

COSATU Submission:
Climate Change Bill
Portfolio Committee:
Environment, Forestry & Fisheries
National Assembly

07/09/2022



Introduction

- The Congress of South African Trade Unions welcomes the tabling of the Climate Change Bill at Parliament.
- COSATU supports this long overdue & progressive Bill & urges its speedy passage.
- The Bill is a badly needed intervention to coordinate South Africa's laggard efforts to tackle climate change.
- It will help ensure national, provincial & local government & key State-Owned Enterprises develop appropriate climate changes targets.

Introduction

- It seeks to address the correct balance between saving the environment, protecting the health of society & saving jobs.
- This is a difficult balance to achieve but the Bill does seek to ensure that the environment, lives & jobs are saved.
- COSATU participated in extensive engagements on the Bill at Nedlac & appreciated the open, constructive & progressive approach by government on the Bill & to addressing the concerns of workers.

Definitions

- COSATU supports the definitions provided for in the Bill.
- In particular we welcome the emphasis placed on a Just Transition.
- This is key as a transition is occurring.
- However, it must be a just transition that takes workers, vulnerable persons & communities at risk with & not leave them behind to the vagaries of the market.

Objects of the Bill

- COSATU supports the progressive objectives of the Bill.
- They provide a clear mandate on the need to:
 - Tackle climate change,
 - Protect the environment,
 - Provide for a just transition & nurture economic development,
 - Have clear climate change plans & strategies, and
 - Ensure that the inheritance of future generations is protected.

Principles of the Bill

- COSATU supports the Bill's principles developed through extensive engagements at Nedlac between government, business & labour.
- COSATU welcomes the focus on:
 - International equity,
 - Just transition,
 - Protection for & accommodation of workers, vulnerable persons & communities,
 - A cautious developmental approach,
 - Science-based actions, &
 - An integrated government & society wide response, including responsibilities of businesses.

Application of the Bill

- COSATU welcomes the Application of the Bill.
- It is key that all spheres of government, from national to provincial to local & to SOEs are allocated clear responsibilities, tasks & timeframes.
- These must be binding & not voluntary.

Alignment of Policies

- COSATU supports the provisions providing for the alignment of policies.
- Climate change requires a coherent national response if it is to be tackled.
- COSATU welcomes the roles provided for business, labour & civil society to make inputs in these government processes, strategies & plans.
- Maximum input & ownership are key to ensuring their successful implementation.

Provincial & Municipal Climate Change Forums

- COSATU welcomes the provisions for Provincial & Municipal Forums on Climate Change.
- This is key to ensuring national plans & strategies are successfully implemented & that provincial & municipalities play their full role.
- The space provided for autonomous provincial & municipal plans will help ensure their plans reflect local contexts.
- The clear timeframes will help ensure that they are held accountable for their implementation by national government & society.

Presidential Climate Commission

- COSATU welcomes the provisions for the Presidential Climate Commission.
- Its establishment at a Presidential level will help provide it with the necessary political authority to ensure its success.
- COSATU supports the roles allocated to it, in particular its monitoring & evaluation mandate.
- Its provision for organised business, labour & civil society will help ensure the public at large supports its critical work & that key stakeholders contribute to its implementation.

National Adaptation Objectives, Strategies & Plans

- COSATU welcomes the provisions for national adaptation objectives, strategies & plans.
- COSATU supports the provisions for Greenhouse Gas Emissions Trajectory, Lists & Inventory, as well as stipulating what constitutes Greenhouse Gases & the contributing activities to these.
- The provisions requiring actions to reduce these are critical.
- This level of detail will help ensure national plans & strategies have the necessary scientific foundation & detail to tackle climate change. ¹¹

Sector Adaptation, Targets & Plans

- COSATU supports the provisions for sector adaptation, targets & plans.
- These are key given the varying impact on the climate that different sectors have.
- It will empower government to develop with stakeholders, relevant sectoral approaches as needed, in particular for key sectors e.g. mining, agriculture, energy, transport, housing, clothing & textiles etc.

Carbon Budgets

- COSATU supports the provisions for carbon budgets & the work done to ensure synergy between these & the Carbon Tax.
- These are a necessary carrot & stick to help industry move to less polluting practises.
- It is also critical that these are put in place to ensure that our trade relations with key trading partners, e.g. the European Union are not disrupted as they put in place their carbon trade regimes & requirements on trading partners.

Public Participation

- The provisions providing for public participation on various regulatory adjustments by the Minister are welcome.
- These will help key stakeholders give inputs & ensure the right balances are found.
- It will be critical that these are accompanied by the necessary public education & engagements as these are extremely technical matters.
- Without this it risks reducing these important processes to only experts from academia, NGOs & business.

Offences

- The provisions providing for sanctions are necessary to ensure compliance with the objectives of the Bill, in particular provisions providing for penalties for failure to implement greenhouse gas mitigation plans.

Schedules 1 & 2

- COSATU supports the inclusion of key departments responsible for Sector Emission Targets under Schedule 1 & key departments & entities responsible for Sector Adaptation Strategies & Plans under Schedule 2.

Conclusion

- The Climate Change Bill is a welcome & long overdue intervention.
- It is badly needed if we are to tackle one of the greatest existential threats to humanity, the environment & the planet.
- It compels government at all levels & entities as well as business to put in place the necessary assessments, plans and strategies.
- It provides a clear clarion call for all of us to work together to save the environment.

Conclusion

- It also provides a correct balance with the need to protect workers, vulnerable persons & communities.
- It recognises our real developmental & economic challenges.
- It provides an inclusive approach that gives space for organised labour, business and civil society to play their roles & to help guide the national response.
- COSATU supports the Climate Change Bill & urges its speedy passage by Parliament.