MEDIA STATEMENT

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT STARTS PUBLIC HEARINGS ON CLIMATE CHANGE BILL

The Portfolio Committee on Environment, Forestry and Fisheries began scheduled public hearings on the Climate Change Bill today.  
  
The Acting Chairperson of the committee, Mr Pagiso Modise, said the Bill was long overdue, as it was first mooted in the 2015/16 financial year. “This is our third official meeting on the Bill. It is not our desire to meet virtually [to discuss the Bill], but was necessitated by an unavoidable catastrophe of the outbreak of Covid-19. But the committee is hopeful that it will soon be able to hold public hearings in person, and get input from South Africans on how best they think we could mitigate and meet the net-zero emissions,” he said.

Parliament has a duty to get the public’s views around climate change, as it will transform our lives in alarming and unimaginable ways. “The recent floods in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) touched all of us. Climate change is making livelihoods’ resources scarce; this could lead to a breakdown of lives and protocols. This is no longer [just] an environmental or economic issue.”  
  
The virtual public hearings into the Climate Change Bill are happening just eight days before the Conference of Parties converge in Sharma El Sheik in Egypt for the 27th time (COP27). High on the agenda of COP27 is climate finance, climate action and persuading countries to commit to net-zero emissions.  
  
Some of the speakers scheduled to present at the public hearings are:  
• The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs  
• The Institute for Economic Justice  
• Business Union South Africa  
• The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment  
• The Minerals Council of South Africa  
  
Mr Modise urged all present to focus on the benefits of early action, as time is fast running out. “This is the reason the Bill is in front of the committee. Climate change will contribute to increased frequency and intensified extremeness of weather events and that will affect our lives immensely,” he said.  
  
“It is against this background that we have implemented the climate action tools in various government departments.” However, a department by department approach is inefficient, which is why government as decided to devise legislation to deal with climate change more comprehensively.

**Sibongile Maputi**  
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