

Address

Minister Barbara Creecy

Presidential Climate Commission's Multistakeholder Conference on a Just Transition 5 May 2022

Deputy Chair of the Presidential Climate Commission, Mr Valli Moosa
Honourable Minister Fikile Mbalula
Hon Faith Muthambi Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee of Forestry, Fisheries and
Environment and other members of parliament here today
Fellow Commissioners, and
Fellow South Africans,

It is my pleasure to join you at this important occasion, for South Africa's first multi-stakeholder conference on a just transition.

The just transition is the core of all our work on addressing climate change in South Africa – putting people first as we reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

The Presidential Climate Commission has a clear role to play in assisting the government with the central problem it faces. The 2018 Jobs Summit was clear that the transition is happening, and if not well managed, there is a risk of a disorderly transition which will be catastrophic for workers and society more broadly.

In governments thinking on issues of climate justice we have been guided by two main objectives:

- The first is how we ensure that the consequences of a transition to a lower carbon economy and a climate resilient society are not carried by workers and communities in vulnerable industries and value chains. And so we have adopted a slogan which says no one must be left behind
- The second is that the overall manner in which we approach the transition must help us with our development challenges as a society and in particular must assist us in dealing with the wicked problems of poverty, inequality and unemployment.

We have also agreed as government that because the transition will ultimately affect more than seven sectors of our economy, it will in fact be a whole of society transition. While some aspects of the transition, for example that in the energy sector, will have government as a major role player, the wide ranging nature of the transition means many transitions will take place with differing actors including the private sector, organised labour and civil society.

This means that if we are to achieve the two objectives I have outlined earlier, it is crucially important that at the outset we reach a common understanding on both the concept and process that will ensure we achieve our broader development objectives, while leaving no one behind.

It is in this context that I would want to suggest the following contributions to our debate today:

First, the transition must be procedurally just.

This is about empowering (not only supporting) workers, communities, and small businesses, with *them* defining *their* own development and livelihoods in the transition—and incorporating their definitions in the ways government, corporates, and citizens respond.

This conference, and work and consultations prior, gives life to this principle of procedural justice – an inclusive process to define a shared vision for a greener and more sustainable economy.

We must commit to integrating procedural justice into future work on the climate transition, including the work of the PCC.

Second, the transition must support an equitable sharing of risks and opportunities.

As South Africa reduces emissions, there are significant opportunities to be seized in a cleaner economy. For example, clean energy transition will also open new markets for the supply of clean energy minerals, like platinum, vanadium, cobalt, copper, manganese, and lithium.

Climate-smart agriculture could create better yields and more resilient crops, improving the lives and livelihoods of farmers.

But workers and communities whose livelihoods are tied to fossil-fuel industries may be negatively impacted in the short-term.

We must ensure that these risks and opportunities are distributed fairly, and that those least responsible for the climate problem are supported to adapt with reskilling and up-skilling, and that we give significant attention and resources to how we start new industries and new value chains in vulnerable economic sectors.

Finally, the transition must be restorative.

This is about moving forward constructively, together, in a manner that appropriately rectifies the harms of the past. Access to land, food, basic services, proper health care and good education are the building blocks of a climate resilient society. We cannot achieve these without fundamental changes that ensure broader economic inclusion and economic ownership.

The just transition framework, which we are discussing today, provides a template for the transition, and the principles to guide us, including from the voices we don't always hear.

There is no perfect blueprint for what this transition must look like. Indeed, many countries around the world are grappling with the same issues we are.

But, from the perspective of government, we do know that the just transition can help to identify the opportunities presented by a net-zero economy—where we have an opportunity to grow the economy through new jobs, better jobs—in essence, going beyond the management of those most impacted.

A just transition is not something that is happening to us, but rather a change that offers an opportunity to protect our constituents, give them a reasonable opportunity to work, while also pursuing the opportunity of a new economy.

So what happens once the framework has been finalised by yourselves?

As government we look forward to your the finalising of the just transition framework so that it can be taken to Cabinet for consideration. It will also be important once we have a coun?>::try “JUST TRANSITION FRAMEWORK” that we then begin to understand its implications for government policy and planning processes.