



Climate change: No worker must be left behind!

The Universe is sweltering under the impact of global warming. This is the most devastating threat facing us today. It is no longer a phantom of academics and scientists in laboratories - global warming is real. All humanity and other living organisms have thus far, in one way or the other, experienced the effects. Seasons no longer follow a predictable cyclical rhythm one after another. We live in a world where droughts co-exist alongside torrents of floods. Temperatures have been increasing, presenting serious health, environmental, and economic risks to human life. Only the worst denialists still believe that global warming does not exist. Global warming is real and threatens to push us to extinction. We ignore it at our own peril.

However, humanity across the globe has come to the realisation of a collective responsibility towards the preservation of the environment. There are global campaigns to raise awareness and encourage efforts to reduce the impact of global warming. The international community has been at the forefront of driving campaigns to ensure there is commitment and effort to reduce greenhouse emissions to reduce the impact of global warming.

As a member of the international community, South Africa has pledged its support and commitment to make contributions. There are national efforts and demonstrable commitments, including our participation in the Congress of Parties (COP), a platform that is driving international efforts to curb greenhouse emissions, where South Africa has shown good will and appreciation of the collective responsibility towards the preservation of the universe.

Fedusa, as part of the responsible civil society movement, could not be ignorant of the imminent threat. It has the agency to mobilise its constituencies to preserve the environment and reduce the effects of global warming. In October 2021, Fedusa published a Climate Policy document. A brochure that summarises the policy document was published in December 2022. Various Fedusa affiliates and associates have been invited to make their contribution and it is against this background that the PSA is making these inputs.

The policy document is comprehensive and demonstrates our commitment to saving the planet whilst adequately capturing the interests of workers. The PSA wishes to add the Union's voice in its support and endorsement of the Fedusa Climate Policy document.

The PSA believes that the public service is the cog without which the wheel of the transition to greener economy cannot move. South Africa's efforts and commitments to global compacts to saving the environment are dependent on a public service that is highly alert, skilled, and knowledgeable to drive the agenda for change.

The reality is that countries that rely heavily on coal as a primary source of fuel and electricity automatically top the list of culprits for greenhouse-gas emitters. South Africa does not have a diverse energy mix and the overreliance on coal as a main source of energy has secured the country a seat amongst the top offenders. Most of the country's electrical power stations are coal powered. It is not surprising, therefore, that the energy sector represents approximately 80% of South Africa's gross emissions. South Africa also burns too much fuel on the roads, with the transport sector accounting for approximately 12% of the country's greenhouse-gas emissions.

The PSA would like to see the Public Service Coordinating Bargaining Council actively engaged in these matters, prioritising them and ensuring that they are part of the mainstream agenda of the public service.

The PSA believes that public servants have a huge role to play in combatting climate change at work and at home. By being conscious of the use of energy, using public transport, not littering, and embracing a culture of recycling, we can push back the rate of global warming. These small steps can slow down the damage. By pursuing these opportunities, the country can ensure that a just transition yields new, innovative opportunities that will create jobs, stimulate the economy, and save the planet.

It is obvious that the world is moving towards a greener economy and new sources of energy are the future if we are to save the planet. The move towards a green economy means that we must be prepared to decommission and repurpose the country's power stations and invest heavily in low-carbon generation capacity. This sounds alarm for possible job losses for workers in that industry. However, the PSA supports the just transition to the green economy. At the same time, the PSA underscores that no transition can be regarded as just unless it is inclusive. Labour must be fully involved and provided the space to participate meaningfully and gainfully in the transition. Efforts must be made to ensure the re-skilling and up-skilling of workers so that they are able to participate meaningfully in the green economy. No worker must be left behind!