



**PRESIDENTIAL
CLIMATE COMMISSION**
TOWARDS A JUST TRANSITION

THE ORIGINS OF **OUR FUTURE**

2020 - 2025

BUILDING A CONSENSUS FOR CLIMATE ACTION

A Five-Year Review and Reflection
of the Inaugural Presidential
Climate Commission









ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

A FIVE-YEAR REVIEW OF THE INAUGURAL PRESIDENTIAL CLIMATE COMMISSION, 2020-2025

The current five-year term of the Presidential Climate Commission (PCC) concludes in December 2025, and a new Commission, reconstituted in terms of the Climate Change Act (Act 22 of 2024), will commence from 1 January 2026.

As the Commission concludes its inaugural term, we have undertaken a comprehensive 5-Year Review to reflect on its mandate, impact, and evolution since its establishment in 2020.

This review reflects, in summary, the Commission's contributions to climate policy, just transition planning, and consensus-building during its first term. This commemorative publication aims to capture key milestones, lessons, and personal insights from our inaugural term.

It highlights the work done over the last half a decade, complementing volumes of our reports and public documents.

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PROLOGUE

HIS EXCELLENCY, CYRIL MATAMELA RAMAPHOSA

President: Republic of South Africa and

Chairperson of the Presidential Climate Commission

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PRESIDENTIAL CLIMATE COMMISSION

“The Presidential Commission on Climate Change will ensure that as we move towards a low carbon growth trajectory that we leave no one behind.

We will finalise the Climate Change Bill, which provides a regulatory framework for the effective management of inevitable climate change impacts by enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience, and reducing vulnerability to climate change – and identifying new industrial opportunities in the green economy”

State of the Nation Address, 13 February 2020

JUST TRANSITION FRAMEWORK

“The country’s emission targets are fundamental not only to our transition to a low carbon economy, but they are also critical in influencing the pace and the nature of our country’s transformation. A more ambitious approach to reducing our emissions must be accompanied by greater attention to the work we must do to protect communities, jobs and the broader economy from the effects of climate change.”

*Upon Receiving PCC Recommendation on the Just Transition Framework,
Sefako Makgatho Presidential Guest House, 2 July 2021*

G20 AND CLIMATE ACTION

“When we began our Presidency, we pledged to mobilise the G20 to strengthen disaster resilience and response.

Climate induced natural disasters spare no country, but their toll is heaviest on those without the means to recover and rebuild.

Climate change touches every nation, but its impacts are unevenly felt. That is why we have together pledged to increase the quality and quantity of climate finance to developing economies, to strengthen multilateral development banks, to support country platforms like the Just Energy Transition Partnership, and to unlock private capital.

We reaffirmed our dedication to energy security, affordability and universal access, and the importance of supporting developing economies in their transition to low carbon emissions.”

Closing Address, G20 Leaders’ Summit, Johannesburg, 23 November 2025



HE. PRESIDENT, CYRIL MATAMELA RAMAPHOSA
Chairperson of the Presidential Climate Commission





FOREWORD

DR CRISPIAN OLVER

Deputy Chairperson of the Presidential Climate Commission

HALF A DECADE OF CONSOLIDATING A SOCIAL COMPACT FOR A JUST TRANSITION

Five years ago, the Presidential Climate Commission was conceived to find common ground on how to confront one of the greatest challenges of our time – global climate change.

Today, as I reflect on the PCC's first term, I am struck by how far we have come.

The Commission has helped South Africa navigate its climate journey not as a technocratic exercise or a political negotiation alone, but as a shared national project.

It has been a forum where business and labour, communities and government, academics and activists have sat across the same table and grappled with tough questions of transition.

Sometimes these dialogues were fraught. Often, they revealed the deep trade-offs inherent in change. Yet, again and again, the PCC demonstrated that dialogue, grounded in evidence and guided by justice, can yield shared solutions.

The Commission's journey has not been linear. We have been tested by crises in energy security, shocks in the global economy, and the urgency of climate impacts unfolding around us.

At times, the pace of change felt too slow. At others, the pressure for action outstripped institutional readiness. But through it all, the PCC has kept faith with its founding principles: inclusivity, transparency, scientific integrity, and the conviction that the transition must be just.

The PCC's work is unfinished – indeed, the just transition is only beginning. But the Commission has laid down markers of how South Africa can confront climate change while addressing inequality and securing development. It has shown that it is possible to imagine a future where climate ambition and national development can advance together.

This is the legacy we hand forward.

As the PCC moves into its next phase under the Climate Change Act, I hope this five-year report serves not only as a record of achievement, but also as an invitation for South Africans to continue building, questioning, and refining the pathways to a just, inclusive, and sustainable future.

Crispian Olver

CRISPIAN OLVER

Deputy Chairperson of the Presidential Climate Commission



WHO ARE WE?

A DIVERSE COLLECTIVE FOR A COMMON PURPOSE

The PCC's strength lies in its inclusivity. The inaugural crop of commissioners reflects a broad representations of government, labour, business, civil society, non-governmental organisations, interfaith and religious, as well as and research and science institutions.

Collectively, these commissioners make the PCC a unique and inclusive platform consistent to the country's democratic governance landscape.



Valli Moosa
Deputy Chairperson
Commissioner (2020 – 2024)



Dr Crispian Olver
Commissioner and Executive
Director (2020 – 2024)
Deputy Chairperson (2025)



Dorah Modise
Commissioner and
Executive Director
(2025 – Current)

COMMISSIONERS

Social Partners (2020 – 2025)



Ayakha Melithafa
2020 – 2025



CClr Nasiphi Moya
2025



Gen Bantu Holomisa
2020 – 3 July 2024



Bobby Sven Peek
2020 – 2025



Bongani Mwale (Dr)
2020 – 28 Jan 2025



Dhesigen Naidoo
2020 – November 2022



Boitumelo Moleté
September 2024 – 2025



Brandon Abdinor
2024 – 2025



Dr Brian Mantlana
2020 – 2025



David Jarvis
April – December 2025



Louise Naudé
2020 – 2025



Geordin Hill Lewis, Cllr
March 2023 – March 2025



Happy Khambule
2020 – November 2022



Jacques Hugo
2020 – 2024



Janse Rabie
November 2022 – 2025



Joanne Bate
2020 – January 2025



Joanne Yawitch
2020 – 2025



**Cllr Kenalemang
R Phukuntsi**
March 2023 – 2025



Lebogang Mulaisi
2020 – April 2023



Lungisa Fuzile
Nov 2022 – July 2025



Mac Chavalala
2020 – 2025



Makoma Lekalakala
2020 – February 2025



Malusi Mpumwana
(Bishop)
November 2022 – 2025



Mandy Rambaros
2020 – December 2022



Mpho Makwana
March – October 2023



Mapaseka Lukhele
2020 – 2025



Mbalenhle Precious
Baduza
November 2022 – 2025



Mbulaheni Enos Mbodi
2020 – 2025



Melissa Fourie
2020 – September 2024



Zama Khanyile
November 2022 – 2025



Mteto Nyati (Dr)
September 2024 – 2025



Mzila Mthenjane
September 2024 – 2025



Happy Khambule
2020 – 2024



(Princess) Tsakani
Nkambule
November 2022 – 2025



Setlakalane Molepo
2020 – November 2020



Shafick Adams (Dr)
November 2022 – 2025



Shamini Harrington
2020 – February 2025



Waheed Hoosen
April – December 2025



Nikisi Lesufi
2020 – Sept 2024



Gideon Serfontein
Commissioner,
Chairperson of Finance
and Governance
Committee

COMMISSIONERS

Government Ministers, 6th Democratic Administration (2020– 2024)



Barbara Crecy
*Forestry, Fisheries
and the Environment*



Enoch Godongwana
Minister of Finance



Mmamoloko Kubayi
Human Settlements



Khumbudzo Ntshavheni
*Minister in the
Presidency*



Gwede Mantashe
*Mineral Resources
and Energy*



Dr Blade Nzimande
*Higher Education,
Science and Innovation*



Thoko Didiza
*Agriculture, Land Reform
and Rural Development*



Parks Tau
*Trade, Industry and
Competition*



Senzo Mchunu
Water and Sanitation



**Dr Kgosisentsho
Ramokgopa**
Electricity and Energy



**Dr Nkosazana
Dlamini Zuma**
*Cooperative Governance
and Traditional Affairs*



Fikile Mbalula
*Transport
2020 – 2023*



Sindisiwe Chikunga
*Transport
2023 – 2024*



Pravin Gordhan
Public Enterprises

COMMISSIONERS

Government Ministers 7th Democratic Administration (2024 – 2025)



Barbara Creecy
Minister of Transport



Dr Dion George
*Forestry, Fisheries
and the Environment*



Mr Enoch Godongwana
Minister of Finance



Thembisile Simelane
Human Settlements



Khumbudzo Ntshavheni
*Minister in the
Presidency*



Dr Blade Nzimande
*Science, Technology
and Innovation*



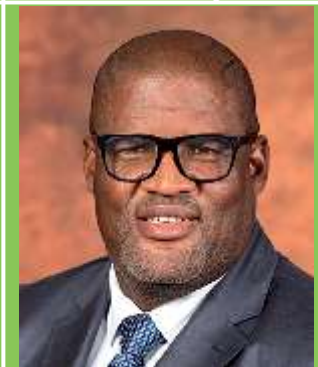
John Steenhuisen
Agriculture



Parks Tau
*Trade, Industry and
Competition*



Pemmy Majodina
Water and Sanitation



Mzwanele Nyhontso
*Land Reform and Rural
Development*



Velenkosi Hlabisa
*Cooperative Governance
and Traditional Affairs*



Mr Buti Manamela
*Higher Education
and Training*



Mr Gwede Mantashe
*Mineral and Petroleum
Resources*



**Dr Kgosisentsho
Ramokgopa**
Electricity and Energy



PAR T ONE

THE PURPOSE OF OUR BEING

A PERIOD OF SELF-DEFINITION
AND IDENTITY

OUR HISTORY

THE PCC'S POLITICAL ECONOMY AND THEORY OF CHANGE

The genesis of the Presidential Climate Commission (PCC) marked a turning point in South Africa's climate governance landscape. For the first time, the country created a permanent, independent, multi-stakeholder body to steer its response to climate change. Its establishment and custodianship by President Cyril Ramaphosa demonstrated commitment to a just transition at the highest level of government.

South Africa's transition to a low-carbon economy unfolds in a complex social, political and economic context. The country is heavily dependent on coal for power and exports revenue.


Unemployment and inequality in South Africa remain among the highest in the world and persistent poverty shapes every dimension of society. The energy crisis – marked by years of load shedding – has magnified tensions between development imperatives and climate ambition.

South Africa's economy is carbon-intensive and structurally unequal. Large state-owned enterprises, powerful business interests, organised labour, and vulnerable communities all have a stake in the transition. Climate finance flows are limited, municipal capacity is limited and uneven, and public trust in institutions is fragile and waning.

The PCC was established to navigate this complexity. Its role was not simply technical, that is, to recommend emissions targets or model pathways, but political and social: to help reconcile competing interests, build trust, and ensure that climate action reinforces rather than undermines development.

At the same time, South Africa bears increasing international responsibility to align with global decarbonisation trajectories, while needing to protect jobs, energy, and economic competitiveness.

The creation of the PCC reflected both domestic imperatives and global momentum: South Africa needed an independent, credible body that could convene diverse voices, provide sound evidence, and help the country navigate the just transition.



The PCC was established to help reconcile competing interests, build trust, and ensure that climate action reinforces rather than undermines development.



VALLI MOOSA

Inaugural Deputy Chairperson (2020 – 2024)

In most countries around the world, climate change is a highly charged political matter. There is no venom spared between the believers and non-believers in their dislike for each other. For political parties, it is a favourite topic for invective. Not so in South Africa. We do not, of course, have absolute consensus on how to deal with the curse of climate change, but I cannot think of many countries which have greater national alignment.

There is no political party in South Africa that rejects the science of climate change. It was not turned into a political football in any of the election campaigns. The reality of the measurable accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere is not a left wing or right-wing issue.

Unlike, many rich countries, South Africa is not turning a blind eye to the findings of the world's leading scientists in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Nor is our government running away from its obligations to international climate agreements. The growth of solar and wind energy is nothing short of remarkable for an economy our size. Government financial incentives for renewable energy have been sustained and well managed. Our commercial banks have also not been found wanting when it comes to funding renewable energy.

In all of this, the Presidential Climate Commission has played no small a role. It is composed of representatives of trade unions, business, religious leaders, civic organisations, and government. Over the past five years it has conducted every one of its meetings in full public view – anybody can sit in. This transparency has helped to build trust and narrowed the field for fake news.

It uses the best of vast South African experience to build consensus. Having been involved with climate change in many parts of the world for over three decades, I can confidently say that the work of the PCC is best in class.





THE FUTURE WE WANT


THE PCC'S THEORY OF CHANGE

The years 2020 to 2022 were more than institutional setup.

The early years were those of testing the idea of a just transition conceptualised and driven by multiple actors, seeking to broaden its definition and understanding amongst South Africans. It was about shaping the first frameworks, and demonstrating that inclusive dialogue could bridge divides in one of the world's most unequal societies.

The PCC's work has been guided by a Theory of Change rooted in three principles of justice – procedural (inclusive processes), distributive (fair allocation of costs and benefits), and restorative (addressing past harms).

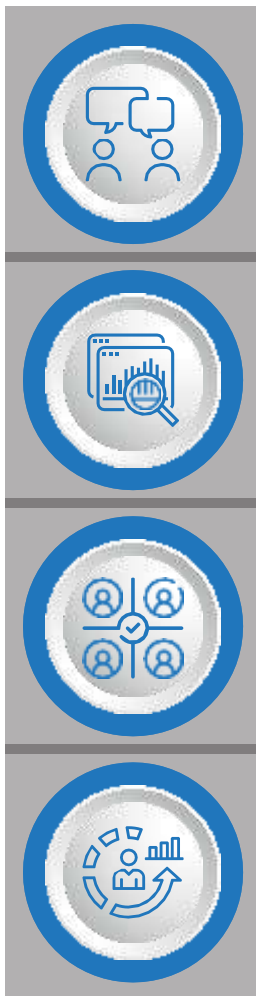
Its Theory of Change assumed that, if South Africa could embed justice principles into its climate transition, it could not only meet international climate commitments but also build a more inclusive, resilient economy.



The PCC's work has been guided by a Theory of Change rooted in three principles of justice – procedural (inclusive processes), distributive (fair allocation of costs and benefits), and restorative (addressing past harms).

OUR STRATEGY FOR DELIVERY

FOUR INTERLINKED PILLARS ANCHORED OUR STRATEGY:



INCLUSIVE DIALOGUE:

Creating space for all voices – government, business, labour, communities, civil society, and youth – to influence transition pathways.

EVIDENCE-BASED ADVICE:

Producing rigorous research and analysis to inform decisions on mitigation, adaptation, finance, and industrial strategy.

CONSENSUS-BUILDING:

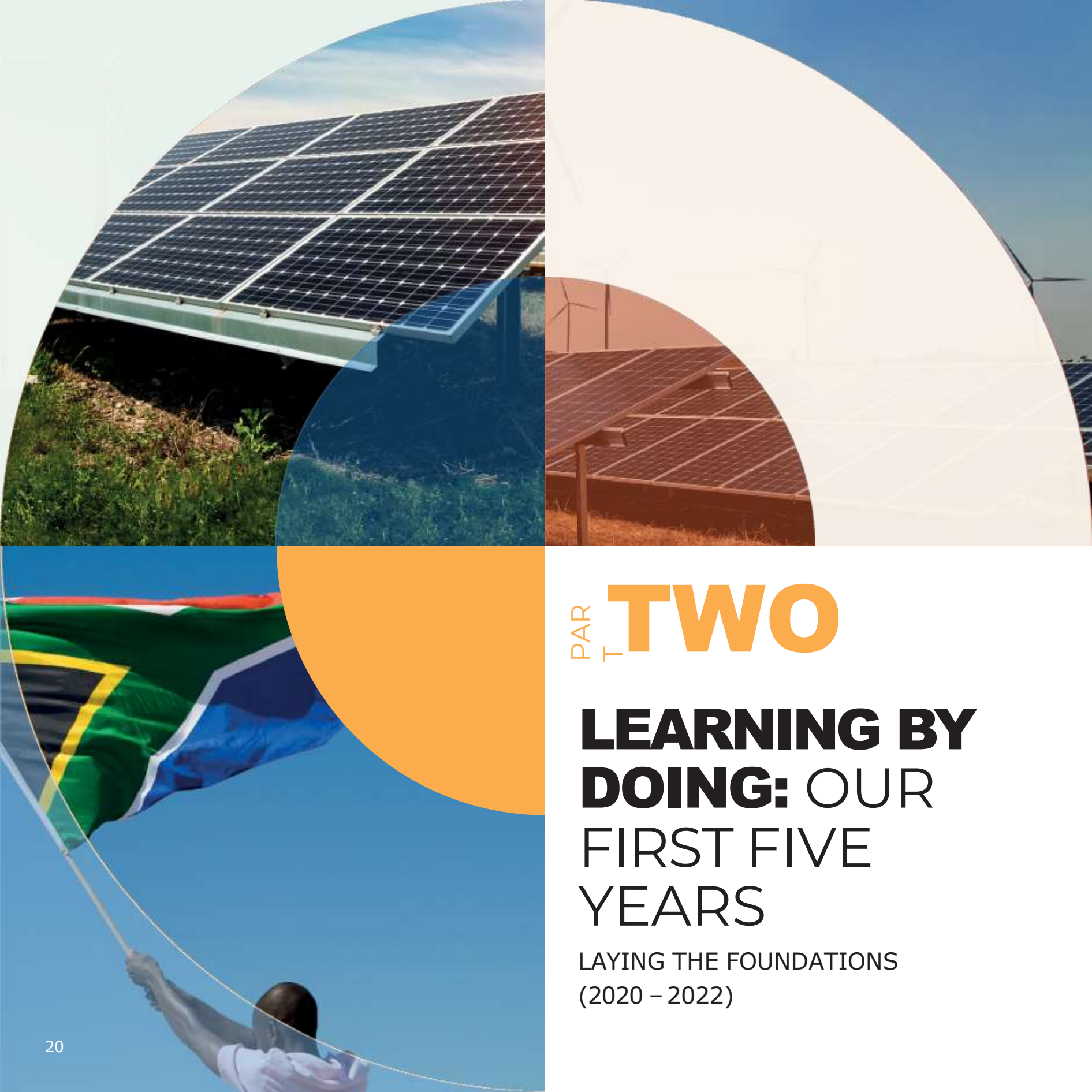
Facilitating agreements that balance ambition with feasibility, and climate action with development needs.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND MONITORING:

Tracking progress, publishing independent assessments, and holding government and stakeholders accountable.

Through this approach, the PCC positioned itself as a “boundary organisation” – translating science into policy, and stakeholder perspectives into actionable recommendations.

However, the road was not always easy, resulting in learnings that informed subsequent work.



PAR T TWO

LEARNING BY DOING: OUR FIRST FIVE YEARS

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS
(2020 – 2022)



SETTING UP THE COMMISSION

The PCC was born in the wake of South Africa's commitments under the Paris Agreement, the 2018 Presidential Jobs Summit, and mounting evidence of climate risks to the economy and society.

The PCC's credibility and impact over its first five years rested as much on how it functioned as on what it achieved.

This multi-stakeholder model was not without precedent. While NEDLAC has long provided a platform for social dialogue, the PCC gave climate change a dedicated forum, backed by the leadership at the highest level of the state.

SETTING OUR AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Over its first term, the PCC aimed, to:

- » Lift Climate Change from an environmental agenda into a mainstream economic agenda across society.
- » Elevate the just transition from a concept to a national framework embedded in law and policy.
- » Influence energy and industrial policy through technical recommendations and social dialogue.
- » Mobilise climate finance platforms and contribute to global partnerships.
- » Strengthen adaptation and resilience planning, particularly in vulnerable communities.
- » Build national consensus on South Africa's climate pathway, amidst political change.

CRAFTING OUR WORK – THE COMMISSION'S WORKING GROUPS

The PCC's working groups – spanning adaptation, mitigation, finance, monitoring and evaluation, and just transition – became the backbone of oversight and technical direction.

Each group convened stakeholders, generated recommendations, and fed into Commission plenaries, where consensus was forged. This ensured that decisions reflected both rigorous analysis and broad stakeholder buy-in.

- » Create a social partnership around a just transition. Engage with stakeholders, including government, business, labour, academia, communities, and civil society.
- » Define a vision for a just transition, and means of achieving that vision, covering the necessary sectoral shifts, technological innovation, the labour market, and climate finance.
- » Conduct independent analysis on climate change impacts on jobs, the economy, and social development.
- » Monitor progress towards mitigation and adaptation goals, as well as the achievement of a just transition.



MBALI BADUZA CEO, We the People SA

I commend the PCC – Commissioners, Secretariat, and our two Deputy Chairs – for truly listening to the voices of diverse stakeholders, especially young people.

This has not been easy. With youth making up almost two-thirds of our population, we are far from a homogenous group. Despite already having a Youth Commissioner, the PCC went further to formally recognise the Youth Leaders Caucus – a collective of organisations and individuals across sectors committed to a transformative agenda.

Meeting with the PCC Secretariat every six weeks is not a symbolic gesture, but a tangible commitment to ensuring young people's views shape decisions. The PCC has recognised that we are not merely future inheritors of this planet, but present-day leaders critical to driving a just transition.

In line with Section 24 of our Constitution, which protects the rights of present and future generations, the PCC has made procedural justice real by embedding genuine youth inclusion in its processes.

This legacy of listening, partnership, and intergenerational justice is one I hope will deepen in the next phase of the just transition.





MZILA I. MTHENJANE

Commissioner and CEO: Minerals Council South Africa

The invitation to join the PCC as a commissioner was an honour, a privilege and an opportunity to contribute to the national imperative and journey for South Africa as we embark on a just energy transition to the future. It is a future that we all want because nobody wants to be left behind in times of change. Defining how this future will look like is both a challenge and an opportunity.

Therefore, the opportunity to articulate the mining industry's perspective and its role in enabling this change was welcome. South Africa's rich mineral endowment, extensive mining expertise, and diverse mineral portfolio position it prominently on the global mining map. These strengths underscore the sector's importance in supplying critical minerals for the benefit of the country and the wider world.

The impact from our mining, minerals and metals will be far reaching for South Africa, including investment and economic stimulus, strengthening of the national fiscus, creating employment and local economic development opportunities, as well as regional development prospects, whilst building a climate resilient society.



FINDING COMMON GROUND

THE JUST TRANSITION AS A NATIONAL VISION

Our foundational achievement was the PCC's role in shaping South Africa's updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) in 2021. The Commission provided advice that supported a significant increase in ambition: tightening the emissions reduction range for 2030 and signalling a clear trajectory toward net-zero by mid-century. These recommendations balanced climate science with feasibility, demonstrating the PCC's value as a source of evidence-based, consensus-driven advice.

A JUST TRANSITION FRAMEWORK FOR SOUTH AFRICA IS ADOPTED

The first two years of the PCC were critical in embedding the concept of a "just transition" into South Africa's policy lexicon. By mid-2022, the Commission had produced South Africa's first Just Transition Framework, outlining how decarbonisation must be pursued alongside equity, justice, job creation, and poverty reduction. The Framework was subsequently adopted by cabinet.





















Initially contested and poorly understood, the idea gained traction amongst key stakeholder groups as the PCC facilitated dialogues with mining communities, organised labour, and industry.

This framework is not an abstract document. It reflected the lived realities of communities dependent on fossil fuels and translated them into guiding principles for national policy.

It was shaped through workshops in Mpumalanga's coal-belt, consultations with unions and youth, and deliberations with business.

In the early stage of its development the PCC conducted consultations in Lephalale, Upington, Durban South, in the coal fields of Mpumalanga in Emalahleni, Ermelo and Secunda, as well as Gqeberha and Xolobeni in the Eastern Cape. These consultations culminated into the first ever Multi-Stakeholder Conference in May 2022.



March 2011:	 Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Procurement Programme (REIPPP)
October 2011:	 National Climate Response Policy
December 2018:	 Department of Transport's Green Transport Strategy (GTS)
October 2019:	 Integrated Resource Plan (IRP)
August 2020:	 National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy
September 2020:	 Low Emission Development Strategy (LEDS)
October 2020:	 Regulations on New Generation Capacity
May 2021:	 Department of Trade, Industry and Competition's (DTIC) Green Paper on NEVs
June 2021:	 South African Automotive Master Plan (SAAM2035)
September 2021:	 Nationally Determined Contribution
October 2021:	 Electricity Regulation Act
November 2021:	 DMRE Draft Just Transition Framework
February 2022:	 Climate Change Bill  Carbon tax rate increase  Electricity Regulation Amendment Bill
March 2022:	 South Africa Green Taxonomy
May 2022:	 PCC Just Transition Framework
August 2022:	 DTIC NEV Roadmap
In progress:	 South African Renewable Energy Masterplan (SAREM)  Green Hydrogen Commercialisation Strategy

KEY: POLICY TYPE



Climate



Just
Transition



Industrial



Electricity



Finance



MAPASEKA LUKHELE

Transnet Corporate

The public consultations leading up to the development of the Just Transition Framework were an eye-opening experience for me, particularly when viewed against the backdrop of lived realities following the Covid-19 pandemic. One of the key milestones was Parliament's adoption of the Just Transition Framework, which proved to be a game-changer.

While policies and legislative instruments on climate change already existed, the Framework introduced a clear point of reference and coherence to Just Transition dialogues and planning across the country. From this process, an important lesson emerged – the value of inclusive, participatory engagement in shaping practical and equitable climate responses. Looking ahead, I hope the Framework continues to serve as a guiding tool, ensuring that the transition is paced, balanced, and responsive to the diverse needs of our society.





MELISSA FOURIE

Former ED of Centre for Environmental Rights and Commissioner

Accepting the invitation to join the first PCC in 2020 as a commissioner representing civil society was not an easy one. Civil society and human rights organisations routinely challenge many of the decisions on energy and climate made by other constituents of the PCC, including through court action – so the engagements with commissioners representing constituencies still operating, approving, financing and defending fossil fuel developments were inevitably challenging.

During my time on the PCC, commissioners had many robust arguments about the conflicts and disagreements inherent to these constituencies of the PCC. Yet to its credit, the PCC created and continues to create a unique platform for commissioners from very different constituencies to hear each other, share information and even to collaborate. This continues to be an invaluable opportunity for problem-solving in the very complex project that is South Africa's just transition.

A few things stand out for me as the PCC's achievements in its first term. One is its foundational commitment to open governance and transparency, which is critical at a time when many governance institutions treat public engagement and input as a tick box exercise.

The second was the completion of the aspirational Just Transition Framework, which set a vision for South Africa's just transitioned and fleshed out the concepts of procedural, restorative and distributive justice.

A third has been the PCC's steady commitment to honour South Africa's international obligations to bear its fair share of greenhouse gas emissions reductions, and to providing the best peer-reviewed technical research and evidence to demonstrate for decision-makers how critical and urgent the transition towards clean, renewable energy is for South Africa's future prosperity and resilience to climate change.

THE EARLY STEPS

THE JUST ENERGY TRANSITION PARTNERSHIP (JETP)


Perhaps the most visible outcome of this formative period was the launch of the US\$8.5 billion Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP) at COP26 in Glasgow (2021).

While the negotiations were led by government, the PCC played a behind-the-scenes role in framing the partnership as a just transition initiative, rather than a purely financial or technical cooperation package. This ensured that the JETP was not only about emissions reductions, but also about people, livelihoods, and development.

The Just Energy Transition Investment Plan (JET IP) for the five-year period 2023 – 2027 sets out the scale of need and the investments required to achieve the decarbonisation commitments in our Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC).

At the request of the President, and following its successful launch at COP27, the PCC initiated consultations on the Just Energy Transition Investment Plan and released a report *A Critical Appraisal of the Just Energy Transition Implementation Plan*.

Municipal investment needs have been cited as a cross-cutting investment target in the JET-IP. This led to the PCC developing a one-of-a-kind Municipal JET Support programme which sets out what is required to provide specific support to municipalities to navigate the energy transition and play a dynamic role in the energy system for the benefit of the communities they serve.



Perhaps the most visible outcome of this formative period was the launch of the US\$8.5 billion Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP) at COP26 in Glasgow (2021).





HITTING THE GROUND

GROUNDING OUR WORK (2022 – 2025)

The years 2022 to 2025 marked the PCC's transition from a fledgling institution into a central actor in South Africa's climate governance. Having established its mandate and credibility, the Commission deepened its programmatic work, broadened its partnerships, and worked to embed the just transition across policy, planning, and implementation primarily within the public sector.

This period grounded the PCC's mandate in action. It showed that the just transition was not an abstract concept, but a lived process – requiring adaptation in farms and cities, innovation in finance, reforms in energy and transport, and new opportunities for workers and communities.

This period was characterised by consolidation, expansion, and growing influence – nationally and internationally.

GOVERNMENT AS A CUSTODIAN OF THE DEVELOPMENTAL STATE

In its engagements, the PCC has over time reaffirmed that there is strong public support and policy commitments for acting on climate change and driving a just transition in South Africa, but a notable disparity between policy ambitions and practical outcomes.


However, concerns remain how government has expressed contradictory public policies and positions, particularly regarding the future of the energy sector, whilst local governments have inadequate technical and financial capacity which constrain their role as the frontline responders to climate change and the just transition.

While capacity is only part of the problem, municipalities have weak governance and in some instances are deliberately dysfunctional in order to enable corruption, disruption of municipal projects, extortion of contractors and mobilisation of community protest due to internal political fighting.

Given the significance of coal production in Mpumalanga, including its contribution to the national economy, the PCC was at the forefront of supporting alignment and coordination of the various initiatives on just transition across the Mpumalanga province, in order to maximise benefits and ensure transformative impacts.

Further, the PCC worked collaboratively with the Mpumalanga Green Cluster Agency, the principal multistakeholder agency and coordination hub of the green and circular economic transformation in the province.

Over the last five years, the leadership of the Mpumalanga Province and municipalities has warmed up remarkably to the PCC and the challenging work put into building this relationship is notable and appreciated. The footprint of the PCC in the province is notably the coordination of response and redevelopment initiative in Komati post the closure of the Eskom's Komati Power Station in Steve Tshwete Municipality.



While capacity is only part of the problem, municipalities have weak governance and in some instances are deliberately dysfunctional in order to enable corruption, disruption of municipal projects, extortion of contractors and mobilisation of community protest due to internal political fighting.



COUNCILLOR KENA LEMANG PHUKUNTSI Mayor, Tswelopele Local Municipality, SALGA Commissioner

Given the continued and increasing pressures of climate change, acting at the local level is an urgent matter. Local and subregional governments across the world and in South Africa, both rural and urban are in the front line of climate action, but they are unable to shoulder the massive infrastructure investments and adaptation efforts required for sustainable, low-to-no emission, and climate resilient development.

As organised by the Local Government, together with our partners, we see ourselves as implementation partners and are keen to support the development, financing, and implementation of ambitious NDCs, National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), Long-Term Strategies (LTSs), and other key strategies ahead of 2025.

However as local government we recognise that the internal space cannot substitute for progress in national policymaking and implementation, but they are a primary platform for building international consensus and a common purpose on how to address the ever-worsening climate crisis.



By the end of 2025, the PCC had matured into a state of readiness to be statutory body under the Climate Change Act, with expanded governance structures, stable financing, and donor partnerships. Its work had:

- » Embedded just transition as a national policy priority in the Medium-Term Development Plan.
- » Produced influential technical and policy recommendations.
- » Strengthened adaptation and resilience planning.
- » Positioned South Africa as a leader in climate finance platforms.
- » Demonstrated a culture of dialogue and accountability across society.

ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE – FOR PEOPLE, PLANET AND PROSPERITY

As climate impacts became more visible – floods, droughts, and record heatwaves – the PCC elevated adaptation as a national priority. It developed policy recommendations for a Climate Change Response Fund to finance resilience and emergency responses and supported a strategic review of South Africa's Disaster Management Framework to better integrate climate risks.

The PCC facilitated the development of new knowledge underpinned by technical studies.

- » In partnership with the South African Weather Service and research institutions, the PCC updated the Climate Risk Report up to 2023, mapping vulnerabilities and shaping early warning systems.
- » Sectoral reviews in agriculture, water, and the built environment identified priority interventions and highlighted the interdependencies between these sectors food, including the impact that climate change will have on such.

In supporting local government responses and readiness, the PCC also conducted an assessment of adaptation, resilience, and disaster management in the eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality, particularly the impacts of and response to the 2022 flooding and piloted Climate Resilient Development Strategies (CRDS) in municipalities, notably Nelson Mandela Bay. These two reviews demonstrated how resilience planning could be embedded in urban governance, offering templates for replication in other metros and secondary cities.

The adaptation and resilience work informed the conceptualisation of a Just Adaptation and Resilience Investment Platform (JAR-IP), a proposed nationally led, multi-stakeholder country platform designed to mobilise and coordinate large-scale finance for climate adaptation aligned with South Africa's development priorities. JARIP will help translate adaptation strategies into bankable projects and tangible community-level outcomes, positioning South Africa to attract international climate finance and deliver a more just, climate-resilient future.



JANSE RABIE

AgriSA Natural Source Centre of Excellence

Serving as a Commissioner on the Presidential Climate Commission has been a profound professional and personal journey. Appointed in 2022, I had the privilege of representing South Africa's agricultural sector at a time when climate volatility increasingly threatens food security, rural livelihoods, and natural resource sustainability.

The Commission's mandate, to guide South Africa's just transition to a low-emissions, climate-resilient economy, has been both ambitious and necessary.

My focus was to ensure that agriculture's voice was not only heard but integrated into climate planning. Farmers live closest to the land and are among the most affected by climate change. Their resilience and innovation must be central to our national response.

Looking ahead, I envision the Commission evolving into a permanent institution that continues to convene diverse voices, hold government accountable, and drive a transition that is not only just, but generationally transformative.









BISHOP MALUSI MPUMLWANA

South African Council of Churches

It must be said that the idea of even thinking about transitioning from fossil fuels, thus moving away from coal as our source of energy which is an abundantly available resource in South Africa was a very bold move! Very bold indeed! It was counterintuitive in many ways. We have Mpumalanga as a colliery province with about 12 municipalities whose livelihoods are anchored on coal. What does transitioning mean and represents for these communities?

Indeed, it was a bold move, and almost unthinkable! Yet it had to be a firm agenda item for which commission was established. The environmental impacts of climate change demand bold moves, in the old adage of “adapt or die!”. The climate-related devastation that the people of our country on the eastern coastline are already increasingly experiencing – KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape, tells us that this is not a distant global challenge, but an immediate existential challenge of life and death for many.

Thus, the targets of the Paris Agreement, to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius or less, becomes a matter of national strategy to protect lives and to protect our economy. It is a moment that almost mimics the biblical call of “choose life” (Deuteronomy 30:19-20).

I was not able to join the Commission visit the Komati Power Station. I subsequently made a private trip to Komati and surrounding areas like Kriel. I gave lifts to people to get talking to them; I walked around and chatted randomly. The gloom of Komati was inescapable, and the sense of hopelessness because of the real and perceived job losses. I was also able to see what should have been obvious to me without the visits, that the coal industry is not just the mines and the power stations. It is a whole eco-system with people selling fruit, food and other incidentals that those in employment need.

The justness of the transition needs to answer the livelihood questions of this eco-system. It raises the question of what kinds of economic activities can adequately compensate and ensure that no one is left behind. How quickly can the introduction of sustainable energies be able to absorb labour disengaged by coal discontinuation – both the mines and the power stations?

The privilege of serving in the Presidential Climate Commission has been that these almost insurmountable real-life challenges are tackled head on and hope is generated. The Just Transition has the potential to create new industries and bring more ordinary people to productivity beyond labour.

EMISSIONS REDUCTION

MITIGATION AND NET-ZERO PATHWAYS

The PCC is taking a multifaceted approach towards climate change mitigation in its efforts to support the country's transition towards a climate-resilient and low emissions economy.

The Commission is supporting economic decision-makers by developing and collating studies on net-zero mitigation pathways for various priority sector of the economy as identified in the Just Transition Framework. This includes understanding technical pathways and their social and economic consequences as well as supporting the long-term modelling community in South Africa. The PCC also convened a Community of Practice for Modellers, ensuring that technical capacity for climate planning was strengthened across institutions.

The Mitigation work programme was anchored in scenario modelling and evidence-based policy advice. The PCC's Net-Zero Pathways Report explored 40 scenarios to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, balancing economic, social, and environmental trade-offs. This analysis informed South Africa's preparation for updating its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) for 2030 – 2035.

In the energy sector, the PCC provided pivotal advice to the relevant line ministries. Its Electricity Recommendations Report (2023) outlined reforms in pricing, market design, and grid expansion, while a series of policy briefs on electricity pricing addressed affordability and municipal procurement strategies. A high-level roundtable at the Johannesburg Stock Exchange catalysed debate on the urgent need for grid investment.



Beyond energy, the PCC supported the Department of Transport in developing a Transport Just Transition Plan (TJTP). This comprehensive roadmap aligned decarbonisation with job protection and spatial transformation, backed by socio-economic impact assessments.



BRANDON ABDINOR

Centre for Environmental Rights

The PCC has been a truly dynamic space in which critically important just transition, climate-resilience and decarbonisation pathways are debated and formed, and social compacts come into being. It has been fascinating to watch the balancing act unfold as very different stakeholder interests and constituencies weigh-in, share information, advocate for outcomes, agree and disagree on the many aspects that make up this uncharted journey.

What is striking is the overwhelmingly enduring commitment to transparent engagement on the part of commissioners, the secretariat, partners and stakeholders. Passion, good faith, expertise and a diversity of lived experiences blend to create ways forward, or at least deep and grounded knowledge about why certain issues are not yet ripe for moving forward.

All of the workstreams are valuable, but two that stand out for me are Just Transition Framework and the NDC recommendations. Both of these, in their different ways, reveal the incredibly complex interplay of the many factors to be navigated on the road to a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy and society. The PCC is well placed to do this and will hopefully go from strength to strength as the need for a just transition, climate resilience and deep decarbonisation get ever more urgent.



CLIMATE FINANCE AND INNOVATION

PUTTING MONEY ON THE TABLE

Without finance, the just transition will not be realised. The PCC advanced a landmark policy proposal for a Just Transition Finance Mechanism (JTfM), which framed how finance should address historical inequalities and support community-led initiatives, reskilling, and the development of resilient infrastructure.

At the municipal level, the Municipal Just Energy Transition Support Programme assessed readiness across ten (10) municipalities. Findings showed that metropolitans were making progress, while smaller municipalities struggled with finance, capacity and outdated infrastructure.

A pilot programme led by the Project Management Unit and South African Local Government Association (SALGA) funded through the JETP will capacitate municipalities to build a pipeline of projects. These insights will contribute to inform decision making in national planning and resource allocation, and municipal level project preparation.

The PCC also pioneered climate finance tracking through its Climate Finance Landscape Reports, improving data quality and tagging methods to identify gaps and opportunities. Partnerships with the Development Bank of Southern Africa, the African Climate Foundation, and others strengthened South Africa's participation in Country Platforms – collaborative mechanisms for aligning finance with national priorities.

The 2025 Country Platform Exchange, hosted in Cape Town, brought together over 130 stakeholders from government, finance, and civil society, showcasing South Africa's leadership in climate finance innovation.



LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

A PEOPLE-CENTRED JUST TRANSITION

At the heart of the PCC's mandate remains the principle that climate action must serve people. Between 2022 and 2025, the Commission advanced concrete programmes to protect livelihoods, create new jobs, and embed distributive justice.

EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY FOR MPUMALANGA

A flagship initiative was the Employment Strategy for Mpumalanga, which identified high-potential sectors such as citrus, wood, hemp, and sustainable aviation fuel. These industries offered pathways for local economic diversification and job creation in the coal-belt.

Complementing this, the PCC launched the Just Transition Consortium for Research on Employment and Work (JT CREW), a research platform on labour dynamics and social security reform.

SOCIAL OWNERSHIP MODELS

Innovative work on social ownership models demonstrated how renewable energy could be collectively owned, decreasing inequality and building community wealth. Partnerships with universities and the United Nations Development Programme explored social entrepreneurship in waste management and energy.

MPUMALANGA PARTNERSHIP IMPLEMENTATION MODEL

The PCC's Mpumalanga Partnership Implementation Model (PIM) provided a practical mechanism for bottom-up project origination. Through consultations and feasibility studies, it helped co-create a pipeline of just transition projects, embedding accountability and community governance into implementation. The PIM is an extension of the ongoing work of the PCC with districts and municipalities to assist with adaptation and resilience-building at a local level.



MBULAHENI MBODI NUMSA

Social Ownership, Community Voices, and Lessons

For me, to see some socially owned projects being taken seriously and even piloted was a highlight. That is over and above hearing voices on the ground speaking out in the engagements on climate and climate justice issues. What became a lowlight was hearing and seeing how Komati turned into a ghost town with devastating impacts to both the workers and society in general.

Interests differ according to where we have constituencies, but one could at least appreciate being there to make other people understand our positions and postures just as we attempt to hear theirs. There is work still to be done to make a more solid footprint without the secretariat looking like its leading the Commission and instead Commissioners really leading and directing the work. The incoming Commissioners should take note of the teething challenges and make it work better with workers and the poor.







PAR T **THREE**

FEWER BUT BETTER

CUMULATIVE
IMPACT (2022-2025)

KEEPING TRACK

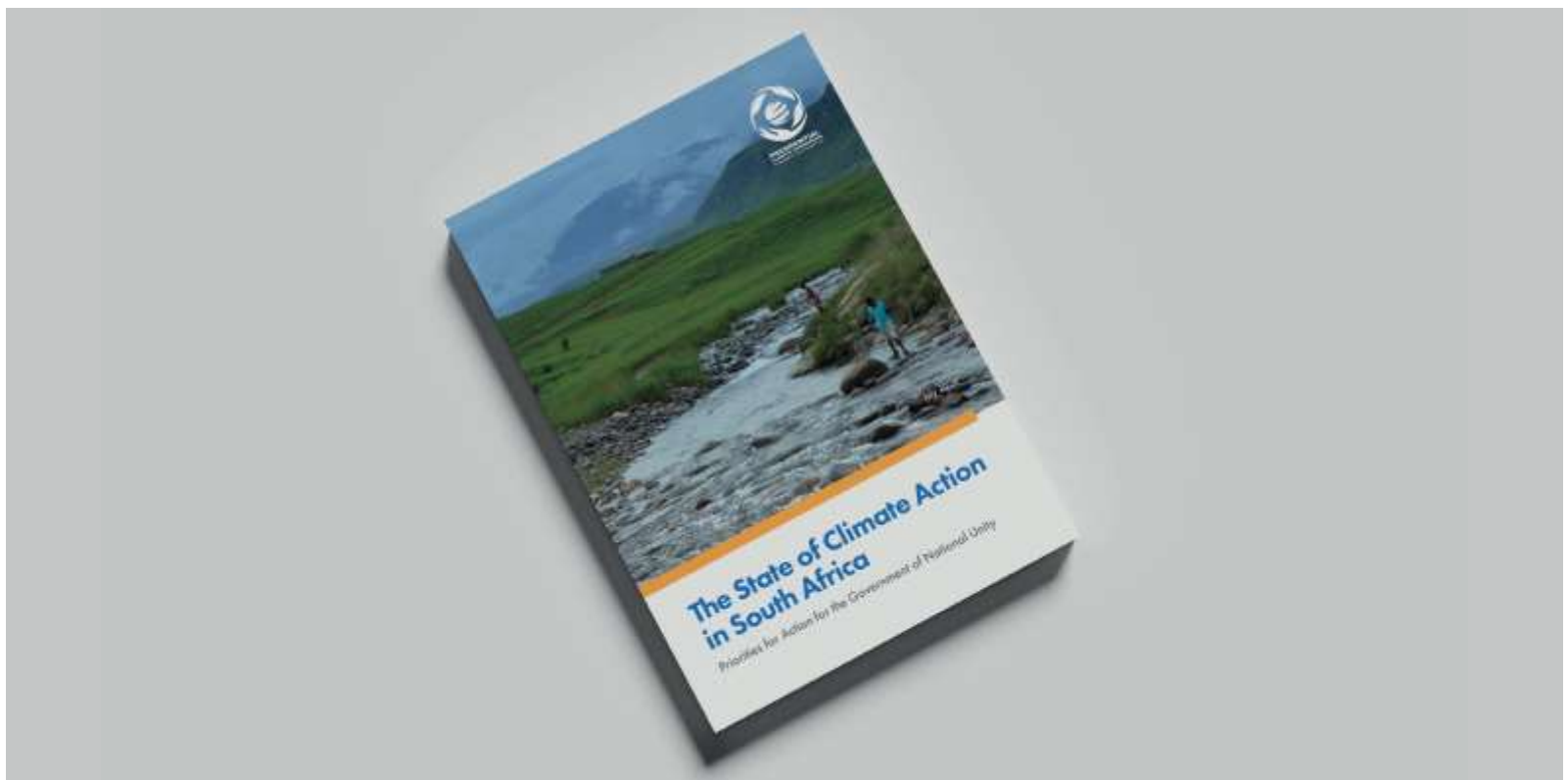
MONITORING AND EVALUATION

In 2024, the PCC released South Africa's first State of Climate Action Report, benchmarking achievements, gaps, and challenges across the economy. The report, which was prepared with inputs from more than 47 researchers and experts across sectors, carried a compelling message: While South Africa has strong commitments and wide public support for tackling climate change and facilitating a just transition, progress is not yet happening at the pace and scale required.

Accompanying this, a national survey of public perceptions revealed widespread support for renewable energy but limited understanding of a "just transition," highlighting the need for public education.

The PCC began developing a national Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework for the just transition, in collaboration with the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation.

It also undertook detailed reviews of specific projects, most notably the Komati Decommissioning, which will hopefully be used as a national template for future coal plant closure strategies.





SHAFICK ADAMS

Water Research Commission

The PCC plays a vital role in driving transformation in South Africa and beyond, offering valuable advice on energy transition, climate adaptation, resilience, and mitigation.

Given my role in the water and related landscape sectors, I was primarily involved in the Adaptation and Resilience Working Group, but I also could gain insight into areas beyond the environmental sphere.

The strength of the debates among various social partners enabled us to navigate many complex issues thoughtfully and effectively. This experience reinforced what I have always believed: the diversity of stakeholders and their perspectives is key to driving transformative change.

Looking back, a key takeaway is that the Komati decommissioning serves as a stark reminder of how not to approach a transition. It highlights the importance of considering not only immediate direct impacts but also the indirect effects.

The next phase should embrace complexity and uncertainty, building on the excellent work already completed. By doing so, the PCC can continue to help in developing adaptive, resilient strategies that address our growing challenges effectively. It was a great honour to be part of the inaugural five-year term.



RAISING AWARENESS, BUILDING LEGITIMACY AND INCLUSION

IMPROVED CONSENSUS ON THE JUST TRANSITION DELIVERED

The PCC's outreach and communications were about mobilisation through social engagement, fostering collaboration and ensuring transparency. Reaching out to broader stakeholders, was a key driver for social inclusivity.

By the end of 2022, the PCC had begun to establish itself as a trusted national platform. Its open dialogues attracted participation from across society. Its research outputs – on energy pathways, adaptation needs, and social protection – were widely cited. And its convening power signalled that South Africa was serious about aligning climate ambition with social justice.

Nomonde Nkosi is the Director of Womxndla Community Development NPC, located at the Carolina Police Station.





JACQUES HUGO FEDUSA

I fondly remember when I was informed that our Federation, Fedusa, recommended me for the Commissioner's position at the PCC and the subsequent appointment. What a privilege to have served with fellow commissioners and the outstanding secretariat of the PCC.

It soon became apparent that the task of getting South Africa to a Just and equitable lower carbon emission economy was a very large one. One of the key milestones for me was to be part of the creation and eventual publication of the PCC Just Transition Framework. The key to the Just transition is social dialogue. With social dialogue, government, business, trade unions and civil society groups collaborated in the national, industry and community planning and policies that are necessary for a just transition to zero emissions. There is, however, still lots of work to be done in this instance and the PCC is actively working towards defining the vision of the Just Transition.







MAKOMA LEKALAKALA

Director of Earthlife Africa

Time flies! Five years since the Climate Commission came into existence and I am honoured to have served and completed my term as a commissioner. As the climate change induced natural disasters ravaged our coastal areas, the Commission was faced with an urgent task to advise the country and beyond to decarbonise for prevention of future negative impacts.

Being in communities and participating in online consultations for the development of the Just Transition Framework was my highlight. The Commission held extensive consultations in different hotspot areas of Limpopo, Mpumalanga, KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape, and Northern Cape communities. From these consultations, it was clear that the climate issue is an intersectional one. We heard how people are concerned about the negative impacts of climate change and how their views were captured in the Just Transition Framework which put procedural, distributive and restorative justice at the centre of the transition.

Community voices were heard. Encouraging ordinary people from different communities to engage in person and online, to be watchdogs of the Commission. I feel I have played a role and will continue to play beyond my term. I remain grateful for opportunity of contributing towards the advisory of the South Africa decarbonisation agenda. I am grateful to the dedication and support of the secretariat in supporting commissioners in all aspects of their activities.



Institutional Functioning and Oversight: A just transition is not only about the policies and projects that shape South Africa's climate response. It is also about the institutions that enable them.





PRINCESS BEATRICE TSAKANI NKAMBULE Black Business Council

Princess Beatrice Tsakani Nkambule is a serial entrepreneur, a prominent and experienced Community Builder, Motivational Speaker and Best-Selling Author. She serves in leadership roles in numerous Community, Government and Business Organisations throughout the country.

She is a former educator with over 30 years business experience in diverse industries such as Property Development, Industrial Cleaning, Health Risk Medical Waste, Energy and Agriculture. Her businesses operate in several provinces across the country.







GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

From its inception in 2020, the PCC was designed as a multi-stakeholder body. This inclusive structure became its greatest asset: decisions were informed by diverse perspectives, and recommendations carried the weight of broad-based legitimacy.

Initially, the PCC was housed under the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE). Following a Cabinet approval in early 2022, the Secretariat was transitioned for interim hosting under Nedlac with governance and accountability aligned to NEDLAC's structures.

This arrangement provided stability during the Commission's formative years, though it also meant navigating complex oversight processes. As part of formalising the interim hosting arrangements, the PCC streamlined its leadership portfolios to focus on research and policy, institutional support, communications and consensus-building, and operations.

The Commission has witnessed the transition of Commissioners from all sectors over the period with new Commissioners coming on board from across labour, business, and civil society in early 2025, the PCC successfully managed its leadership transitions, with Dr Crispian Olver appointed as Deputy Chairperson of the Commission, and Ms Dorah Modise appointed in the role of Executive Director for PCC Secretariat. These appointments signalled both continuity and renewal, bringing seasoned leadership to guide the PCC into its statutory future.

The enactment of the Climate Change Act, 2024 marked a decisive shift. The Act established the PCC as a statutory Schedule 3 public entity, providing institutional certainty and independence.



FINANCE AND DONOR PARTNERSHIPS

Financial sustainability was a cornerstone of institutional functioning. The PCC's resources came from two main streams: government appropriate flowing via NEDLAC, and donor contributions managed through our fiscal host partner, the African Climate Foundation (ACF).

Over five years, the PCC cultivated a diverse funding base.

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS INCLUDED:

1. Global Energy Alliance for People and Planet (GEAPP)
2. Bloomberg Philanthropies
3. African Climate Foundation
4. United Kingdom Partnership Action on Transition (UK-PACT)
5. Ford Foundation
6. Bulb Foundation
7. European Climate Foundation
8. Open Society Foundation Africa
9. Agence Française de Développement (AFD)
10. International Finance Cooperation
11. Royal Danish Embassy
12. Danish Energy Agency
13. Yellowwoods
14. EU Delegation to South Africa

Additional support came from bilateral donors, such as the German Embassy, and in-kind contributions from technical agencies including the World Bank Group (WB), the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), World Resources Institute (WRI), the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) and the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA), and the Johannesburg Securities Exchange (JSE) and VodacomSA.

SEEDING RESEARCH COLLABORATION

The higher education sector was enthused by the establishment of the PCC. With many institutions identifying and seeking to expand their research, learning and teaching and pilot projects and programmes to address climate change, through collaboration with the PCC.

These multidisciplinary centres of knowledge production the PCC as a partner in their pursuit of remaining relevant and responsive to the just transition and provided enormous support and collaborated with the PCC in various ways.

The Tshwane University of Technology, University of Mpumalanga, Vaal University of Technology, Durban University of Technology and the Nelson Mandela University, Wits University and University of Cape are worthy of acknowledgement in this regard.

These partnerships were more than financial. They provided technical expertise, analytical capacity, and platforms for collaboration. By 2025, the PCC had become recognised not only as a national body but as a trusted partner in regional and global dialogues on just transitions.



ACCOUNTABILITY AND OVERSIGHT

Transparency and accountability underpinned the PCC's institutional mutation. The Commission produced quarterly performance reports, presented to Parliament's Portfolio Committee on Environment, and underwent independent audits.

By the end of its first term, the PCC had achieved unqualified audits under NEDLAC and was transitioning toward its own statutory reporting as a Schedule 3 entity.





MAC CHAVALALA

South African Federation of Trade Unions (SAFTU)

I appreciated the opportunity to serve in the PCC with a group of hard-working commissioners, supported by a capable secretariat team during our inaugural term. Working with commissioners who came from different social, political and ideological backgrounds was challenging and a lesson for me at the same time.

The issue of climate change is no longer a myth but reality, and if nothing is done it will exacerbate the triple crisis of unemployment, poverty and inequality plus crime.

The incoming commissioners must continue with awareness campaigns using all public platforms and social media. Thanks to the Chairperson of the Commission and his deputies for navigating the ship.



RISK MANAGEMENT

The Commission's journey was not without risks. Internally, it faced challenges of limited resources, evolving management structures, and high demand relative to capacity. Externally, it operated in a contested policy environment where evidence-based advice could be politically sensitive.

The PCC responded by embedding risk management into its governance processes. A standing Finance and Governance Committee convened quarterly to review risks, oversee audits, and monitor performance. Collaboration with reputable research institutions bolstered the credibility of its evidence base, while transparency in stakeholder engagement helped to safeguard legitimacy.



BUILDING A MATURING INSTITUTION

SECRETARIAT AND STAFFING

Behind the Commission's multi-stakeholder forums stood a dedicated Secretariat. Small in size but high in commitment and delivery, the Secretariat grew steadily over five years, expanding to more than thirty staff by 2025.

Its structure combined senior advisors (covering mitigation, adaptation, finance, and monitoring) with managers focused on policy and research, partnerships and institutional support, stakeholder engagement and consensus building.

The PCC's staffing profile reflected South Africa's demographics and sought to embody the inclusivity that defined its mandate. Its institutional journey continues to demonstrate that inclusive, governance is not only possible, but essential in navigating complex transitions.

By 2025, the PCC had finalised the administrative processes required to transition to an interim structure under NEDLAC and is now preparing for establishment as a statutory entity with independent governance arrangements. Diversity, skills, and agility remain a key priority in the lead up to anchoring the PCC's space as a world class independent climate advisory entity.

Resource constraints and uneven capacity are recurring challenges. But the PCC's institutional resilience – its ability to adapt, sustain credibility, and grow stronger through experience – became one of the defining achievements of its first five years. The Commission's functioning has enjoyed some learnings and improvements. Retention was a challenge, given the competitive market for skilled climate professionals, but the PCC invested in capacity development, mentorship, and partnerships to build a pipeline of talent.





CRISPIAN OLVER

Serving as inaugural Executive Director and more recently Deputy Chair of the Commission during its first term has been a profound privilege and learning journey. From our early steps in building an institution that could bridge government, business, labour, and civil society, to shaping the national agenda on just transition and climate action, the PCC has shown what is possible when diverse actors commit to dialogue and collective problem-solving.

We have navigated moments of hard bargaining and of breakthrough, learning that progress depends as much on trust, transparency, and understanding as it does on sound technical inputs. Looking back, I am proud of the Commission's role in placing justice at the centre of South Africa's climate transition, in creating space for new voices, and in building the institutional foundations for decisions that will shape our country's future for decades to come.







PAR T **FOUR**

MEMORIES OF OUR FUTURE

THE JOURNEY
BEYOND 2025



The first five years of the Presidential Climate Commission established the foundations of South Africa's just transition. Yet the journey is only beginning. Climate change will intensify in the decades ahead, and the social, economic, and political choices made now will determine the country's ability to thrive in a low-carbon, climate-resilient future.

Looking beyond 2025, the PCC's mandate and priorities evolve from laying frameworks and building consensus toward delivery, scale, and accountability.

IMPLEMENTING THE CLIMATE CHANGE ACT, 2024

The enactment of the Climate Change Act, 2024 (Act No. 22 of 2024) provides both a framework and long institutional arrangements. As a statutory Schedule 3 public entity, the PCC's mandated role is to advise the government on the following:

- » the Republic's climate change response to ensure realisation of the vision for effective climate change response and the long-term just transition to a low-carbon and climate-resilient-economy and society;
- » the mitigation of climate change impacts, including through the reduction of emissions of greenhouse gases, and adapting to the effects of climate change; and
- » any socio-economic matter related to the just transition.

DEEPENING ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE

Climate shocks are already eroding livelihoods and infrastructure, and projections show worsening risks. The coming years will demand sharper focus on adaptation. The PCC's next phase will emphasise:

- » Scaling up Climate Resilient Development Strategies (CRDS) in municipalities, building on pilots in the Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality.
- » Finalising and mobilising finance for a JAR-IP, and facilitating support to vulnerable communities.
- » Partnering with the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs to strengthen disaster management systems that incorporate climate science and local knowledge and planned for a different lived reality.
- » Mainstreaming climate resilience in agriculture, water, and human settlements, and other departments, aligning with the National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy.



ACCELERATING THE ENERGY TRANSITION

Energy remains the frontline of the just transition. South Africa must simultaneously address the electricity crisis, reduce emissions, and build new industries.

THE PCC WILL:

- (i) Support the government in finalising a least-cost electricity plan that incorporates grid expansion, renewables, storage, and flexible gas.
- (ii) Build from the Komati experience and provide technical insights and dialogue support on coal decommissioning schedules, ensuring they are socially just, financially viable, and technically feasible.
- (iii) Facilitate the expansion of socially owned renewable energy models, demonstrating pathways for community wealth creation.
- (iv) Engage in continuous monitoring of electricity pricing reforms, balancing affordability, cost recovery, and just transition imperatives.



MOBILISING CLIMATE FINANCE

South Africa is at a pivotal moment in its climate action trajectory. At the COP26 in Glasgow, USD 8.5 billion of climate finance was pledged by a group of developed country governments (United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany and the European Union) to support the achievement of a just energy transition.

One of the PCC's central tasks over the next few years will be informing the policy priorities and capital allocation decisions guiding the investment and capital allocation decisions towards the achievement of a lower carbon and climate resilient economy and society.

The financing gap for South Africa's transition remains vast, with estimates exceeding USD 100 billion over the coming decade.

The PCC's future agenda will prioritise:

- » Operationalising the Just Transition Finance Mechanism (JTfM), aligning public, private, and donor finance around people-centred priorities.
- » Advancing climate finance tracking systems and producing biennial reports to improve transparency and accountability.
- » Supporting South Africa's leadership in Country Platforms and global climate finance reforms, linking domestic needs to international flows.
- » Ensuring that financing mechanisms are not only technically robust, but also equitable, addressing the distributive dimensions of transition.



A SOUNDING BOARD ON NATIONAL CLIMATE COMMITMENTS

For South Africa's NDC for 2030 – 2035 the PCC undertook extensive multi-stakeholder engagement with government, business, labour, civil society, youth groups, faith-based organisations and gender constituencies to balance ambition with developmental priorities.

Grounded in technical modelling and rigorous research, the process focused on aligning climate targets, based on South Africa's fair share contribution to mitigation and implementation capacity, with just transition policies that address equity and socio-economic impacts.

In the absence of a consensus reached by the Commission on the 2035 mitigation range, the Commission agreed to put forward the technical report on the 2035 mitigation range because of its scientific rigor and evidence base. Consensus is not always reached, in which case scientific findings and development issues in the country must take precedence and chart the path.



CONSOLIDATING A TRILATERAL PARTNERSHIP

In 2025, under the guidance of the President, the PCC began engaging with the National Planning Commission (NPC), and the President's Economic Advisory Council (PEAC) to deepen alignment across the respective advisory bodies and consider how to support the Government of National Unity (GNU) in delivering on the promise of inclusive, climate-resilient growth.

This trilateral engagement will expand and deepen under the PCC's next phase with the aim of supporting the green economy and industrialisation, and promoting complementarity with a focus on three strategic areas:

1. **Jobs and Skills in the Green Economy:** Exploring strategies to develop a workforce equipped for emerging green industries.
2. **Finance and Investment for the Green Economy:** Identifying financial mechanisms and investment opportunities for sustainable growth.
3. **Governance and Institutional Frameworks, including Local Government:** Strengthening the roles and coordination among various governmental levels to implement green policies effectively.



ENSURING JUSTICE: SUPPORTING WORKERS AND COMMUNITIES

The next phase of the just transition must move from frameworks to tangible benefits for people. The PCC will continue to advise government and social partners on implementation of policies and programmes with a focus on the following areas:

- » Employment and reskilling strategies for workers in coal and energy-intensive sectors, scaling up pilots in Mpumalanga and other transition regions.
- » New economic clusters in sustainable agriculture, hydrogen, electric vehicles, and the circular economy, ensuring that they generate inclusive opportunities.
- » Social safety nets and innovative social ownership models that embed justice and equity in the design of industries of the future.
- » Dialogue with communities most affected by transition, ensuring that policies remain responsive and locally grounded.





WAHEED HOOLEN

One key milestone from my limited time on the PCC was the voice of labour being heard at the Just Transition planning table, as decisions about workers should be made by workers.

We are commonly referred to as social partners; our role should be one of an equal partners as well. This means that we are directly influencing how the just transition landscape is being shaped as we discuss policies to protect jobs, livelihoods, and workplace rights.

The PCC has been an essential space for bringing together different voices, and from a trade union perspective, it has helped bridge the gap between climate goals and social justice. Our presence on the PCC ensures that climate action does not come at the cost of working-class communities.

The PCC helped shift the narrative, from “climate versus jobs” to “climate and decent jobs”.

One of the toughest challenges was building trust between groups that don't always see eye to eye. At times, tensions flared over fears of job losses or unrealistic targets. But through honest robust dialogue and shared commitment, we seem to be finding common ground. A just transition is not just about laws and policies, it's about building relationships, listening deeply, and staying at the table, even when it's difficult.

As we move into the next phase, trade unions will continue to push for action, not just plans. This means investment in skills training, unionised green jobs, and strong social protections for displaced workers.

The PCC must grow its mandate to hold government and employers accountable for delivery. Our vision is clear: a zero-carbon economy built on fairness, dignity, and decent work, and trade unions will continue to be the watchdogs, advocates, and builders of that future.

ACCOUNTABILITY: MONITORING ACTION AND PROGRESS

As South Africa's climate framework becomes more complex, the PCC's oversight role grows in importance. Looking ahead, the PCC will:

- » Regularly publish a State of Climate Action Report, tracking mitigation, adaptation, finance, and social outcomes.
- » Expand public perception surveys and media engagement to ensure that climate policy remains visible and accountable to citizens.
- » Work with the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation to create a national M&E system for the just transition, embedding justice indicators into climate tracking.
- » Ensure that monitoring is not just technical, but socioeconomic: focused on whether policies improve lives and livelihoods, and whether vulnerable communities are protected.



COALITION FOR ACTION: INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND DIALOGUE

A just transition is necessitated not only by domestic climate policy, but also by changing rules of global engagement. As a coal-dependent economy, South Africa faces enormous transition risk associated with international climate mitigation policy developments since the Paris Agreement.

The PCC's next phase will involve consolidating South Africa's role as a leader in just transitions globally. Through the International Climate Councils Network, partnerships with African peers, and engagement at COPs, the PCC will continue to showcase lessons learned, while also learning from others. This will also be pioneered by its recent election as a first Co-Chair of the Global South in the ICCN, for the period 2025 – 2027.





COMMISSIONER BOITUMELO MOLETE

Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU)

Over the past five years, the Presidential Climate Commission (PCC) has played a critical role in shaping South Africa's just transition, and I am proud that COSATU, a key social partner, has been part of this journey from the inception of the PCC in 2020.

From the very beginning, organised labour has consistently emphasised that workers and communities must be placed at the centre of the transition, ensuring that transitioning to a low carbon and climate resilient economy is not pursued at the expense of jobs and livelihoods, but rather as an opportunity to advance decent work, equity, and inclusion.

Although I joined towards the end of the Commission's inaugural term, it was clear to me that COSATU's persistent advocacy had already shaped the Just Transition Framework and firmly anchored workers' voices in the national discourse. This is visible in the recognition of social protection, reskilling and upskilling of workers, and meaningful social dialogue as non-negotiable pillars of a just transition.

For me, as COSATU's Social Development Policy Coordinator, being part of this process has been about building alliances, advancing a progressive labour vision, and reinforcing the reality that climate justice and social justice are inseparable.

The PCC is an internationally recognised organisation and is largely referenced as good practice. The Commission has set precedence through its work, policy briefs and strategic contributions to the bigger Climate Change and Just Transition Discourse.

We know that South Africa is a country that has social dialogue embedded in its DNA, this is seen through NEDLAC. In line with this, the PCC has reinforced that through social dialogue anything is possible. We have showcased how when government, organised labour, business, and communities act together, and it leaves a strong foundation for the next phase of South Africa's journey toward a more equitable, inclusive and sustainable future.

BUILDING A COMPACT THROUGH ENGAGEMENT AND DIALOGUE

We recognise the importance of mobilising key partners and stakeholders to establish a coalition to action the priorities of economic diversification, enabling industrial/ trade policy, job creation, skills development and poverty alleviation.

The Presidential Climate Commission (PCC) has adopted an expansive, inclusive, and meaningful approach in their social dialogues that is not a once-off engagement, but rather a considered and continuous one. This can only be sustained if we continue to work collaboratively with other stakeholders such as government, business, labour, youth, and civil society in leading and promoting social dialogue for the just transition.

The private sector holds substantial responsibilities in this process. Businesses must actively engage in dialogue, recognising that sustainable practices are no longer optional but integral to their operational resilience and long-term profitability. Through genuine participation in social dialogue, businesses can collaborate with labour and communities to innovate sustainable solutions, invest in local economic diversification, and contribute positively to social stability.

Labour unions, are integral actors in South Africa's historical social compacts, likewise play a critical role in advocating for workers' interests while engaging in dialogue aimed at shaping just transition strategies. Labour's active involvement ensures that the transition does not exacerbate inequality but instead promote decent work, fair wages, and improved conditions, preserving dignity and economic stability for workers and their families.

Government must remain tasked with the stewardship of national interests and must facilitate and sustain these dialogues transparently and inclusively, ensuring that commitments translate into tangible policy and actions. Transparent governance builds trust, mitigates potential conflicts, and enhances accountability.







PAR
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**THE END OF A
BEGINNING**

A NEW CHAPTER

The formative years were not without challenges. They were both operational and substantive in the wake of heated debates on energy security, job losses, the shift back to coal by some of the western countries to their regional energy security challenges and tensions between energy security and decarbonisation remained acute.

Capacity was limited, the institutional base under NEDLAC was temporary, whilst fairly resourced in the short term, expectations from stakeholder exceeded the capacity of an institution in its crawling stage.

Yet, the PCC succeeded in laying the essential foundations: a clear mandate, a credible framework for a just transition, and a demonstration that South Africans could debate climate policy in a spirit of shared purpose.

PROUD OF OUR PAST AND CONFIDENT OF OUR FUTURE

The PCC's first five years were about establishing credibility, shaping frameworks, and embedding justice in climate policy. The years beyond 2025 will be about delivery: moving from plans to implementation, from dialogues to results, from frameworks to real change in people's lives.

The first five years of the Presidential Climate Commission offer both a record of progress and a mirror of South Africa's broader transition journey. They reveal the possibilities of inclusive governance, the difficulties of reconciling competing imperatives, and the necessity of embedding justice at the heart of climate action. The just transition is no longer an abstract vision. It is underway – in repurposed power plants, in municipal strategies, in reskilled workers, in new industries, and in national dialogues.

The PCC's responsibility moving forward is to nurture and accelerate this process, ensuring that South Africa not only meets its climate commitments but does so in a way that builds a fairer, more resilient society. The task is daunting. The costs are high. But the PCC's first five years demonstrate that progress is possible – when dialogue is inclusive, evidence is trusted, and justice is the guiding principle.

TEETHING – WHAT WE LEARNED

THE PCC'S WORK UNDERSCORED SEVERAL KEY LESSONS:



Institutions matter. The Just Transition cannot be managed ad-hoc. It requires trusted, inclusive, and well-governed institutions that can convene, advise, and hold actors accountable.

Justice is non-negotiable. The legitimacy of South Africa's climate response rests on whether it addresses inequality, creates opportunities, and protects the vulnerable.

Dialogue creates progress. Consensus is never automatic. It requires sustained dialogue, grounded in evidence, and a willingness to confront hard trade-offs.

Finance is a bottleneck and an opportunity. Without sufficient, well-directed finance, just transitions cannot be delivered. With it, transitions can unlock new growth and livelihoods.

Implementation is the next frontier, on which the PCC can advise. Frameworks and strategies are assent.



DAVID JARVIS

Industrial Development Corporation (IDC)

As a Commissioner of the Presidential Climate Commission, albeit for a short period, I have witnessed firsthand the pivotal role the Commission plays in shaping South Africa's response to climate change. One of the Commission's greatest strengths is its ability to draw on a diverse range of views to formulate its positions, supported by the dedicated secretariat.

Looking ahead, the challenge will be to ensure that the Commission remains evidence-based, practical, and that its guidance has, at its core, the ability to implement. This is crucial, especially in the current global and domestic economic environment. While responding to climate change is core to achieving sustainable development, it is essential that we ensure these ambitions are practical and implementable.





AYAKHA MELITHAFA

Founder, Ayakha Melithafa Foundation

One of the most meaningful moments of my term was the establishment of the Youth Leaders Caucus, a milestone that gave young people from diverse organisations and constituencies direct access to the PCC. For the first time, I no longer felt alone as a youth commissioner, and I witnessed youth voices meaningfully influence policy.

I believe the PCC's greatest achievement has been the Just Transition Framework – a people-centered, “for the people, by the people” document that advises our President on a fair and just pathway to lowering emissions. This role has taught me that being a commissioner requires courage, selflessness, and dedication; as a civil society voice, you face doubt from society and obstacles, but you must keep soldiering on for the people you represent.

My vision is for more youth-specific commissioners to be in the Commission, greater grassroots inclusion in procedural justice, and simplified policy language so no one is left behind. Serving on the PCC has deepened my belief that justice evolves – from protests on the streets to policy shifts in negotiation rooms – and that young voices can and must play an important role to shape a truly just transition.

The enactment of the Climate Change Act, 2024 has clarified the PCC's mandate to advise on mitigation, adaptation, finance, and just transition pathways. Importantly, it embedded the principle of integrated climate governance at a national, provincial, and municipal planning processes, ensuring alignment across all levels of government.

The PCC has helped South Africa take the first steps on this path. The steps that follow will determine whether the promise of a just transition is realised.





IN MEMORIAM

MINISTER PRAVIN GORDHAN



The late Minister was one of the key economic ministers in the Commission, serving as the Minister Public Enterprises at the time. The late minister was a consistent and committed Commissioner, who, during his term at the PCC witnessed and endorsed the adoption of the Just Transition Framework, the first NDC recommendation of the PCC, the first Electricity planning recommendations and the Critical Review of Just Energy Transition – Investment Plan (JET-IP).

He was a key proponent of the development of the workstreams to monitor and evaluate economic development in Komati, and to affect change where development and progress was stagnant. Despite his busy schedule as a Minister, he prioritised participation in the Commission meetings and was very vocal on economic development issues and Climate Finance areas. Even though he had recently retired, his death was a loss to the PCC and the country, to which he was devoted.

MAC MAKWARELA – FIRST COMMISSION SECRETARY



Mac Makwarela served as the PCC's first Commission Secretary during its formative period. His leadership, diligence, and deep understanding of governance provided the scaffolding on which the Commission built its early credibility.

Mac helped establish the systems and procedures that enabled the PCC to function effectively in its early years, bridging the gap between vision and execution. His commitment to transparency, fairness, and inclusivity embodied the values of the Commission.

Though his time with the PCC was cut short, his legacy lives on in the memories of those who worked alongside him.

THANDOKAZI HEWU, YOUTH AND CLIMATE ACTIVIST



Environmental and Just Transition Activist and key member of ECCEF (Eastern Cape Combined Environmental Forum) who made a huge contribution in the process of mobilising, and meaningfully engaging with communities.

To the many Souths Africans whose lives were taken short by various disasters, their demise should remind us of the urgency of the climate crisis.

CONCLUSION

The first five years of the Presidential Climate Commission offer both a record of progress and a mirror of South Africa's broader transition journey. They reveal the possibilities of inclusive governance, the difficulties of reconciling competing imperatives, and the necessity of embedding justice at the heart of climate action. The just transition is no longer an abstract vision. It is underway – in repurposed power plants, in municipal strategies, in reskilled workers, in new industries, and in national dialogues.





REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

This report is based on the collective work of the Presidential Climate Commission over its first five years (2020 – 2025). In addition, the report reflects insights from PCC policy briefs, technical studies, public dialogues, and stakeholder consultations conducted during this period. These documents remain publicly available through the Commission's website.

The PCC issues various research documents, policy briefs and proposals in the course of its work. Over its first term, the PCC produced several flagship publications that shaped South Africa's climate transition.

PCC RECOMMENDATIONS

- » PCC recommendations for South Africa's Nationally Determined Contributions 2025 – 2030
- » KwaZulu-Natal 2022 floods review report
- » Just Transition Framework, 2022
- » Electricity Recommendations Report (2023) – Guidance on least-cost pathways, pricing reforms, and grid expansion
- » A critical appraisal of the South Africa's Just Energy Transition – Investment Plan, 2023
- » Early lessons and recommendations from Komati's decommissioning and repurposing project, 2023
- » PCC Recommendation on Climate Change Response Fund for South Africa, 2024
- » State of Climate Action Report, 2024
- » PCC Recommendations for South Africa's Nationally Determined Contributions 2035, 2025
- » Komati's Just Transition: Assessing progress, challenges, and lessons, 2025
- » Adaptation, Resilience and Disaster Management in eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality, 2025

PCC ANNUAL REVIEW

- » PCC Annual Review 2021 – 2022
- » PCC Annual Review 2022 – 2023
- » PCC Annual Review 2023 – 2024
- » PCC Annual Report 2024 – 2025

TECHNICAL REPORTS

- » Net-Zero Pathways Report (2023) – Scenario modelling and policy advice on achieving carbon neutrality by 2050
- » Transport Just Transition Plan (2024)
- » Public Perceptions and Attitudes Relating to Climate Change and the Just Transition in South Africa (2024)
- » Climate Finance Landscape Reports (2024, 2025)
- » Just Transition Finance Mechanism Proposal (2025)
- » Social Ownership models in the Just Transition



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We also thank the Executive Directors of NEDLAC and their staff, for grounding the base of our institutional set-up and their invaluable financial and resource contributions.

The leadership of the various provincial governments as well as the mayors and councillors and the South Africa Local Government Association, as well the parliamentary Committees for (1) Labour and Employment (2) Forestry and Fisheries and the Environment and (3) Mineral Resources, (5) Energy and Electricity, who took keen interest of our work and connected us with their constituencies.

We remain immensely indebted to the priceless support from the National Planning Commission, the Presidential Economic Advisory Council and the many stakeholders, community, and climate activists from across the rural and urban landscape of our country who mobilised their constituencies behind our work, guiding the construct of the compact we wanted to build.

TOGETHER, A JUST TRANSITION IS POSSIBLE.
















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TOWARDS A JUST TRANSITION



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