

## **PRESS RELEASE**

EXTINCTION REBELLION CAPE TOWN

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 18 OCTOBER 2023**



**extinction  
rebellion  
CAPE TOWN**

## **KING COAL IS BACK!**

**What?** A SECOND protest action at AFRICAN ENERGY WEEK which is taking place at CTICC1.

**Who?** Extinction Rebellion Cape Town

**Where?** Outside CTICC1, 1 Lower Long Street, Foreshore, Cape Town

**When?** Wednesday 18 October 2023 from 8:30-9:00 (in the morning)

### **Contact persons:**

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### **Details of action:**

Members of Extinction Rebellion will be staging a protest action on the second day of African Energy Week, with a specific focus on "**KING COAL IS BACK**" (which is on the AEW agenda for the day).

### **Press Release**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, coal is an ageing and, many argue, obsolete technology. Evoking images of choking black dust, dirty mines, and polluting emissions, [coal has long been considered a fuel that must be phased out for the health of our planet.](#)

Yet, this Africa Energy Week announces that "King Coal is Back", heralding the entrance of "Africa's Future Clean Coal Industry". The session calls coal "a reliable baseload power source for driving economic growth" and argues that it plays a pivotal role in "balancing environmental concerns with the socio-economic development imperatives of African countries". Such statements warrant extreme scrutiny.

While the need to rapidly decarbonise cannot be overstated, the reality is that we will need to continue to use fossil fuels *in the short term* to transition to renewable energy alternatives. Extinction Rebellion understands the reality that the Just Energy Transition is a process that unfortunately involves highly polluting technologies as we attempt to bridge the gap between a carbon-based grid and a renewable one.

However, we reject the suggestion that a “Clean Coal Industry” is possible. [Every aspect of coal production, from the mining of coal to the point where it is burnt for our electricity, is toxic to life on Earth. It is the most polluting way to produce electricity.](#) How could something so dirty ever be made clean?

This point is only reinforced by the fact that, here in South Africa, a 2017 study confirmed that air pollution from the coal industry [not only results in disproportionate instances of respiratory infection but is also the cause of death of more than 2000 South Africans per year.](#) This data was used in the Deadly Air Case, in which [claimants from Mpumalanga went to court to prove that South Africa’s reliance on coal causes various devastating health issues. The judge ruled that polluted air does indeed violate the human right to a healthy environment,](#) confirming that the coal industry has played a devastating role in the poor health of many South Africans.

Considering the impact of coal pollution on South African lives, it is not only deeply insensitive but categorically false to claim that coal could ever be a “clean” fuel. The claimants of the Deadly Air case can attest to the fact that coal is a toxic pollutant.

Additionally, if the session tries to claim that “Africa’s Future Clean Coal Industry” will be achieved through carbon offsetting, we have another reason to raise our eyebrows. [Carbon offsetting schemes have been exposed as notoriously unreliable and, in many cases, scams that have no positive impact on the environment.](#)

Alternatively, [carbon capture and storage schemes do offer great potential for mitigating the progress of global warming.](#) However, [carbon sequestration is still in its infancy as a technology and must be accompanied by a move away from fossil fuels towards renewable and energy efficient fuel sources.](#) Carbon capture on its own is not enough to clean up coal’s dirty reputation.

Even if carbon offsetting were as effective as greenwashing claims attest and carbon capture were advanced enough to make a real difference to emissions,

they will never be enough to halt global warming and end the climate crisis on their own. The UN emphasises that ["carbon offset projects will never be able to curb the emissions growth... if coal power stations continue to be built"](#). As long as fossil fuel companies and coal proponents promise to account for their emissions later while polluting the atmosphere in the present, human and nonhuman life remains threatened by toxic air and a warming planet.

As Extinction Rebellion Cape Town, we contest the claim that coal could ever be a "clean" fuel source. While we acknowledge that we will be using fossil fuels in the short term as we transition to renewable energy sources, we reject the suggestion that coal has any role to play in Africa's future – especially since it has already altered and stolen the lives of so many Africans. Let's leave coal in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and seize the diminishing opportunity to decarbonise – before it's too late!

–end

## CTICC - Meeting Room 1.4

09:00-10:00

### **King Coal is Back - Africa's Future Clean Coal Industry**

The session will delve into the pivotal role coal plays in the energy portfolios of African nations, serving as a reliable baseload power source for driving economic growth. Despite contributing to 28% of Africa's electricity generation in 2021, coal remains a subject of global controversy. The discussion will examine coal's significance within the domestic and global energy landscape. Of particular focus will be the examination of coal's role in the context of a Just Energy Transition, considering the need for balancing environmental concerns with the socio-economic development imperatives of African countries.

## **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](http://www.extinctionrebellion.org.za)**