



ICDD

Vishwas Satgar

**Worsening Climate Crises
and the Challenge of Red-Green
Alliances for Labour:**

Introducing the Climate Justice Charter
Alternative in South Africa

The International
Center for Development
and Decent Work

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Abstract

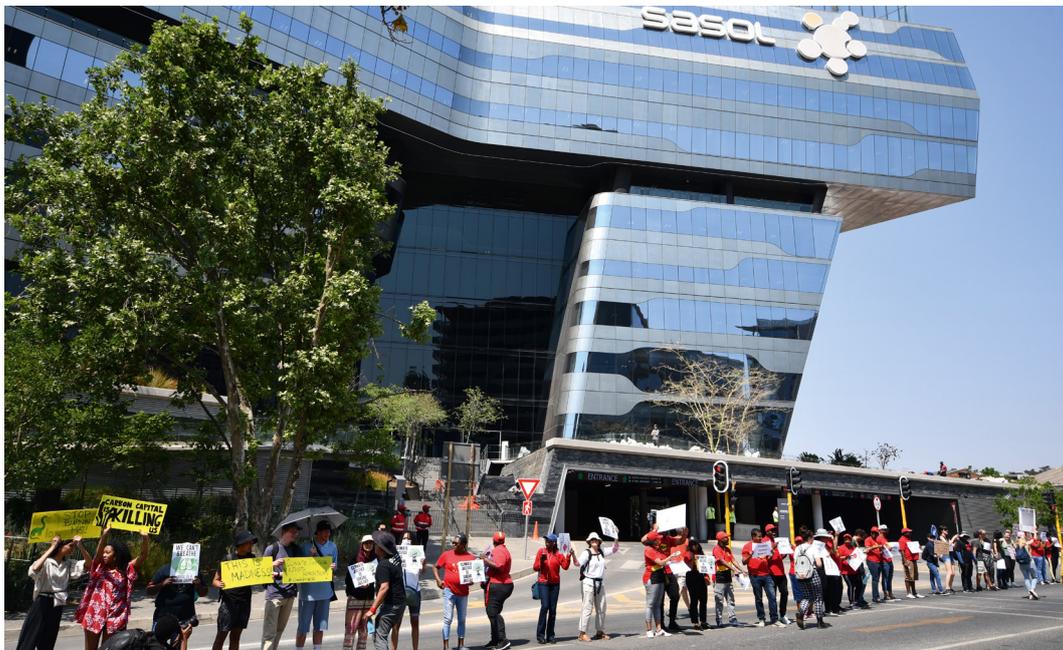
The world is running out of time to prevent catastrophic climate change. In South Africa grassroots campaigning by the South African Food Sovereignty over the past six years, during the worst drought in the history of the country, produced a Climate Justice Charter (CJC). This CJC is unique in the world and is serving as the basis to build convergences between unions committed to a deep just transition and wider climate justice forces. It is laying the basis for red-green alliances to drive the deep just transition from below and constitute a climate justice project for the country. Many challenges face this process but crucial catalytic steps have been taken, with immense potential, to remake climate justice politics. This working paper serves as an introduction to the South African CJC and the systemic alternatives it is advancing. The CJC is included as an annexure to serve as a political resource for innovation and further development as unions attempt to build red-green alliances in other parts of the world to decarbonize and adapt their societies in the interests of the most vulnerable.

1 Introduction

The climate crisis is no longer a question of scientific or academic concern. Since 1992, the United Nations has attempted to involve the governments of the world in a process to solve this problem. The leading climate scientists, through the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), have informed these deliberations with cutting-edge climate science and have drawn attention to the seriousness of planetary heating. Yet, the climate crisis has accelerated and is now a lived reality across the planet through extreme weather shocks such as floods, droughts, wild fires, hurricanes and heatwaves. The global power structure and carbon-addicted ruling classes are failing to address these challenges and dangerous feedback loops related to a receding Arctic ice sheet releasing methane (one of the deadliest greenhouse gases) or increasing carbon saturation in the oceans or the destruction of carbon absorbing rain forests like the Amazon place us all on a path to species extinction.

For countries in the Global South, these climate realities and the grip of imperial control entrench a crisis mode of socio-ecological reproduction. Neoliberal restructuring and adjustment to global capitalism, for a period of over three decades, has produced lumpen ruling classes and externalised extractivist enclaves and regimes, due to which life in Latin America, Africa and Asia has been dispossessed. Race, class and gender within these 'darker nations' have been articulated along these fault lines causing deep human suffering and ecological destruction. The only counter to these challenges is the reconstitution of politics from below by mass subaltern power. Climate justice politics, with its emphasis on confronting and preventing harm to the most vulnerable is central to the building of alliances between organised labour and other victims of the crises of socio-ecological reproduction. This means climate justice provides the gravitational pull for red-green alliances towards solidarity and ecological justice, thereby defining the politics of our time. Unions have consistently argued for a 'just transition' politics to confront the climate crisis challenge (Morena et al. 2020). Broader alliances for climate

justice have called for ‘systems change, not climate change’. This article discusses how these two forces are converging in South Africa around the Climate Justice Charter (CJC) process. It is an introduction to situate alternatives emerging in the South African context to develop a mass-based climate justice movement that brings together trade unions, environmental and social justice movements, youth, faith-based organisations, the media, academics and climate scientists. The CJC is the first of its kind in the world and is emerging from South Africa, a country, which is the twelfth highest emitter of carbon and the leading emitter on the African continent, and a region, which has been declared a ‘climate hot spot’ by the world’s climate scientists (Fripp 2014). This means with further heating, Southern Africa will be facing a catastrophic future. This also necessitates a people-driven just transition from below to advance systemic transformation of a fossil fuel-addicted South Africa. Neither labour on its own nor climate justice forces can lead this struggle or deal with the related challenges. Alliance building for a new transformative politics from below is crucial. The CJC process is one approach to this challenge, based on the convergence of struggles and the building of an ideological coherence for a deep just transition and a post carbon society.



South African Food Sovereignty Campaign, Human Chain around SASOL Headquarters, Johannesburg, South Africa, 2019. This action involved labour unions, climate justice and community organisations.

2 The Failure of the UN Climate Framework

Despite over 25 years of global engagements through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the world is far from resolving the climate crisis. The Paris Agreement (2015) has proven to be a flawed framework. The principle of voluntary national commitments has already been abandoned by Donald Trump's administration, thereby affirming that the United States of America, with the highest historical carbon and per capita emissions in the world, has never been committed to resolving the climate crisis. Despite sub-national policy shifts against Trump's pro-carbon administration this has not stopped the dominance of carbon interests in the US national energy mix and in the US military. In short, the Paris climate agreement is held hostage to national political dynamics and as right-wing shifts occur in national democratic spaces, from Brazil, India, the UK and Australia, carbon-ruling classes are strengthened by the stand of the Trump administration. This offensive by carbon capital is also reflected in the global energy mix, in which coal is still dominant. Global coal use has continued to increase, largely due to electricity demand in China, India and other parts of South and South-East Asia.¹

Moreover, a global political economy, driven by global competition, is prompting industrialised countries to make policy choices based on national interests. China, now the largest carbon emitter in aggregate in the world, despite its renewable energy industries, is still accelerating the development of coal energy projects. Currently, China plans to have 226.2 gigawatts (GW) of coal energy, the highest in the world and which is 40% of the world's total planned power plants. At the same time, the UN-Conference of Parties (COP) process has been bogged down by its attempts to put in place financialised solutions to address the climate crisis. The last round of engagements at the Madrid COP, in December 2019, focused on the trading rules for carbon markets. Treating the global biosphere as the natural capital that can be traded is a wrong-headed idea that has not worked and will not work.² The idea of carbon markets have been around since the Kyoto Protocol and has not brought down global emissions. Climate justice critiques have highlighted how such mechanisms lead to the colonisation of the biosphere in the Global South, reinforces racialised and gendered injustices and simply don't address the systemic roots of the problem.³ Moreover, carbon emissions have been going up since 2017 and are estimated to be at 43.1 billion metric tons by the end of 2019, breaking another record (Harvey et al 2019).

1 www.iea.org/reports/world-energy-outlook-2019/coal

2 See Bond et al (2009)

3 See Satgar (2018)

In this context, it is crucial to have national breakthroughs around deep just transitions that inspire the world and provide examples of social tipping points around the urgency of the climate crisis. In the United States (US), the United Kingdom (UK) and Germany (all major carbon emitters), there is a sea change in public opinion regarding the urgency of addressing the climate crisis. Such social tipping points challenge over 20 years of failed UN-climate negotiations. A combination of factors from climate shocks in everyday life, climate justice activism, the rise of the children's #FridaysForFuture and media mainstreaming of climate news are all coming together. In some countries, the notion of the 'Green New Deal', 'green economies', declaring 'climate emergencies' and setting net zero emissions targets have become crucial in defining climate crisis political discourse. However, while these are important 'green shifts' this has not translated into active political projects reshaping trajectories for rapid and deep decarbonisation pathways. More fundamental transformative political convergences have to still congeal in societies to ensure such deep just transitions of socio-ecological transformation are led from below. In the African and particularly the South African context, this makes the CJC process and its emphasis on constituting red-green alliances crucial.



South African Food Sovereignty Campaign, Drought Speak Out, Constitution Hill, Johannesburg, South Africa, 2016

3 The Southern Africa Climate Hot Spot and Worsening Climate Crisis

The world crossed the one degree Celsius threshold, since before the industrial revolution, in 2015. The operating parameters of climate earth have changed fundamentally since this overshoot. Climate science from the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is very clear that with further heating, extreme weather events would become part of the new normal. In particular, Southern Africa has been deemed a climate 'hot spot'. According to some of South Africa's leading climate scientists a 'hot spot' is not only determined by climatological conditions but also the lack of socio-ecological systems to address climate shocks (Scholes et al. 2020). So, a region heating at twice the global average is now on a trajectory to experience 3 degree Celsius, when the global heating average overshoots 1.5 degree Celsius in the next few years. This means with increased heating, water stresses will increase through more intense multi-year droughts, heatwaves will get more frequent and intense while food systems will be pushed towards collapse. Southern African states are not prepared to deal with this. In the course of 2019, drought has continued in the region with at least 45 million having to face food shortages (World Vision 2019). Cyclones that hit the region have devastated part of Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi, impacting negatively on 2.2 million people.

In South Africa, besides a worsening drought threatening both urban and rural areas, tornadoes have hit parts of the province of Kwazulu-Natal, flooding has also affected parts of the same province in April of 2019 and heat waves have also been registered in different parts of the interior. Both commercial and small-scale farmers have been hit hard in this context, exposing the vulnerabilities of a globalised, fossil fuel and industrial-based food system, controlled by monopolies. The South African state only declared the drought a national disaster in early 2018, almost four years into the drought and after devastating impacts. Moreover, its response has been dismal.

Climate breakdown has registered also on a planetary scale. All regions on planet earth have been impacted by extreme weather shocks in the course of 2019. Droughts, floods, heatwaves and fires have impacted different countries. It is estimated that about seven of these events have cost about \$10 billion each (Harvey, 2019). For poor countries this is catastrophic. In this context, pushing for a deep just transition, which ensures the needs of the most vulnerable and those least responsible is addressed, is absolutely necessary. For South Africa, it means addressing legacies of racialised and gendered inequality together with the injustices of worsening climate crisis. The CJC is about confronting these realities.

4 The Climate Justice Charter Process and Alliance Building with Labour

The CJC process has its roots in six years of campaigning through the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign (SAFSC), and was initiated by the leading role of the Cooperative and Policy Alternative, a vibrant alliance partner and co-founder of the SAFSC, in the midst of one of the worst climate induced droughts (2014 till the present) in the history of the country. The CJC germinated in various confrontations with carbon capital and its allies:

- food corporations pushing up food prices, which was challenged through a hunger tribunal involving the Human Rights Commission, speak-outs on drought and a national bread march involving trade unions;
- protest action outside the Johannesburg Stock Exchange against food profiteering during South Africa's drought;
- development of a Peoples' Food Sovereignty Act for South Africa (2017–2018) which was shared with South Africa's parliament and seven government departments;
- protest actions at SASOL (the second highest carbon emitter in South Africa); headquarters, through a human chain, and at their annual general meeting;
- protesting at media institutions with demands that climate crisis news be mainstreamed including through attempting to occupy the leading newspaper office (Sunday Times), the National Editors Forum and the Press Ombud.

Moreover, in 2019, deep dialogues with various constituencies from drought-affected communities, the media, labour, social justice, environmental justice, youth/children and faith leaders, unpacked ideas, alternatives and concerns regarding the deep just transition. Think pieces from leading activists were also solicited and a draft of the Charter was launched at a conference in November 2019, which was then placed online for further inputs and thereafter, an online assembly on 16 June 2020, led by leading youth and children activists, secured final public input, despite Covid 19. The final version of the CJC was launched on 28 August 2020 at an online assembly led by leading eco-feminists in South Africa. Essentially, the CJC comes from a process of collective struggle and intellectual engagements.

As a campaigning platform, the SAFSC is a loose alliance of organisations from the agrarian sector, climate justice, food justice and solidarity economy movements. Following a successful national dialogue in 2014, the SAFSC was launched in 2015 to address the systemic crises of South Africa's corporate controlled food system.⁴ Inspired by La Via Campesina, which put forward the idea of food sovereignty in 1996, the SAFSC has consistently translated and given substance to a South African approach to food sovereignty. Through its hunger tribunal, drought speak-outs, bread marches, food sovereignty festivals, water sovereignty dialogues and activist schools, it has developed a climate justice perspective on food sovereignty, seeds, water commoning, land use, agro-ecological transformation and solidarity economy.⁵ In Gramscian terms, it has embarked on the long march through civil society to connect hunger, water stress, food price increases, drought and the worsening climate crisis; it has been taking the leap to develop a mass climate justice politics centred on ending hunger, thirst, pollution and climate harm. These lived realities of ecological crisis have provided the basis for a politics of positive solidarity, led by the most oppressed who have been impacted unjustly. The SAFSC has developed a transformative conception of activism which is neither merely about symbolic disruption to raise awareness nor just about tactical disruption of failing industrial food circuits but also includes strategic disruption to advance systemic pathways for a post carbon food sovereignty system in villages, towns and cities, while locating this in an overall climate justice project, as expressed through the CJC.



South African Food Sovereignty Campaign Bread March with labour unions, community organisations, and student leaders, Johannesburg South Africa, 2016

4 See Satgar and Cherry (2019)

5 See www.safsc.org.za

The SAFSC is part of a second cycle (2007–2019) of resistance in post-apartheid South Africa, that has consistently confronted the deleterious impacts of racialised, gendered and ecological disasters of neoliberal capitalism. In its formation as a national campaigning platform it involved just over 60 organisations (community organisations, movements and NGOs). This has grown at different moments of campaigning. In the midst of Covid 19, 110 organisations have endorsed its food sovereignty strategic response to hunger, 125 water stressed communities collaborated with its national platform and the SAFSC has rallied support for 388 food-stressed communities.⁶ As a national platform, all partners share information as part of a food sovereignty commons, those partners wanting to coordinate campaign activities rally support on the platform with the resources they have and, most importantly, local food sovereignty pathways are engendering local alliances. The latter is the epicentre for systemic pathway building of food sovereignty and other transformative system change alternatives. The SAFSC does not have formal and institutionalised leadership but rather it is a space for transformative activist convergence. In all its activities, it has attempted to enable convergences with progressive social forces. Trade unions and unionists have been consistently reached out to and are being involved in its various campaigning activities. At this intersection, it has attempted to forge a ‘red–green’ alliance in which there is a recognition that red has to be green and green has to be red. More sharply, social justice is about climate justice and climate justice is about social justice. Taking this further has been the CJC process led by the Cooperative and Policy Alternative Centre (COPAC), a co-founder and active alliance partner of the SAFSC, together with wider SAFSC forces. In this process, convening a dedicated dialogue with labour has been crucial. This involved reaching out to all the leading trade union federations in South Africa and creating a convened space of trust and respectful engagement on the modalities of the just transition. The following crucial themes emerged from the dedicated CJC roundtable dialogue:⁷

6 See SAFSC Covid 19 interventions and press releases documenting this work at: www.safsc.org.za/category/media2/

7 The roundtable dialogue with South African trade unions was convened on 19 August 2019, in Johannesburg.

- **Trade unions and the just transition:** While union federations in South Africa have grappled with the idea of just transition and started to translate it in the South African context, this has not been deepened within unions through education; adequate capacity has not been built to take forward union resolutions; there has been a disconnect between struggles against inequality and the climate crisis; despite alternatives being available like climate jobs, this has not been integrated into union campaigns and; most importantly, unionists raised serious concerns about the state response towards the just transition including prioritising the needs of workers, as well as, the states' ongoing commitments to a carbon-based economy. In this regard, the state energy parastatal ESKOM featured in the conversation. It is highly indebted at almost R 500 billion and has various institutional challenges including corruption, poor management, lack of planning capacity and poor project management capacity, leading to major cost over runs for its energy projects (including one of the largest coal-fired power stations in the world). A just transition plan for transitioning ESKOM and SASOL, two of the largest carbon emitters, was understood as crucial but which had to place the interests of workers and communities at the front and centre. Ultimately, the dynamics of a neo-corporatist dialogue with the state was called into question as the basis to pursue a deep just transition.
- **The CJC and Alliance Building:** The Charter was understood as crucial to raise awareness, marry daily struggles with climate justice, provide an opportunity to unite unions, assist shifting of mining unions locked into coal, facilitate a common rallying point and also support struggles towards the fulfilment of peoples' basic needs. In short, the CJC was understood as crucial for strategic convergence, movement building in mass struggle and provision of labour with a common agenda to advance the deep just transition. A mass politics involving labour and progressive social forces enabled a shift in approach to deep just transition.
- **Advancing systemic transformation through the CJC:** Unions wanted a deep just transition and not a shallow one. This included addressing workers' control of pension funds as a lever to impact on the direction of the deep just transition, socially owned energy systems, including the municipalised renewable ones, advancing worker cooperatives, climate jobs, rethinking industrial policy, democratising the media and giving consideration to a basic income grant.

5 Challenges

The CJC was adopted at an online assembly during Covid 19, on 28 August 2020. Its introduction calls for climate justice now, while the rest of the text sets out goals, principles for deep just transitions, systemic alternatives, elaborates a conception of a people-led climate justice state and finally, calls for a Climate Justice Deal not only in South Africa but also between Africa and the Global North. On 16 October, the Charter will be taken to South Africa's parliament, together with a climate science document prepared by some of South Africa's leading climate scientists. The rallying slogan for this moment of engagement is: 'End hunger, thirst, pollution and climate harm'. Moreover, all political parties in the parliament will be invited to a debate on their commitments to seriously address the climate crisis. Climate justice forces gathering in this engagement will also demand the CJC be adopted in accordance with provisions in South Africa's constitution.

However, four crucial challenges stand out in this process:

- First, uniting forces will not entail just a convergence on the Charter but also active relationship building in the context of ongoing struggles against carbon capital. In this regard, NGOs seeking environmental justice will have to go beyond narrow issue centred and lobbying politics. Moreover, labour unions would have to overcome the degeneration tendencies that have come to the fore amongst unions. A more pro-active, strategic and transformative trade unionism has to confront tendencies towards defensiveness, business unionism and neo-corporatist cooption into 'green wash' discourses. Building a consensus on rolling mass action to #gridlockcarbon through various forms of disruption has been central to the CJC process. This programme will test all forces, including labour.
- Second, the process of movement building is central to the CJC process and is about moving beyond climate justice politics which has been centered on activist groups and NGOs. Crowd politics as an expression of mediatised populism has also become a crucial challenge. A successful climate justice movement has to be well grounded in the basics of transformative grassroots organizing. There are no short cuts. This would entail building a networked, education-centred and organized grassroots movement that builds mass capacities, is constitutive of power from below and leads the just transition. Systemic alternative building, such as deep just transition plans, food sovereignty pathways, socially owned renewable energy, commoning and community-led natural climate solutions, would not have to wait for state power to be harnessed.

- Third, the media has to be consistently engaged to mainstream climate news, report on climate justice alternatives and ensure that public discourse is empowered. Currently, the majority of South Africans do not understand the science of climate change and its implications for their lives. The media's role in empowering public discourse cannot be underestimated. In the European context, for example, this has made a crucial difference. A climate-literate society will also assist in building a mass-based climate justice movement.
- Fourth, the response of the state to the CJC is going to be crucial. In October 2018, when the UN-IPCC issued what has commonly been called its 1.5°C report, the SAFSC issued an open call to the South African President, endorsed by over 60 organizations and trade unions, for an emergency sitting of parliament to be convened to deliberate on this report and its implications for South Africa's climate policies and just transition (SAFSC 2018). The President ignored this call. The CJC is also a response to the failed climate crisis leadership of the ANC-led state in South Africa. Section 234 of the South African constitution provides for charters to be adopted to compliment the South African constitution. Demanding the CJC be adopted by South Africa's parliament will present both a legal and political challenge to South Africa's carbon-addicted ruling classes. It will define a crucial turning point for the deep just transition. If the Charter is rejected, it will expose the lie at the heart of South Africa's political system on the urgency to address climate crisis. On the other hand, if the Charter is adopted, it will not hold back the climate justice struggle but re-position the state to be society-led.

Your feedback on the people's CJC is welcome. I hope it serves as a resource in your own struggles and is taken further, developed and innovated upon in your own contexts. We are running out of time and large-scale systemic transformation is absolutely essential to give human and non-human life a chance of survival. The red-green alliance is imperative for this to succeed.

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CLIMATE JUSTICE CHARTER

1. For Climate Justice Now

As Africans, we live together on a vast and beautiful continent where the human story began. All of us are linked to the first human who walked upright, dreamed, thought and co-existed with plants, animals, rivers, oceans and forests. Today this common humanity and its future is in serious danger.

South Africa cannot ignore this challenge. The continued use of oil, gas and coal to power our economy and society is making our world unliveable for all life.

The Earth is being damaged by this system that puts profits before life. Every year, temperatures are rising with disastrous consequences. With a 1-degree Celsius increase in planetary temperature since before the start of the industrial revolution, everything is changing fast: increasing extreme weather shocks (droughts, floods, wildfires, tornadoes, heat waves), ecosystem collapse, sea level rise, together with major stresses on the Earth's systems. We are sad because a future with a stable climate is being lost. Our recent drought has taught us that lesson. We are angry because our rulers are not listening. The inequality and suffering of our people, including during the Covid-19 pandemic, has worsened. Yet, we are hopeful because climate science is on our side. Like the science of Covid-19, climate science is calling for caring action now. This Charter is a call to all who care about human and non-human life to act together in advancing a pluri-vision – of people's dreams, alternatives and desires for a deep just transition.

Mines, refineries, waste incinerators, airlines, cement industries, and cars have brought pollution, illness, poisons and suffering to our communities. Chemical-based and export agriculture contributes to various diseases. Yet we have rallied. With lessons learned about these harms and the importance of the life enabling commons (land, water, biodiversity, energy, earth system and cyber sphere), we continue to advance our commitment to justice, anchored in people's power. Hence, we consciously choose to end the war with nature.

More climate shocks and ecological crises will result in more suffering (and more pandemics), for the majority, particularly workers, the poor, people with disabilities, landless and the vulnerable. These are not simply natural disasters but failures of leadership. As we defend the web of life and live with climate breakdown, we seek to end race, class, gender and ecological injustice. We cannot let grassroots women and children be the shock absorbers of this crisis, like before and during Covid-19. Invisible care work in households and sacrifices by women in poor communities contributes to blunting the edge of suffering while male domination and violence continues. A carbon free society and effective life supporting systems mean emancipation for all, including for future generations, from this eco-cidal system. This is the struggle of our time and our historical task as South Africans, as humans and as part of the wider living earth community.

2. Goals of the Charter

This Charter aims to:

—— 2.1 ——

Advance an awareness that we thrive and co-exist on one planet. Earth is a common home for all species. Thus, we seek to affirm our role and responsibilities as guardians of our planet's ecosystems and the delicate web of life it supports.

—— 2.2 ——

Inspire a break with the thinking that caused the crisis and that reinforces the obsession with growth, progress and domination. The power of humanity is constrained by the limits, cycles, tipping points and boundaries of all ecosystems. More of the same thinking that harms Earth, is forcing it to react with a power we cannot match.

—— 2.3 ——

Reconnect with an Earth-centred conception of what it means to be human. Nature is endless, and we are just one small part of it. We have to appreciate that every element of an ecosystem has an intrinsic value and must be respected.

—— 2.4 ——

Deepen cooperation. We thrive most as humans when we express solidarity, share, live slowly, are free, affirm our needs and preserve the foundations of our life world. The time to challenge and end the selfish, greedy, competitive, violent and conquering conception of the human has arrived.

—— 2.5 ——

Overcome the crisis of corporate-captured political leadership, which is incapable of thinking beyond the short term, 'business as usual' games and which fails to understand the root causes of the problems. We reject their false solutions that prolong the use of carbon and perpetuate the unjust life destroying system.

—— 2.6 ——

Strengthen our democracy, constitution and transformative constitutionalism, by claiming our rights and building united people's power, as we confront the climate emergency and worsening socio-ecological crises.

3. Principles for Deep Just Transitions

Every community, village, town, city and workplace has to advance the deep just transition to ensure socio-ecological transformation. The following principles shall guide the alternatives, plans and processes towards a deep just transition in our society:

— 3.1 —

Climate justice: Those least responsible must not be harmed or carry the cost of climate impacts. Hence the needs of workers, the poor, the landless, people with disabilities, grassroots women, children and vulnerable communities have to be at the centre of the deep just transition. The benefits of socio-ecological transformation must be shared equally.

— 3.2 —

Social justice: Climate justice is social justice. Confronting all forms of discrimination and oppression as it relates to race, class, gender, sex and age, to secure climate and social justice.

— 3.3 —

Eco-centric living: To live simply, slowly and consciously, in an eco-centric way, which recognises the sanctity of all life forms, our inter-connections and enables an ethics of respect and care.

— 3.4 —

Participatory democracy: All climate and deep just transition policies must be informed by the voices, consent and needs of all people, especially those facing harm.

— 3.5 —

Socialised ownership: In workplaces and communities, people's power must express itself through democratic control and ownership, including through democratic public utilities, cooperatives, commoning, communal ownership and participatory planning, including participatory budgeting, in towns and cities, to ensure collective management of the life enabling commons and systems.

— 3.6 —

International solidarity: Everyone's struggle is a shared struggle to sustain life. In the context of worsening climate shocks, international solidarity is central to the deep just transition as it serves to unite all who are struggling for emancipation and for a post carbon world.

— 3.7 —

Decoloniality: Colonial, neo-colonial and imperial domination are driving us towards extinction. This is based on the worship of extractivism, technology, finance, violence and markets. We will actively delink from this system as we affirm an emancipatory relationship between humans and with non-human nature rooted in our history, culture, knowledge and the wider struggle of the oppressed on planet earth.

— 3.8 —

Intergenerational justice: Care for our planetary commons and ecosystems is crucial for intergenerational justice; to secure a future for our children, youth and those not yet born.

4. Systemic Alternatives for Transformative Change

We face many crises but the climate crisis is the most dangerous. Through addressing the climate crisis, which affects everything, we can also advance solutions to all socio-ecological crises and more generally end the war with nature. Systemic alternatives are necessary to address the causes of climate change, its risks and pressures for systems collapse.

There are people's alternatives to fossil fuels, which can meet our basic needs, enhance our capacity to deal with climate disasters and prepare us to regenerate life-supporting systems. Such systemic alternatives have been imagined and are part of people's struggles to decarbonise societies now as part of the deep just transition. We are committed to advancing such alternatives and democratic systemic reforms from below.

4.1

Democratic and Deep Just Transition Plans: Top down approaches to the deep just transition assume people cannot think for themselves and do not have answers. Together, every community and workplace needs to develop a deep just transition plan. This should be done in a democratic manner to enable an energy transition to decarbonise, whilst meeting essential needs, and advancing systemic alternatives, goals and principles as set out in this Charter.

4.2

Socially Owned and Community-Based Renewable Energy through a Rapid Phase-Out of Fossil Fuels: Our dependence on coal, oil and gas has to be ended as it is accelerating climate breakdown, ultimately leading to an unliveable world. Nuclear energy is dangerous and costly. Instead, we will advance socially owned and community based renewable energy systems (such as solar, wind, hydro and tidal power), supported by participatory budgeting and incentives (such as feed in tariffs) for our workplaces, homes and communities. Such energy technologies must be industrialised in South Africa, using renewable energy. Efficient use of energy and technology will be crucial in this transition. Divestment from fossil fuels, an end to fossil fuel subsidies and an end to extraction (such as fracking, more coal mines and offshore extraction) are imperative. All big energy generators such as Eskom and Sasol have to commit to deep, just transition plans, to secure the interests of workers, affected communities and future generations.

— 4.3 —

Feed Ourselves through Food Sovereignty: The current industrial food system produces hunger, uses water inefficiently, destroys nature, releases carbon and is generally unhealthy. Commercial fishing has destroyed marine ecosystems and undermined the rights of subsistence fishers.

Every community must prioritise small scale, agro-ecological farming to meet local needs. The right to food must give food producers, small scale subsistence fishers, informal traders and consumers the power over their own food commons systems to ensure that culturally appropriate and nutritious food is available to all. Moreover, biodiversity, control of seeds and resources for production need to affirm the importance of indigenous knowledge, local markets, control of the water commons, the eco-social function of land, and good health. Big farms need to be deconcentrated to ensure land justice, but in a manner that is fair, strengthens reconciliation and builds solidarity.

— 4.4 —

Democratise the Water Commons: Water is controlled by a few while many are in desperate need. Industrial farms, mines, coal generated electricity, sugar and timber plantations are some of the major users of water. As a public good, water needs to be conserved by all and it must be protected from pollution. Furthermore, water use has to be democratically planned and effectively regulated while affirming citizens' rights to consume this scarce and precious resource. Water and sanitation infrastructure must be upgraded, managed and monitored to ensure efficient use. Water savings from phasing out coal generation and big industrial scale farming will enhance the water commons. A water conscious society has to be promoted.

— 4.5 —

Enjoy Life through Working Less: Work for everyone as the means to survive and earn income is no longer possible. Unemployment, low paying jobs and long working hours harm society. In a heating world, working hours must be reduced, at least to a four-day week. Decent, zero carbon climate jobs must be guaranteed and supported by collective, values-based and eco-centric approaches to production, consumption, financing and ways of living through the solidarity economy. Such an economy is based on needs and democratises economic power. Together with a universal basic income grant system (UBIG) complementing existing public goods, all workers can be protected in the transition required and society more generally will have a cushion. The UBIG will generally promote human cultural flourishing in a post work society.

— 4.6 —

Eco-mobility and Clean Energy Public Transport Systems: The car industry carries a major responsibility for undermining clean energy public transport systems and for wasteful investment in expensive road infrastructure. These harms can be brought to an end with greater support for walking, bicycles, clean energy motor bikes, horses and donkeys as eco-mobility modes of transport. Cities and towns also need to be car free and provide infrastructure for eco-mobility. Every community needs to be integrated into a mass transit system involving buses, trains and trams running on renewable energy and hybrid technologies based on local eco-manufacturing. The transportation of goods must also shift to rail. Non-electric cars based on fossil fuels must be phased out. Air and sea transport must also be decarbonised or limited.

— 4.7 —

Zero Waste and Simple Living: Mass consumption of commodities and 'celebrity lifestyles' are resource intensive, wasteful and carbon centric. Moreover, landfill sites, incineration of waste and pollution of ecosystems are harmful. Zero waste closes the loop through recycling, reuse, solidarity economy principles and sustainable design in our economy so that there is less (or zero) extraction of raw materials. Certain technologies like single use plastic, have to be banned. Together with simple living, we can live with minimal resource and carbon footprints.

— 4.8 —

Eco-social Housing, Buildings and Transition Towns: Many existing homes are not designed to deal with climate extremes. Moreover, many are still homeless in our society while the rich have golf courses. We need to retrofit existing buildings and homes to handle more heat and weather extremes. Similarly, new homes must be designed as part of eco-communities, villages, towns, municipal rental schemes and cities where construction methods use natural materials, have minimal impact on the environment and provide for eco-social land needs of individuals as part of a community. Such needs are for housing, agroecological food production, sustainable water use, biodiversity, child rearing and culture. Cement is not used in this context given its huge carbon footprint and has to be phased out as a building technology.

— 4.9 —

Beyond Mainstream Economics: The assumptions that economics makes about human behaviour, nature, profits, markets, commodities and growth is destroying everything. Mainstream economics merely justifies the wealth for a few, their destructive use of resources, and resulting pollution and carbon emissions. Our economies have to serve our needs as socio-ecological beings and the needs of ecosystems. We need an economics that takes into account ecological footprints, happiness, well-being, the resilience of ecosystems (through regular audits), the commons, and planetary boundaries. Our economics must be orientated around concepts and tools that assess the state of all living creatures and ends the harm to humans as well as non-human nature. This should serve as the basis of agenda setting, policy, resource allocation and democratic planning.

— 4.10 —

The Rich Must Pay their Ecological Debt: The wealthy in our societies have consumed resources excessively, negatively impacted on ecosystems, and have huge carbon footprints. They owe us all an ecological debt and have to carry the financial burden of the deep just transition. This means a climate debt tax for the rich; high taxes on airline travel, private jets, luxury vehicles and electric cars; a progressive carbon tax targeting polluting corporations not phasing out carbon fast enough; and climate justice tariffs on carbon criminal corporations and governments. Workers need to leverage pension and provident funds, through worker control, to ensure the deep just transition meets their needs and support the creation of a national cooperative bank to assist workplaces, communities and households with the socially owned renewable energy transition and the realisation of deep just transition plans. Public finance also needs to be harnessed from eco-taxes, penalties for pollution, withdrawing subsidies to fossil fuels, and other progressive taxation sources.

—— 4.11 ——

Knowledge is Crucial for Survival: There is a big knowledge gap in society regarding the worsening climate crisis. We have to draw on different knowledge systems to raise public awareness and survive. Indigenous knowledge has powerful resources to assist us and it has to be retrieved, learned and respected. Earth system science, including climate science, is essential to inform the public about the climate crisis and its challenges. Climate science as people's science has to be complimented by lived experience based on observing and learning from ecosystems. Given the complexity of climate change, research and innovation to ensure systemic transformation and to advance the public interest must be supported. Universities and schools must take these knowledge challenges on board.

—— 4.12 ——

Emergency, Holistic and Preventative Healthcare: Inequality in healthcare means climate harms will bring injustice, such as during the Covid19 pandemic. We need workable, accessible and responsive public healthcare systems to meet people's needs and address the health challenges that come with climate heating. Such healthcare systems must be capable of dealing with emergencies, psychological trauma, diseases and new epidemics. Holistic care and a preventative orientation at the grassroots have to be strengthened.

—— 4.13 ——

Rights of Nature and Natural Climate Solutions: Our oceans have been polluted, forests destroyed, land stolen and biodiversity loss increased, all due to the pursuit of profit. If we are to survive, all living creatures need to be respected. All life and all ecosystems on our planet are deeply intertwined and need to exist, persist and regenerate their vital cycles. The rights of nature approach recognises the intrinsic value of all non-human life forms. Moreover, nature has its own solutions to climate change from which we can learn. Such solutions include conservation, restoration and land management activities that increase carbon storage across forests, wetlands, grasslands, coastal ecosystems and agro-ecological farm lands. Community-led biodiversity registers are crucial to protect and advance natural climate solutions.

—— 4.14 ——

Climate Conscious Media: The media is not informing the public adequately about climate change. It needs to take the science of climate change more seriously and inform the public about the climate crisis, policy issues and the systemic alternatives required. Climate news has to be mainstreamed in radio, television and print media.

5. Towards a People Driven Climate Justice State

The South African state has to become a climate justice state that recognises the climate emergency, whilst strengthening our democracy. It has to be guided by the vision, goals, principles and people-led systemic alternatives contained in this Charter and all its climate policies must be aligned to realise this Charter. More specifically a climate justice state will also:

5.1

Enable participatory planning for deep just transitions from below.

5.2

Develop public finance mechanisms such as a public climate insurance fund and green bonds, provide a climate crisis mandate to the Reserve Bank, re-orientate all public and private finance institutions to support the deep just transition and advance the tax proposals in this charter.

5.3

Ensure progressive regulations that will curtail the destructive logic of capital, place limits on corporations, and importantly, place a ban on any future fossil fuel extraction.

5.4

Decarbonise all state practices and achieve a zero-carbon footprint in all its activities;

5.5

Administratively and constitutionally redesign state structures as parts of the country become unliveable.

5.6

Prepare the country for rising sea levels and take appropriate measures as part of participatory planning.

5.7

Strengthen local government to have enhanced powers and democratic planning competencies to deal with the climate crisis.

5.8

Develop institutional capacity through a people-led climate disaster management system, which includes a national fire service, fully functional public hospitals, rapid response emergency teams, increased capacity for the weather services and disaster management infrastructure.

5.9

Promote research and innovation to deepen systemic transformation for deep just transitions from below, actively raise public awareness and ensure all public institutions are climate justice leaders.

5.10

Reduce all wasteful spending, end corruption and professionalise the state bureaucracy by appointing the best people in the country to serve in government. A truly non-racial and women led bureaucracy must be created.

5.11

Advance a climate justice orientation in its international relations, including renewing radical Pan-Africanism, through promoting: a climate justice position amongst African governments to demand climate debt reparations from the global north as part of a Climate Justice Deal; climate justice sanctions against carbon criminal states; solidarity towards refugees and migrants; research; systemic alternatives; renewable energy pooling; climate disaster response capabilities; and call for an 'End To Fossil Fuel Treaty' in the UN system that benefits African governments.

6. People's Power for Commoning and a Climate Justice Deal for South Africa

A climate justice future can only be achieved through the power of a united people. We have learned this through the struggle against colonialism, apartheid and neoliberalism.

Power lies in different parts of society, in the systems we build, the organisations and movements that we are part of, and in the street politics we do. People's power has to be at the forefront of defending the living commons which sustains us and future generations.

Human beings are an adaptable and flexible species. We understand the causes of the climate crisis and we have democratic, transformative and just solutions to prevent our extinction. This Climate Justice Charter is a signpost; a trumpet call, to move all of us in the direction of system change now and for a Climate Justice Deal that ends the suffering of the most vulnerable and oppressed. Such a people led initiative will ensure that we address the multiple crises confronting the country while affirming the hope of the many expressed in this Charter. Let's take a stand for a caring society and unite, in South Africa and through international solidarity, before it is too late.

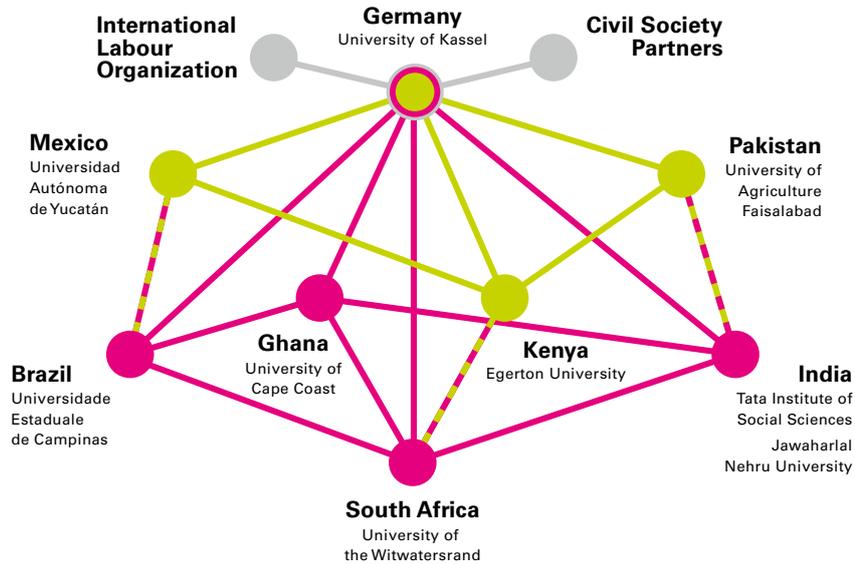
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AND DEEP JUST TRANSITION
TO SUSTAIN LIFE!**

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