

JUST TRANSITION

Conference



AIDC
**Alternative Information
& Development Centre**

*Strengthening Alliances for a Wage-led, Low-Carbon, Sustainable and
Equitable Development Path for Southern Africa*



Cape Town

DECEMBER

10-12th

2023

This conference is convened by the Alternative Information and
Development Centre (AIDC), Trade Unions for Energy
Democracy and the National Labour and Economic
Development Institute (NALEDI)

CONTEXT AND OVERVIEW

In response to growing debt levels – with a debt to GDP ratio of 70% - the government has been implementing harsh austerity measures to prioritise debt repayments which is now the largest expenditure item of the budget. This is coupled with the increased liberalisation of the South African economy, where, in a context of failing state-owned enterprises, over-run by debt, mismanagement and corruption, the South African government is rolling out a programme of privatisation.

The increased roll of the private sector in energy generation is purported to enable the decarbonisation of South Africa's energy sector. To this end the South African government has signed a partnership with several governments to expedite the country's transition away from coal. The Just Energy Transition Partnership with South Africa, announced at COP26 in November 2021, — was the first of its kind. The JET agreement dangled the possibility of \$8.5 billion in concessional finance mainly from multi-lateral development banks, export credit agencies or state development agencies and investment corporations. However, any financing would be contingent upon the creation of "an enabling environment through policy reform of the electricity sector, such as unbundling [of the public utility, Eskom] and improved revenue collection" (read: higher prices for electricity). Just a week after COP26, the IMF also called for the unbundling of Eskom and the need for reduction in the size of Eskom's workforce.

The government, under pressure from creditors, credit rating agencies and the international financial institutions is co-opting the language of Just Transition to give credibility and legitimacy to a thoroughly anti-working class and anti-poor programme of reforms. This amounts to a form of green structural adjustment, where loans are conditional on privatisation. It will add to the country's debt burden, further undermine public energy systems, contribute to a loss of energy sovereignty and thereby exacerbate the social crisis tearing our country apart.

The conference will bring popular forces from labour, social movements and progressive civil society to take forward discussions to define a Just Transition to address the social, economic and ecological issues tearing our country apart. In other words, to develop a ***Just Transition from below***, as an alternative to the government and big corporations Green Structural Adjustment Programme, which it labels a Just Transition.

The focus of the conference will be on current debates on how best to decarbonise energy systems, as a key pillar for dealing with the accelerating climate crisis and transitioning to a low-carbon economy. Our concern is with forging a comprehensive just transition that contributes to overcoming mass unemployment and unparalleled levels of inequality.

CONFERENCE

programme

| Sunday, 10 December | | |
|-----------------------------|--|---|
| 19:00 – 20:30 | Breaking Down the Barriers: How Austerity and Privatization Hinder Low-Carbon Energy Transition | Clara Mattei, Sarah Bracking, Matt Huber and Patrick Bond |
| Monday, 11 December | | |
| 09:00 – 10:30 | Is the Minerals-Energy Complex Going Green? Decarbonization and South Africa's Political Economy | Sam Ashman |
| 10:30 – 10:50 | Tea | |
| 10:50 – 13:00 | Pitfalls of the for-profit energy model globally and the need for a public pathway for a just transition to a low-carbon economy | Sean Sweeney |
| 13:00 – 14:00 | Lunch | |
| 14:00 – 15:30 | Is community-owned renewable energy the future? | Katrina Lehmann-Grube & Sandra Van Niekerk |
| 15:35 – 17:00 | #FixEskom for a just transition to a low-carbon economy | Khangela Baloyi & Andile Zulu |
| 18:00 – 20:00 | Film screening: Temperature Rising | Anita Khana & Rehad Desai |
| Tuesday, 12 December | | |
| 09:00 – 11:00 | The risks associated with the JETP as a model for climate finance | Penny Herbst & Dominic Brown |
| 11:00 – 11:15 | Tea | |
| 11:15 – 13:00 | Financing a public pathway approach to the energy transition and overcoming energy poverty | Duma Gqubule |
| 13:00 – 14:00 | Lunch | |
| 14:00 – 15:30 | The struggle for a just transition from below – resisting austerity and privatisation | Trevor Shaku & Hamedea Deedat |
| 15:30 – 16:30 | Way forward and closure | |