



National Economic  
Development and  
Labour Council

## BRIEFING NOTE: NEDLAC 30 YEAR OF DEMOCRACY PROJECT

*Nedlac social partners reflecting on 30 years of democracy and planning for the future*

**Theme: Labour market, social protection and the just transition**

**Sub-theme:** Climate change

---

Welcome to the discussion on responding to climate change, which will cover:

- Ensuring a just transition;
- Adaption to climate change; and
- Disaster management

This briefing note will assist you in your discussion by:

- Highlighting key issues<sup>1</sup>
- Setting out questions for you to consider.

You are free to add additional issues and questions to your discussion.

### A. Key issues

#### 1. Variables and driving forces

*The Indlulamithi project has identified the following variables and driving forces:*

- SA will remain a high emitter of CO<sub>2</sub>, and the effects of climate change will not be adequately addressed, further widening inequality.
- Environmental changes, including increasingly severe shifts in global climate patterns, long-term temperature increases and environmental degradation. Under an unconstrained emissions scenario, the annual temperature is expected to increase by a minimum of 1.0 or a maximum of about 3.0°C by 2050, with the most likely increase in the range of 1.5–2.0°C. Under strict global emissions policies, a smaller increase in temperature is expected, ranging from about 0.5–2.0°C.
- Climate change impacts on Africa – mostly causing drier and hotter conditions – need to be monitored carefully.

*The NDP review indicates that:*

- The long-term decarbonisation of the South African economy will focus primarily on the electricity sector in the 2020s. A deeper transition will take place in the electricity sector, coupled with a transition in the transport sector towards low-emission vehicles in the 2030s, while the 2040s and beyond will be characterised by the decarbonisation of the hard-to-mitigate sectors. (NDP:12)

*The AfDG dialogues argues that:*

- Water issues need to be demystified so that there is a greater appreciation of water scarcity and the consequences of climate change and environmental degradation
- A broad-based political settlement within the state and beyond is critical for addressing the potential for social division under deepening climate change and the pressures of the

---

<sup>1</sup> These issues have been sourced from various documents including the DPME 30 year review, Indlulamithiscenarios, AfDG dialogues held in 2022/23 and work in Nedlac.



National Economic  
Development and  
Labour Council

energy transition. To support this, new state capabilities are needed – such as enabling the reskilling of labour, supporting down-stream industrial development in the move to renewables, supporting local content/production that generates employment and builds local firm capabilities, and so on.

## 2. Achievements and changes

- Within South Africa's economic and social context, the transition to net zero carbon emissions has been based on consultative social dialogue to reach a consensus on just and inclusive pathways (NDP:13). The Just Energy Transition Framework and Just Energy Transition Investment Plan (JET-IP) have been developed to facilitate progress towards a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy (Summary:43).
- **Legislative and regulatory instruments** have been introduced to mitigate climate change and environmental degradation, the latest being the Climate Change Bill. (NDP:12). A carbon tax was introduced in June 2019 to incentivise businesses to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions (Review: 245)
- **Renewable energy** is making important inroads in improving the energy mix (Summary:43)
- **Climate change disruptions** to infrastructure can be devastating. Floods in KwaZulu-Natal in April 2022, on a smaller scale in North-West and Eastern Cape, had a devastating impact, with 356 schools across nine districts experiencing damages that require repairing at an estimated total cost of over R 254,000,000. (Review: 96).

### B. Questions to be addressed<sup>2</sup>

- a) What are the **achievements and lessons** regarding government and social partners' response to climate change?
- b) How can South Africa make a **fair contribution to the global effort to stabilise greenhouse gas (GHG) concentrations** in the atmosphere at a level that avoids dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system within a timeframe that enables economic, social, and environmental development to proceed sustainably (Review: 242). Consider issues such as the timetable to decommission coal-fired power stations and the air quality consequences.
- c) What **protective measures**, both pro-active (e.g. climate resilient stormwater) and reactive (e.g. early warning systems for improved emergency response) should be put in place, especially in the water and agricultural sectors and households in climate change risk areas?
- d) How can capacity for **climate change response planning and implementation** across government and social partners be built? Consider the proposals for an Adaptation Fund, social partner participation in disaster management responses, and strengthening of the PCC in putting climate change and transition issues into government policy. Also, consider how public awareness of climate change can be enhanced

---

<sup>2</sup> Note: Skills development and social protection measures to enable a just transition and the role of renewable energy are also discussed in other working sessions.