



CJCM Discussion Document

For A National Climate Emergency Election in 2024

An Electoral Tactic for the Climate Justice Charter Movement (CJCM)

1. Background

1.1 The Climate Justice Charter Movement grew out of the campaigning work of the Cooperative and Policy Alternative Centre (COPAC) and the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign during the worst drought (2014-2021) in the history of the country. The Climate Justice Charter (CJC) is the world's first comprehensive charter setting out a pluri-vision: to address the legacies of apartheid, the current poly crisis and secure a livable, just and democratic future. The CJC is endorsed by 282 organisations and growing.

1.2 In the course of this journey, COPAC, SAFSC and subsequently the CJCM have attempted, through numerous engagements with the ANC government and political parties, to secure a commitment to place the country on a democratic climate emergency footing. This is what we have done to raise the alarm, while the climate and poly crisis worsens in the country due to failed ANC and political party leadership of the country:

- In 2015 we hosted a hunger tribunal to address the worsening food crisis due to the drought; in 2016 we hosted drought speak-outs and had a bread march through the streets of Johannesburg; in 2018, we took a People's Food Sovereignty Act to parliament for a new food system, given the collapse of our commercial agricultural system during the drought;
- Later in 2018, when the UN issued its 1.5C report calling on governments to cut emissions by at least 45% by 2030 we called on the President to convene an emergency sitting of parliament to discuss what this means for our climate preparedness and policies;
- In 2019 we developed the CJC through bottom-up dialogues and took it to parliament on October 16, 2020, and called for its adoption as per section 234 of the South African constitution which provides for charters to be adopted. We also took a document prepared by leading climate scientists warning about climate risks facing the country

and a memorandum of demands from communities to end climate harm, corruption, thirst, pollution and hunger.

- In 2021 we returned to parliament with a fire engine to emphasise the challenge of planetary heating and demanded the adoption of the CJC;
- In 2022 we charged President Ramaphosa and others for the deaths of people due to the climate-related 'rainbomb' in KZN. This was a climate disaster due to failed leadership. The criminal justice system scuttled the criminal charges we laid;
- In 2023 on the 3rd year celebrations of the CJC, on August 28, we called on President Ramaphosa to place the country on a democratic climate emergency footing, given forecasts by leading climate scientists that we should prepare for the worst: an extreme summer.

1.3 In all these efforts we have been ignored by the ANC government and the mainstream political parties. We cannot sit back and be victims of failed political leadership. The democratic climate emergency needs to be mainstreamed now so the entire country can be seized with the task of accelerating the deep just transition in communities, workplaces, sectors and the state to limit harm, meet the needs of the people and affirm our international climate commitments.

2. Strategic Approach

2.1 At our March 2023 national conference, we drew the following strategic conclusions about the state of climate politics and struggle:

- The UN-led multi-lateral process, including the Paris Agreement, is failing human and non-human life. There is a crisis of leadership at this level including within most national states;
- Fossil fuel capital has effectively delayed the phase-out of fossil fuels for almost three decades. Emissions and investments in fossil fuels continue to increase. The global energy mix is still skewed towards fossil fuels;
- The failure to address the climate crisis for over 3 decades has put us on an eco-fascist course towards climate chaos and breakdown, with great harm and loss of life becoming a lived reality. In South Africa both the carbon nationalist and green neoliberal factions (including in the Presidential Climate Commission) have failed to take the worsening climate crisis seriously and are delaying an accelerated deep just transition.
- South Africa is unprepared for the worsening climate crisis. The drought, Durban 'Rainbombs' of 2019 and 2022, more floods, storm surges and the prospect of an extreme summer and dry conditions coupled with a failing state and economy spells disaster. South Africa is in the grip of a poly crisis of social reproduction;
- The ANC's market democracy has been exclusionary with its emphasis on giving power to capital over the state, society and natural relations. Coupled with the squeeze of 'Zumafication' our constitutional democratic project has been compromised by intensifying criminalisation. There has been a serious and

dangerous rollback of constitutional democracy. Our criminalized market democracy is not working and is on a dangerous trajectory;

- Political party politics is transactional, criminal and performative. Voting publics are disabled and merely play a voting role. On the other hand, none of these parties have been able to stem widespread state failure nor put forward serious solutions to address the worsening poly crisis. This has created a crisis of political representation and a deepening legitimacy crisis of the state.

2.2 The CJCM is not a political party but seeks to ensure climate justice mass politics through advancing a climate justice project for South Africa, informed by the plurivision of the CJC. The CJCM has four strategies to confront the polycrisis: (i) build an international bloc of vulnerable governments, peoples, workers and movements; (ii) secure a Climate Justice Deal and people/worker-driven democratic climate emergency state; (iii) deepening democracy through fighting corruption and renewing our constitutional democratic project; and (iv) building a people and worker-driven movement grounded a new paradigm of power that builds, transforms and shifts power to accelerate the deep just transition in communities, workplaces, sectors and the state. It is about intersectional transformative politics championing democratic systemic reforms from below.

2.3 As a people and worker-driven movement, we believe transformation must be grounded in a political program of transformative policies, providing content for the deep just transition. We must fight from below for democratic systemic reforms that meet the needs of the people and the most vulnerable. We must give momentum to accelerated deep just transitions in communities, workplaces, sectors and the state. We must organize, mobilise, conscientize and transform from below.

2.4 The electoral tactic we envisage is an expression of tactical flexibility to take forward CJCM strategies and its political program into the democratic mainstream. It is about testing a movement-party function of the CJCM to confront the crisis of political leadership pushing us into a worsening poly and climate crisis in the state, society and economy.

2.5 While a few voices have argued the CJCM should become a 'green party' because South Africa does not have one, the majority view supports the current strategic, programmatic and institutional direction of the CJCM. Moreover, this is what distinguishes the CJCM from a 'green party' wanting to modernize and gradually change things: The CJCM is committed to (i) its pluri-vision which is grounded in South African realities of past, present and future; (ii) a commitment to systems change and transformation to overcome the poly crisis through democratic systemic reforms; (ii) emancipatory ecology from below through building the capacity of workers and peoples to lead change to end the war with nature; (iv) it is not about being narrowly electoralist but about a new paradigm of transformative power.

3. Why an electoral tactic in the 2024 national elections?

In more specific terms these are the reasons for a CJCM electoral tactic:

- 3.1 Place the urgency of the climate crisis at the centre of South African society. In 5- or 10-years' time it will be too late with a 1.5c global overshoot which will place South Africa at 3c. This will have devastating consequences for a country unprepared;
- 3.2 Provide a narrative of systemic alternatives to address the main poly crises of social reproduction: unemployment, hunger, water crises, inequality, worsening climate shocks and rolling blackouts. The CJCM has developed key policy alternatives including a Climate Justice Deal, based on the CJC plurivision, which needs to be brought into the national discourse. The democratic eco-feminist socialist program of the CJCM will centre its electoral platform ;
- 3.3 Provide a left alternative to the exclusionary nationalist, xenophobic, criminalized and narrow liberal mainstream. It will provide a foothold and presence for a serious left in an institutional political context moving further to the right and engendering dangerous polarization;
- 3.4 Demonstrate a more ethical, accountable, transparent, servant leadership and societal-driven approach to political representation in parliamentary politics, consistent with the constitution and societal expectations. CJCM public representatives will work bottom-up to relay the voices, concerns and climate justice alternatives of the people and workers. This will be different from the transactional politics of mainstream political parties – citizens vote and then return to passivity;
- 3.5 Even if electoral representation for the CJCM does not garner electoral support, it will demonstrate a willingness to engage in a manner consistent with the constitution and will use the moment to inform society about the urgency of the climate/poly crisis and climate justice alternatives. This will be an important success for climate justice activism.

4. Key Aspects of the Electoral Tactic

The electoral tactic of the CJCM is characterized by the following dimensions:

- 4.1 Contest for the election of 10 tried and tested activists, committed to the climate justice cause and the CJCM, into the national parliament of the Republic. This slate will be informed by intergenerational, gender, race and class criteria;
- 4.2 The campaign shall be based on the climate justice platform of the CJCM and will profile key policy ideas to address the worsening poly and climate crisis. It will construct a narrative against the crisis of leadership worsening the poly crisis and for climate justice alternatives for South Africa.

5. Key Tasks for the CJCM to Advance the Electoral Tactic

The following tasks will be taken forward, simultaneously, to make this happen:

- 5.1 The incoming National Coordinating Committee to finalise the CJCM candidate list;
- 5.2 Fundraising initiatives to generate finance from members, donors, supporters and the public for the CJCM electoral campaign. This is to be done in a transparent and accountable way consistent with South African law.
- 5.3 Meet the IEC technical requirements for contesting the national elections – including registration as a political party, paying a R5000 registration fee, paying a fee of R300 000 for national elections, providing the constitution of the CJCM (with 1000 signatures of registered voters/Deed of Foundation) endorsing this position;
- 5.4 Develop a phased electoral campaign plan (November till elections) – launch of the electoral platform and candidates, key campaign messages, media interventions, voter mobilization initiatives and monitoring- including organizing all CJCM activists, supporters and volunteers into campaign machinery.

Kindly send your comments to cjcm@mweb.co.za