensure that there are no power shortages along the path toward attaining this future. An important aspect to be addressed is the education system, which needs to assist the youth and workers in coal to find alternate employment through reskilling and upskilling. Commissioner Essop believed this to be a very important first step on a very difficult journey toward a no-coal future.



Ownership of energy

Despite regional and national concerns around energy security, all the groups supported the decentralisation of energy, noting that this must be coupled with increasing the capacities and resources of municipalities and communities. Proper governance and transparency would also be essential for ownership to be decentralised. All in all, there was an agreement in principle on diversifying ownership. However, more investigation is needed into the nuances, implications and cost of decentralised energy production and socially owned systems. Some differentiated between ownership and management, stating for example that the State should own, while management could be diversified.



Institutionalisation of the Just Transition

Unfortunately, many groups were unable to discuss the full implications of the institutionalisation of the Just Transition. However, those groups who did discuss this question were reluctant to commit to a particular option. The options tabled were a Presidential Climate Change Coordinating Commission or a NEDLAC process. However, participants expressed concerns about the transparency, inclusiveness and decision-making power of these institutions.



Wrap Up and Next Steps

Commissioner Essop thanked all participants and partners for their meaningful and respectful discussions and inputs. Participants can also send written submissions. The inputs will be incorporated into the final Vision and Pathways document, and a full workshop report capturing the discussions will be circulated.

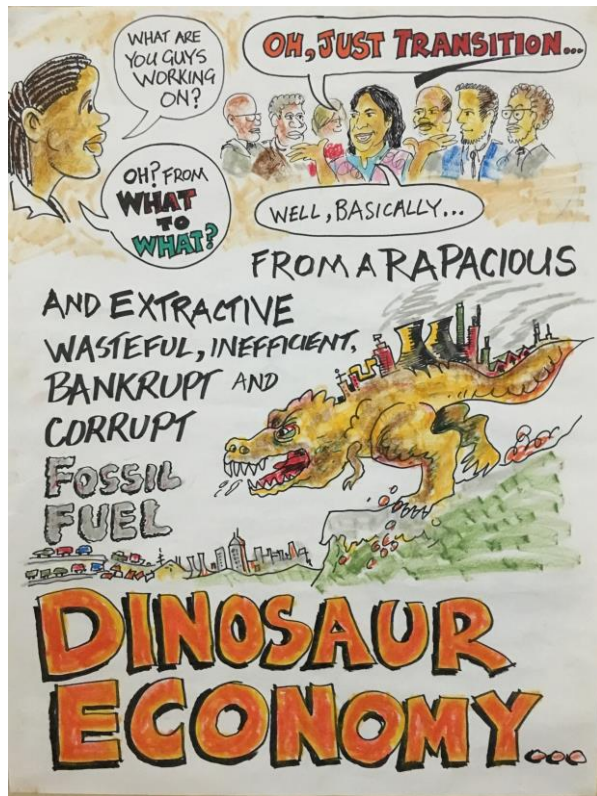
Several recommendations for immediate action were made.

- The NPC will continue to reach out to labour groups to build consensus and work towards developing a social plan for workers.
- The NPC will look into how to pilot work in the two hotspot areas (Mpumalanga and the Free State).
- A Summit will be held later this year to present the final outcomes of this process – all participants will be invited.

Commissioner Essop concluded by expressing her gratitude to everybody including all the partners, DEA, GIZ, the provincial and local governments that assisted with hosting the workshops, and the service providers, SEA and OneWorld. She invited participants to enjoy the display of illustrations from the workshop cartoonist and artist, N.D. Mazin (Andy Mason). The posters are on the following pages.



Poster 1: Dinosaur Economy: Heading To Extinction



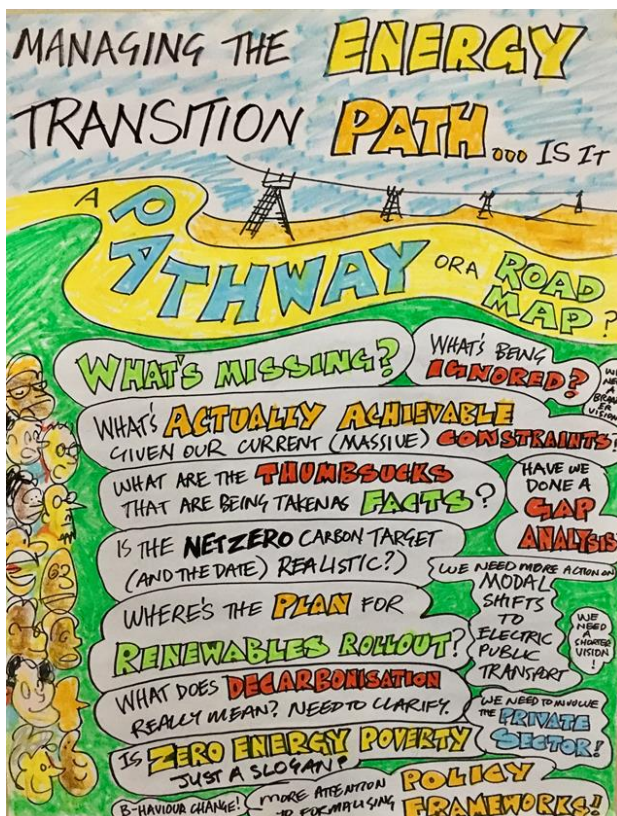
This poster begins with NPC Commissioner Tasneem Essop voicing a pun. It's not "just" transition, it's a "just transition". An important distinction, brought to life by imagining the worst case scenario as a rapacious, extractive, wasteful, inefficient, bankrupt and corrupt fossil fuel dinosaur economy rushing headlong towards its own extinction like a lemming over the edge of a cliff. In the background is a depiction of the problem: quite literally, business as usual.

Poster 2: A Shared Vision For 2050



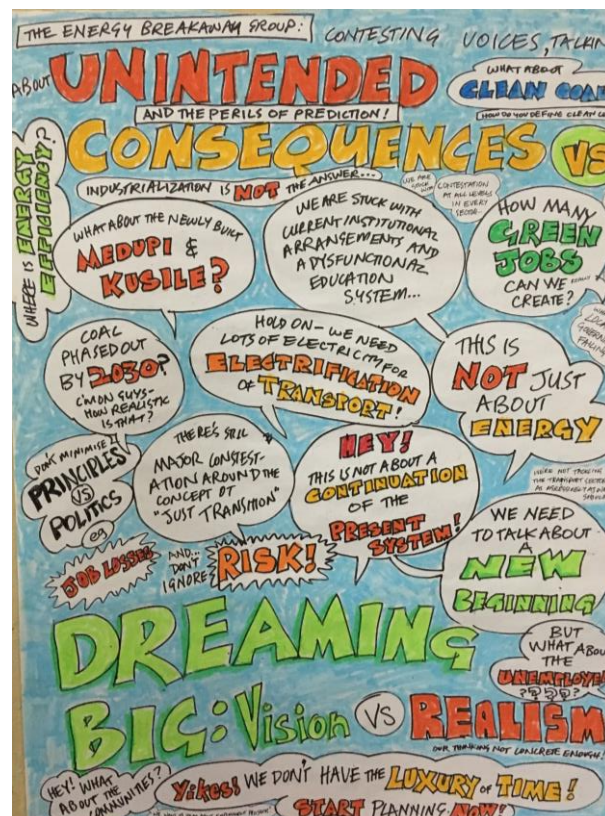
This poster presents alternatives to the dinosaur economy by linking the idea of "a just transition" to the project of "a shared vision for 2050". This vision is shared by labour, civil society, government, business and academia (science), and includes the concepts of low carbon, renewable energy, protecting diversity, climate resistance, sustainability and policy alignment. Its goals are to end corruption, mobilise political will, resolve conflict, and achieve consensus, transparency, and the dignity of work on a living planet. There's a particular emphasis on what we mean by "just", which obviously involves some sort of rotation or reorganisation of South Africa's economic model(s).

Poster 3: Managing The Transition



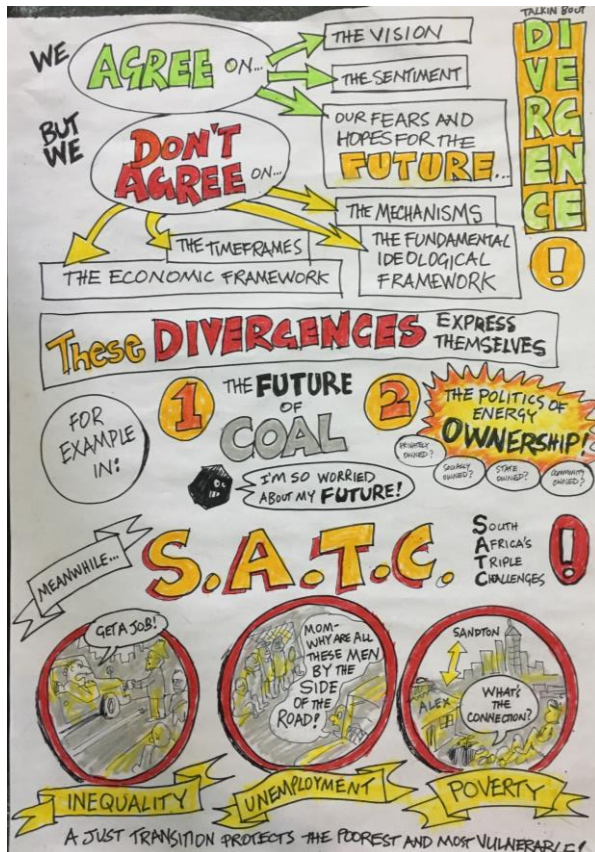
This poster documents the open discussion in the Energy Breakaway Group. The first big question to arise concerned the nature of the exercise itself: should the energy transition be likened to a pathway, worn by the passage of countless feet across a landscape, or should it be a strictly designed roadmap? Many tough questions arose from this session: What's missing? What's being ignored? What's actually achievable given our current (massive) constraints? What are the thumbsucks that are being taken as facts? From these larger questions numerous specific questions arose. A couple of things became clear: if there is a common element, it's the need for behaviour change; and much more attention needs to be paid to formalising policy frameworks!

Poster 4: Vision vs. Realism



The discussion in the Energy Breakaway Group turned towards unintended consequences: dreaming big is obviously necessary and good, but our dreams can run away with us, and vision can outstrip realism. At this stage of the conversation, dissenting voices held the floor. Prediction has its perils, there is contestation in every sector; certain concepts, such as “clean coal”, are heavily contested, as is the very idea of “a just transition” itself. In any talk about a new beginning, principles and politics are going to clash: the risks of job losses and the faltering economy loom large; the luxury of time is long lost. Paradoxes abound – the energy pathway is not just about energy, the timelines are not just about time, and understanding the future begins with understanding the past.

Poster 5. Triple Challenges and Multiple Divergences



The final poster talks about the divergences of opinion that are one of the NPC's biggest challenges. There is broad agreement around the vision and the sentiment – we all share similar hopes and fears about the future. However, we are nowhere near agreement on the mechanisms, the timeframes, the economic framework and, especially, the fundamental ideological framework. These divergences express themselves, for example, in the future of coal and in the politics of energy ownership.

Meanwhile, a new acronym, SATC (SA's Triple Challenges) haunts our every move: the beggars and the roadside work-seekers make visible the connection between inequality, unemployment and poverty – nowhere more starkly demonstrated than in the proximity of Alexandra and Sandton City.