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| **COSATU Submission:****Climate Change Bill** **27 May 2022** |
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**Submitted to:****Portfolio Committee:** **Environment, Forestry & Fisheries****National Assembly****Republic of South Africa** |

1. **Introduction**

The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) welcomes the tabling of the Climate Change Bill at Parliament. The Federation supports this long overdue and progressive Bill and urges its speedy passage by Parliament.

The Bill is a badly needed intervention to coordinate South Africa’s laggard efforts to tackle climate change. It will help ensure national, provincial and local government as well as key State-Owned Enterprises develop appropriate climate changes targets.

It seeks to address the correct balance between saving the environment, protecting the health of society and saving jobs. This is a difficult balance to achieve but the Bill does seek to ensure that the environment, lives and jobs are saved.

COSATU participated in extensive engagements on the Bill at Nedlac and appreciated the open, constructive and progressive approach to government on the Bill and to addressing the concerns of workers.

1. **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 and communities at risk with and not leave them behind to the vagaries of the market.

1. **Objects of the Bill**

COSATU supports the progressive objectives of the Bill. They provide a clear mandate on the need to tackle climate change, to protect the environment, to provide for a just transition and nurture economic development, to have clear climate change plans and strategies, and to ensure that the inheritance of future generations is protected.

1. **Principles**

COSATU supports the principles of the Bill. These were the result of extensive engagements between government, business, community and labour at Nedlac.

The Federation welcomes the focus on international equity, just transition, protection for and accommodation of workers and vulnerable persons and communities, a cautious developmental approach, science-based actions, and an integrated government and society wide response, including responsibilities of businesses.

1. **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 and to SOEs are allocated clear responsibilities, tasks and timeframes. These must be binding and not voluntary.

1. **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.

We welcome the roles provided for business, labour and civil society to make inputs in these government processes, strategies and plans. Maximum input and ownership are key to ensuring their successful implementation.

1. **Provincial and Municipal Forums on Climate Change**

COSATU welcomes the provisions for Provincial and Municipal Forums on Climate Change. This is key to ensuring national plans and strategies are successfully implemented and that provincial and local government play their full role.

The space provided for autonomous provincial and 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 and society.

1. **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.

The Federation supports the roles allocated to it, in particular its monitoring and evaluation mandates.

Its provision for organised business, labour and civil society will help ensure that the public at large supports its critical work and that key stakeholders help ensure its implementation.

1. **National Adaptation Objectives, Strategies and Plans**

COSATU welcomes the various provisions for national adaptation objectives, strategies and plans.

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

1. **Sector Adaptation, Targets and Plans**

COSATU supports the provisions for sector adaptation, targets and 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 and textiles etc.

1. **Carbon Budgets**

COSATU supports the provisions for carbon budgets and the work done to ensure synergy between these and the Carbon Tax.

These are a necessary carrot and 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 and requirements on trading partners.

1. **Public Participation**

The provisions providing for public participation on various regulatory adjustments by the Minister are welcome. These will help key stakeholders give inputs and ensure the right balances are found.

It will be critical that these are accompanied by the necessary public education and engagements as these are extremely technical matters. Without this it risks reducing these important processes to only experts from academia, NGOs and business.

1. **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.

1. **Schedules 1 and 2**

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

1. **Conclusion**

The Climate Change Bill is a welcome and long overdue intervention. It is badly needed if we are to tackle one of the greatest existential threats to humanity, the environment and the planet. It compels government at all levels and 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. It also provides a correct balance with the need to protect workers, vulnerable persons and communities. It recognises our real developmental and economic challenges.

It provides an inclusive approach that gives space for organised labour, business and civil society to play their roles and to help guide the national response.

COSATU supports the Climate Change Bill and urges its speedy passage by Parliament.

Thank you.

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