



PHASA

Public Health Association
of South Africa

Primary Health Care Directorate
UCT Faculty of Health Sciences
OMB Groote Schuur Hospital
James.Irlam@uct.ac.za

14 Sept 2020

The Honourable Minister Tito Mboweni

Minister of Finance

Att: Mary Marumo (Mary.Marumo@treasury.gov.za)

Cc: <Media@treasury.gov.za>, <DGRegistry@treasury.gov.za>, <minreg@treasury.gov.za>, <Siphiwe.Dube@treasury.gov.za>

Dear Mr Mboweni

RE: An Urgent Call for Leadership on Climate, Energy and Health in Building a Post-COVID-19 South Africa

I write on behalf of the Climate Energy and Health Special Interest Group (SIG) of the Public Health Association of South Africa (PHASA), a group of public health professionals which was formed in 2017 to advocate for healthy energy policy that protects public health from climate change and air pollution-related diseases in South Africa.

In July 2020 we wrote to the Minister of Health, Minister of the Environment, Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy, and the President asking for strong leadership on climate, energy and health in building a post-COVID-19 South Africa, with special reference to the work of the proposed Presidential Climate Change Commission. A recent response from the Minister of the Environment informed us that the terms of reference of the Commission are still being prepared for Cabinet approval.

A July 2020 report by an alliance of environmental and economic justice organisations (*No going back to normal: Imagining a Just Recovery in South Africa*), calls for a transformative vision to lead the recovery of our society from COVID-19, which puts people's health first in all policies. Central to this vision is a just energy transition from fossil fuels to renewables in a way that minimizes job losses of energy workers, that allows communities more control over their energy sources, and that prioritizes the restoration and protection of the environment¹.

These initiatives followed an international petition to the leaders of the G20 countries on May 26, supported by over 350 organisations representing over 40 million health professionals and over 4500 individual health professionals from 90 different countries calling for a #HealthyRecovery. They concluded that government investments in health care, transport, energy and agriculture must prioritise health protection and promotion².

¹ 350Africa.org & Climate Justice Coalition (2020). *No going back to normal: Imagining a Just Recovery in South Africa*. <https://350africa.org/just-recovery-report/>.

² In support of a #HealthyRecovery. <https://healthyrecovery.net/>



PHASA

Public Health Association
of South Africa

Primary Health Care Directorate
UCT Faculty of Health Sciences
OMB Groote Schuur Hospital
James.Irlam@uct.ac.za

A recent letter from the desk of President Ramaphosa concluded that “*we need to act now, guided by a common strategy, to combat climate change and build a new, resilient economy*”.³ We do indeed need to act now, and it is our plea to you as Minister of Finance to lead your fellow Cabinet members toward securing ecologically sustainable development. We cannot afford anything less, and as our President has written, we cannot afford either to be out of step with international moves towards green growth and development.

We are aware that when G20 health and finance ministers meet again on 17 September 2020, they will focus on preparing for, and hopefully preventing, future crises. Since people’s health is the ‘bottom line’ of climate change, we urge you to ensure that these plans include investments in health systems, that they are inclusive, and that they fully integrate environmental sustainability and effective climate responses for the health of present and future generations.⁴

Our public finance institutions such as the Industrial Development Corporation and Development Bank of Southern Africa can take the lead in financing these plans. Their stepping into the breach to procure PPE in the wake of the pandemic is commendable. To build resilience to future crises, these institutions need to fund the more just and sustainable future we all crave. This means stopping funding fossil fuel projects and instead funding projects like those laid out in the *No going back to normal* report⁵.

You and your fellow ministers, as the shareholders and principals of these institutions, can make these changes happen. We hope you will seize this opportunity.

Sincerely

James Irlam

Chair: Climate Energy and Health Special Interest Group, Public Health Association of South Africa

³ From the desk of the President; 24 August 2020. <https://www.gov.za/blog/desk-president-34>

⁴ Section 24 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996.

⁵ 350Africa.org & Climate Justice Coalition (2020). No going back to normal: Imagining a Just Recovery in South Africa. [https://350africa.org/just-recovery-report/..](https://350africa.org/just-recovery-report/)



PHASA

Public Health Association
of South Africa

Primary Health Care Directorate
UCT Faculty of Health Sciences
OMB Groote Schuur Hospital
James.Irlam@uct.ac.za

Climate Energy and Health Special Interest Group exco members:

Maxine Brassell

Rico Euripidou

Timothy Lloyd
Attorney: Centre for Environmental Rights NPO

Glen Tyler
350Africa.org