



ENVIRONMENT DAY 2023

“Antarctica – for peace and science”

Who? Extinction Rebellion Cape Town

Where? Kalk Bay Beach (behind Cape to Cuba), Kalk Bay, Cape Town

When? Monday 5 June from 10:30-11:00

What? “Hands off Antarctica! Now and forever!” action

On Environment Day, we will be staging a performance protest to highlight our call to the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties currently meeting in Finland to support the proposal for a “forever ban” on fossil fuel exploration and exploitation in Antarctica. The short theatrical piece will feature Oil Execs / Bad People pouring oil onto an iceberg, which represents the (almost) pristine wilderness of Antarctica.

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Press Release:

In a world where much of nature has been polluted or destroyed, and where wars are fought over borders, it is vital that the Antarctic Treaty System is strengthened to protect the last part of our planet where nature mostly remains unspoilt, and where, so far, nations have agreed to hold off on greedily staking claims to land. Antarctica is a kind of global commons held in shared stewardship by 55 states, the signatories to the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS) which declares that this continent should be only used for peace and science.

This week, in Helsinki Finland, delegates from the ATS signatory countries meet at the [45th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting](#) to discuss the protection and preservation of Antarctica. South Africa is attending this meeting and has decision-making status.

Currently Antarctica is protected against all mining initiatives by the “1991 Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty” (known as the Madrid Protocol). However, from 2048 onwards this agreement could be changed as it takes only one country to trigger a

review of the protocol. Countries could then undo this mining ban and we could see nations rushing to exploit the many fossil fuels nestling under the Southern Ocean.

Not only will the mining process be an environmental and biodiversity disaster for the region, but the global implications will also be dire as the extraction and use of the fossil fuels with their associated CO2 emissions will deepen the climate crisis. Given the competing claims to land and therefore mining rights, the race to carve up Antarctica will surely exacerbate geopolitical conflict.

The review of the Madrid Protocol can seem far off, but it does represent a possibility for mining in Antarctica and this has been enough to motivate some states to conduct unsanctioned prospecting for fossil fuels, for example, [Russia's research vessels have been conducting seismic blasting](#) to map the hydrocarbons around the Southern Ocean. Permanently closing the door to mining would remove the temptation to engage in the damaging exploration of Antarctica, and it would also heed the warning call from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to stop all new oil and gas projects in order to prevent even more severe impacts of climate change.

Therefore, we call on the South African government represented at ATCM to support [the proposal](#) that individual states unilaterally, and the decision-making Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties, as a group, explicitly commit now to never commence hydrocarbon extraction in Antarctica: that is to call for a "forever ban" on fossil fuel exploration and exploitation in Antarctica.

—END

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Boiler plate

Extinction Rebellion (XR) is a global network and believes it is a citizen's duty to rebel using peaceful civil disobedience when faced with criminal inactivity by its Government. The Rebellion centres on demands for Government to tell the truth about our dire situation and to act accordingly, including to decarbonise our economy by 2025, in a mobilisation of war time like proportion.

We declare a non-violent rebellion on behalf of life itself and against our criminally negligent government. Our government's abject failure to protect citizens and the next generations from unimaginable suffering brought about by climate breakdown and social collapse is no longer tolerable.

The group's key demands are:

- The Government must admit the truth about the ecological emergency, reverse all policies inconsistent with addressing climate change, and work alongside the media to communicate with citizens
- The Government must enact legally binding policy measures to reduce carbon emissions to net zero by 2025 and to reduce consumption levels
- A national Citizen's Assembly to oversee the changes, as part of creating a democracy fit for purpose.

Website: www.extinctionrebellion.org.za