

PRESS RELEASE

Civil society calls on president to act on the energy crisis in absence of ministerial response

A call from civil society to the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy (DMRE) Minister, Gwede Mantashe, to urgently take a simple step required in order to allow additional renewable electricity capacity to be built and alleviate the energy crisis has been met with silence.

12 days after sending an [urgent call](#) to the minister, the 16 organisations who issued the call are yet to receive an acknowledgement of receipt. The organisations below have now approached President Cyril Ramaphosa requesting him to once again “twist the minister’s arm” to remove this obstacle to adding new renewable capacity to the grid.

People in South Africa have been waiting on an announcement from the president about interventions to tackle the country’s energy crisis, but this has not been forthcoming. Peter Becker, a spokesperson for Koeberg Alert, one of the letter’s signatories, has said the lack of response from the minister’s office, and vague announcements of a second state-owned enterprise to generate electricity show there is not yet a concrete plan.

“It is becoming clear that the minister does not understand what is needed to solve the energy crisis. We do not need an energy emergency to be declared and we definitely do not need another state-owned electricity company, or Eskom 2.0. We need everyone working around the clock, including the DMRE and the National Energy Regulator of South Africa (NERSA), to use existing regulations and processes to fast track approval of new generation applications and get large scale wind, solar and storage capacity online in record time,” he said.

Section 34(a) of the Electricity Regulation Act (ERA) makes it clear that the minister has powers to issue determinations “to ensure the continued uninterrupted supply of electricity”. “The failure of the minister to timeously fulfil this responsibility has caused the current load-shedding crisis,” says Becker.

The organisations have called on the President to instruct the Minister to act within 10 days by 29 July 2022. If no action is taken by that date, they will reassess their options to drive action in order to end the energy crisis.

Liz McDaid, strategic lead at The Green Connection said: “It is disappointing that in the month that we celebrate our first democratically elected president, democratic President Mandela, we find that the current government appears so dismissive of civil society contributions that the Minister of Energy believes he can just ignore well meant suggestions from NGOs to address the current energy crisis.”

Nicole Loser, Attorney and Programme Head: Pollution & Climate Change at the Centre for Environmental Rights added: “In order for the Minister and the President to meet their constitutional mandates to uphold the rights to health and wellbeing of the people of South Africa and to avoid the worst impacts of climate change, the urgent deployment of clean energy must be prioritised. The Minister has the legal power, not only to unlock important and much-needed clean electricity capacity, but also to ensure the emergence of community generated renewable electricity”.

Thandolwethu Lukuko, Climate Action Network South Africa Coordinator reiterates: “It is disappointing – yet expected – that the DMRE minister has opted not to respond to calls by civil

society on our request for a section 34 determination on the 13GW of renewable energy approved by Cabinet in the IRP2019. It shows blatant disregard for the voice of a critical stakeholder group and continues to demonstrate this in the proposal for a new, state-owned, power utility. Equally concerning is the acceptance by the president of the republic to this call, as a businessman he must understand the time it'll take to get such an entity to deliver much-needed power to citizens. It cannot and will not happen during his term in office. The decision flies in the face of reducing red tape and in the unbundling of ESKOM, processes we assumed he understood. Perhaps we were dead wrong in our assumptions. If the President understands the urgent need for consistent, reliable power, he can provide a response to our letter as an indicative step in the right direction.”

-end-

For media queries, please contact:

Sbu Mkwanazi
0726197006