

Listen to the people: We don't need more polluting coal!

We, the community people from throughout the Mpumalanga province participating in this anti-coal march today call upon government to listen to us. We live with and have first-hand experience of the devastation of coal mining and coal fired facilities. Ours is a voice that has been for far too long ignored for the benefit of corporate profit derived from coal.

We raise our concerns here today with the hope that government will listen to the people it claims to represent.

We are calling on government to take our concerns we have of KiPower and coal in general seriously and we demand that government respects us and responds formally to the issues we raise.

Taking note of following:

Coal developments

- There are more than 120 coal mines operating and developing in the Mpumalanga area. This does not include the very many which are abandoned.
- The Highveld is one of the heaviest polluted areas in South Africa with 12 Eskom coal-fired power stations that are supported by these numerous mines.

Labour and livelihoods

- Coal developments have a history of exploiting peoples' labour, health and their environments on which they have sustained themselves for centuries. People lose their land and lose their ability to feed themselves and for those working on farms they lose their employment.
- The unemployment level in some of these mining towns in Mpumalanga is as high as 80% despite the abundance of mines. Profits are accrued to corporations and poverty to people.

Land

- Coal mines and coal fired power stations have resulted in people losing their land resulting in people being relocated and forced into urban areas and shack settlements.
- Houses and other structures have been destroyed, often beyond repair, as a result of blasting from mines. If repairs are made, no compensation is provided.

Air pollution and health

- Eskom's coal fired power stations are amongst the largest in the world, and have been granted postponements from meeting air quality emission standards that are protective of health and well-being as promised within our South African Constitution.
- Evidence by recent World Health Organisation research indicated that more than 7 million premature deaths occur annually because of air pollution. These deaths are more than tuberculosis, HIV/Aids and malaria combined.
- Recent research by groundWork, Friends of the Earth South Africa has revealed that 51% of deaths due to respiratory illness and 54% deaths due to cardiovascular disease in the Highveld, related to outdoor pollution in the area, can be attributed to Eskom.

Water

- South Africa is a water scarce country. Mines and coal fired power stations use a lot of water daily but still 1 million households are without water. Where there is an abundance of mines, the water is contaminated and cannot be drunk without people falling sick. People are forced into

buying bottled water which increases their financial burden. A study by Greenpeace notes that Eskom power stations uses 10 000 litres of water per second.

- KiPower will use more than 1 million litres of water per day according to their own estimates.

Liability and rehabilitation

- The Ikhwezi Colliery has a history of non-compliance, and Kuyasa Mining wants to build the KiPower station to avoid rehabilitation costs.
- Rehabilitation guarantees guidelines set aside by the Department of Mineral Resources are far too low and SRK has estimated around 16% of what is really needed. So the tax payer has to pay for the rehabilitation or society pays for poorly rehabilitated coal mines.

Participation

- In meetings with the consultants doing the environmental impact assessment for KiPower, community people asked that government come and speak to them directly about the development rather than send intermediaries. Government has yet to come and speak to the people, thus the protest.

Crisis

- The energy system is in crisis in South Africa. Coal is exploited cheaply, to produce big power stations for big energy for big industry, while devastating the community and the environment and making energy unaffordable for the poor.
- Corporation reap profits while poor people suffer the deadly consequences.

Climate Change

- Climate change is having a significant impact upon Africa and South Africa in particular. South Africa is losing its ability to produce food due to climate change, and as South Africa is once of the top greenhouse gas emitters in the world, allowing a KiPower facility that will increase South Africa's greenhouse gases by 3% is not acceptable.

Strain on the economy

- The Department of Environmental Affairs has stated that the combustion of fossil fuels cost South Africa R4 billion rand a year. Critically, the economic cost of not having a healthy population in Mpumalanga is going to be critical as labour is too sick to make a formal contribution the economy and government will have to subsidise this with social grants.

Furthermore, it came to our notice that the Environmental Impact Assessment Report was rejected by government on the 4th of February 2015, yet the consultants (Jones and Wagener) only made stakeholders aware of this on the on the 24th of March. We commend government for asking KiPower to review the no-go option. KiPower cannot start developments prior to environmental authorisation being granted.

Noting the above we call on government to:

- Recognise the failure of consultants as intermediaries, and immediately make plans to address the Mpumalanga Highveld community directly on issues of coal developments in general and of KiPower in particular to understand what the community want. We want direct democracy not democracy through consultants.
- Halt all developments of new coal fired power stations and other coal developments until the Highveld Priority Area's ambient air quality meets the commitments of our Constitution and the Air Quality Act.

- Create community focused alternative clean energy systems that will support those that are in most need of energy, rather than facilitating corporate profits.

- Speak directly to the public and critically the communities who live next to Eskom's coal fired power stations and coal mines and are affected negatively by them and the lack of energy, rather than hoping that an advisory panel of corporate representative - who are addicted to cheap energy - will solve Eskom and South Africa's energy crisis.

The Department of Environmental Affairs has already rejected KiPower's Final Environmental Impact Assessment Report for a variety of reasons. We support the DEA in their recommendation and call on Kuyasa and KiPower to take the proposed coal-fired power station off the table as we don't need another polluting power station killing our people.

- Recognise that coal kills, and therefore we need to kill coal.

We request that you respond to our memorandum within 14 working days.

Thomas Mnguni
Coordinator of the Highveld Environmental Justice Network

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Position:-----

Department:-----