



World Food Day (October 16) Call

National Day of Action to End Hunger and Stop Climate Harm

Invitation to the South African Government to prepare and stand with South African society as the climate crisis worsens and a devastating El Niño looms— Place South Africa on a climate emergency footing now and accelerate the deep just transition with us through a societal driven Climate Emergency Social Contract!

TO: Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly Thoko Didiza, Honourable Willem Aucamp, Minister of Agriculture, Honourable David Maynier, Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, Honourable Nomakhosazana Meth, Minister of Employment and Labour; Honourable Enoch Godongwana, Minister of Finance,

FROM: Climate Justice Charter Movement (CJCM) & South African Food Sovereignty Campaign (SAFSC) and Allies.

1. Our concerns:

- The South African government has not appreciated the extent to which climate extremes are leading to loss of life (at least more than 700 dead with Durban rain bomb, Umthatha flooding and more), ballooning economic costs due to infrastructure loss and displacement of many as climate refugees. These climate impacts and accompanying injustices are planetary in scope. The global costs of climate damage are estimated to be \$450 billion per year.¹ According to the UN, climate shocks have displaced at least 250 million people over the past decade. Europe just lost about 35 000 people due to heat-related excess deaths². Over a thousand people died in Nepal after a glacial collapse triggered flash floods. Climate scientists are warning that this will happen again. With the carbon intensity of the South African economy, the government is contributing to a business-as-usual trajectory that many climate scientists and researchers consider an existential risk to all life. On this path, an estimated 4 billion people could perish by 2050

¹ *Financial Times*. 2026. 'Disasters to Cost World \$450bn a Year from Climate Ch Environment Programme and Development'. September 1. https://www.ft.com/content/b359c765-29e2-4f5f-b72c-ed36668621e1?accessToken=zWAAAaB7_PrykdOzWedlKeJPX9O3LM02ZoYh4Q.MEUCIHIVgBrHrB4jdKbGVKZWZESHwYcubVC_fX-ycVrmESAiEA6AXoAMzKVVqr_stukstBq_Aqze99RRX6FcBoxcG7tCs&sharetype=gif&token=cf4934bf-43bc-41ac-853c-69a67ced11c6&syn-25a6b1a6=1.

² Henley, Jon, and Jon Henley Europe correspondent. 2026. 'At Least 35,000 Excess Deaths Recorded in Europe's Back-to-Back Heatwaves'. *Environment. The Guardian*, August 25. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2026/aug/25/at-least-35000-excess-deaths-europe-back-to-back-heatwaves>.

when the world exceeds 2°C overshoot.³ **Place South Africa on a climate emergency footing now!**

- The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) recently released a scientific study confirming the world is poised to overshoot 1.5°C in the next few years, probably before the end of this decade.⁴ South Africa, with its commitment to fossil fuels and carbon emissions, has contributed to this. For a country and region that is heating at twice the global average, this will be catastrophic for our food systems and failing water systems. The only way to deal with this is to **place South Africa on a climate emergency footing now!**
- The South African government did not learn lessons from one of the most extreme climate-related and El Niño-induced droughts experienced between 2014 -2018. All scientific evidence from leading meteorological organisations highlights the emergence of a powerful El Niño, which is normally associated with droughts and extreme heat in Southern Africa. The best science has warned us and is raising the alarm! This El Niño will peak in October and November and will have knock-on effects into 2027. The World Food Program has warned that at least 50 million people will be pushed into hunger due to the El Niño, with high living costs, including an essential food basket now costing R5 479,80⁵. This El Niño will bring increasing hunger and heat-related suffering to an unprepared country. **Place South Africa on a climate emergency footing now!**
- 99% of coral reefs will disappear if global temperatures overshoot by 2°C, and rainforests will turn into savannas; millions of plants and animals will die. The climate crisis is mass ecocide, a crime not only against nature but against life itself. South Africa's carbon-criminal coal addiction contributes to this, and the only way to stop it is to **place South Africa on a climate emergency footing now!**

2. Noting the following undemocratic and unaccountable behaviour of the South African government regarding the worsening climate crisis:

- Failure to convene an emergency sitting of Parliament in 2018 when over 60 organisations called for Parliament to debate the 1.5°C UN-IPCC report and prepare the country for worsening climate extremes.⁶ Many lives could have been saved.
- Failure to engage in dialogue with the SAFSC in 2018 when it brought the People's Food Sovereignty Act of 2018 to Parliament, and then again failure to engage with the SAFSC and CJCM when they brought the People's Food Sovereignty

³ This figure first appeared in this report: Institute and Faculty of Actuaries. n.d. 'Planetary Solvency – Finding Our Balance with Nature'. Accessed 10 September 2026. <https://actuaries.org.uk/news-and-media-releases/news-articles/2025/jan/16-jan-25-planetary-solvency-finding-our-balance-with-nature/>.

⁴ 'UNEP: World Set to Cross 1.5°C Global Warming, but Can Still Limit, Adapt to and Return from Higher Temperatures'. 2026. February 9. <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/unep-world-set-cross-15degc-global-warming-can-still-limit-adapt-and>.

⁵ Pietermaritzburg Economic Justice and Dignity. n.d. 'Key Data from August 2026 Household Affordability Index – PMBEJD'. Accessed 10 September 2026. <https://pmbefd.org.za/index.php/2026/08/26/key-data-from-august-2026-household-affordability-index/>.

⁶ SAFSC. n.d. *Open Letter to President Cyril Ramaphosa: Demand for Emergency Parliamentary Sitting on UN 1.5C Report*. Accessed 10 September 2026. <https://www.safsc.org.za/open-letter-to-president-cyril-ramaphosa-demand-for-emergency-parliamentary-sitting-on-un-1-5c-report/>.

Act of 2024 and Food Sovereignty Policy ⁷ to Parliament in 2024, which envisages a more climate-resilient food system paradigm.

- Failure to adopt the Climate Justice Charter, as per section 234 of the South African Constitution, and which was handed over to Parliament in 2020⁸, endorsed by 293 organisations (see: CJC webpage ⁹);
 - Failure to adhere to the recent International Court of Justice Ruling directing governments to stop supporting fossil fuels and to phase them out, but also not participating in the recent Colombia conference on phasing out fossil fuels and to support the UN General Assembly decision¹⁰.
 - Failure to heed the urgencies and warnings of climate science, and thus not recognizing we are living in a post-normal world that requires constant research, learning and transformative policy adaptation, with society, in response to the devastating climate impacts the country has been experiencing
 - Failure to enable people- and worker-led deep just transitions in communities and workplaces
 - Failure to acknowledge that the climate crisis is gendered ignores the reality that women are being made the shock absorbers of the climate crisis
3. The South African government is failing to mainstream the climate emergency and is reflecting a crisis of leadership. Given how high the stakes and risks are, we will not wait, and we do not accept this thoughtless and uncaring behaviour. We invite the government to join us and support our initiatives from below to accelerate the deep just transition now through the following:

3.1 End Hunger Through Food Sovereignty

- 3.1.1 Trigger the Disaster Management Act and ensure civil society is involved in all mechanisms to prepare the country for the forecasted El Niño and activate key measures of the SAFSC and Climate Justice Charter Movement Food Sovereignty Policy for South Africa such as: support food sovereignty hub building in every ward in the country, complement agroecology roll out, build up buffer stocks for a national food reserve, accelerate land reform for small scale farmers and community gardeners, support the establishment of water commons committees in communities, declare the food sector a strategic sector and establish a food sovereignty commons public partnership with

⁷ Feed Ourselves Through Food Sovereignty: A Climate Justice Charter Policy to Address the Hunger Crisis and the Risk of Climate Famine, 34 (2024). <https://cjc.org.za/download/96f5f06a-8b35-4008-aa12-8a7e46489f81>.
People's Food Sovereignty Act, 37 (2024). <https://cjc.org.za/download/804de3c5-58f6-4634-ab05-041206303df5>.

⁸ <https://cjc.org.za/media/releases/dd576306-bb50-493a-beda-9b4a5ddca4e6>

⁹ <https://cjc.org.za/>

¹⁰ 'Explanatory Note on the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution - International Court of Justice (ICJ) Advisory Opinion on the Obligations of States in Respect of Climate Change'. 2026. DIRCO, May 22. <https://dirco.gov.za/explanatory-note-on-the-united-nations-general-assembly-unga-resolution-international-court-of-justice-icj-advisory-opinion-on-the-obligations-of-states-in-respect-of-climate-change/>.
Fossil Fuel Treaty: <https://www.fossilfueltreaty.org/icj>
The Road to Santa Marta: Securing a Global Framework to End the Fossil Fuel Era: <https://www.fossilfueltreaty.org/conference>

small-scale farmers, fisherfolk, informal traders, food sovereignty campaigners and other relevant social forces;

- 3.1.2 End hunger by accelerating the just transition of the industrial, local community and ocean food system to a food sovereignty commons system as envisaged in the People's Food Sovereignty Act 2024 and Policy such that there can be democratic planning, incentives, greater resilience and democratic societal control of food and water systems. The right to food must be affirmed through food sovereignty;
- 3.1.3 Recognise informal traders as an essential part of the food system, as workers, that need guaranteed, secure, affordable and appropriate spaces from which to trade.
- 3.1.4 Recognise that fishing rights are basic human rights. We invite meaningful consultation for fishing quotas, zoning and Marine Protected Areas. Including a realisation of the allocation of 50% of nearshore traditional linefish to small-scale fishers.
- 3.1.5 Recognise and provide support for community stewardship of conservation areas and marine and coastal natural commons, particularly where communities have historically been dispossessed or excluded. Such an approach must embrace local ecological knowledge and community-led biodiversity monitoring and restoration.
- 3.1.6 Recognise and support campaigns to end pesticide use in our food system. Such campaigns envisage a time-bound phase-out, bans on risk-proven pesticides, a transparent and democratic regulatory system, full enforcement of regulatory standards, proper equipment for workers and independent monitoring of pesticide residues in food, soil and water.

3.2 Place the Country on a Climate Emergency Footing Now!

- 3.2.1 Adoption of the Climate Justice Charter in parliament as per section 234 of the South African Constitution as the basis for a Climate Emergency Social Contract.
- 3.2.2 Stopping all offshore oil and gas exploration and extraction, including halting the expansion of coal mines and export of coal to Israel. Support the rapid phase-out of fossil fuels in keeping with the International Court of Justice ruling directing governments to move away from fossil fuels in keeping with climate science, the recent Colombia conference on phasing out fossil fuels and the recent UNEP report on 1.5°C overshoot. Such decisive action contributes to building a Climate Emergency Social Contract.
- 3.2.3 Support the call for universities ¹¹ to work with communities and workplaces to conduct climate risk assessments to ensure transformative adaptation planning

¹¹ CJCM. n.d. 'The Climate Emergency Requires a Post-Normal University.' Change.Org. Accessed 10 September 2026. <https://www.change.org/p/the-climate-emergency-requires-a-post-normal-university>.

and for this work to also inform a national climate risk assessment and societal response strategy as part of building a Climate Emergency Social Contract from below.

- 3.2.4 Further advance a Climate Emergency Social Contract from below through activating the Climate Act in a manner that ensures decarbonization, rapid phase-out of fossil fuels, and adaptation is transformative and is driven from below by workers and communities.
- 3.2.5 Support the consensus in South African civil society for a democratically designed universal basic income grant to cushion against further climate extremes and vulnerability, providing another critical element for a Climate Emergency Social Contract. Such a UBIG would complement existing grants and would be financed through carbon taxes, wealth taxes, and other necessary redistributive mechanisms.

To endorse this call, please complete this form: <https://forms.gle/x7p3BrgzEQrZ1M9B9>

Register your October **16 Solidarity Actions** here: <https://forms.gle/JreonuCRMmLhDKBc7>

Ends

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