MEDIA STATEMENT

CAPACITATE PARLIAMENT AND MUNICIPALITIES ON CLIMATE CHANGE, COMMITTEE HEARS

Municipalities and Parliament need to be capacitated in order to deal with the challenge that climate change poses on the lives of South Africans, the Portfolio Committee on Environment, Forestry and Fisheries heard on Friday.

The committee conducted public hearings on the Climate Change Bill virtually on Friday where the Bill received an overwhelming support from stakeholders and individuals who made oral submissions on the Bill. The committee held two similar public hearings on the Bill where on both hearings the Bill was supported by majority of participants.

Councillor, Traverse Le Goff, a representative from the City of Cape Town told the committee during the public hearings on the Climate Change Bill on Friday that the national government should work hard. He said: “This will strengthen the municipalities and help them decarbonise. The expectation is that capability is provided by national government to assist municipalities that are not coping to draft implementation plans around issues of mitigation and adaptation.”

Furthermore, he said municipalities will need a lot of support in developing the kinds of documents like plans on mitigation implementation. “The City of Cape Town is lucky to have a good climate unit,” he added. Mr Le Goff was part of more than 10 stakeholders that made oral submissions on the Bill.

The stakeholders overwhelmingly supported the Bill and they told the committee that it was a bit late given the urgency and the need to deal with climate change. Mr Le Goff said what the Bill sought to achieve was fundamentally trying to make sure that humanity will continue to be habitable into the future.

“One hard monolith that could not be negotiated is to arrest the 1.5 degrees rise in global average temperature.” He said the rise will hit hard those living in shacks.

He said it was a concern that the Presidential Commission on Climate Change was a discretionary body established by the President.

“Given the serious nature of the problem we are facing, this body should be legislated for and not be a discretionary body.” He said if citizens were to hold their government accountable there needed to be data that is availed for free to the citizens and that there needed to be foresight shown on the Climate Change Bill. “For example, Parliament needs to have a Sustainability Officer,” he suggested.

The Chairperson of the committee, Ms Faith Muthambi, said all the input was crucial and critical. She lamented the lack of clarity regarding the role of provinces.

She said: “These are matters that the committee will have to factor in. We need a coordinating structure to avoid silo mentality.”

She said if it were not for the COP27 taking place next week, the committee would have scheduled another two public hearing sessions, and to reach to all the districts as it normally do in promoting public participation on Bills. “It would do that on this particular one to solicit views of South Africans on how best they think mitigation and adaptations could be implemented,” emphasised Ms Muthambi.

“Climate change mitigation and adaptation is beyond the capacity of government, hence all stakeholders should come on board and play meaningful roles,” added Ms Muthambi. The committee also received presentations from the Human Society International, Bio Watch, the PCCC, the KZN provincial Department of Economic Affairs and Tourism.

**By Sibongile Maputi**

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