

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Getting Ready

Renewables sector preparing 'just transition' roadmap

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South Africa's renewable-energy sector has revealed that it is preparing a 'just transition' roadmap that seeks to speed up and assist the mobilisation of wind and solar energy in regions where gold and coal mining are on the decline.

By incorporating employment and industrialisation in the renewable-energy industry, the roadmap intends to accelerate economic activity and produce job opportunities within the affected areas.

According to the plan, independent power producers will be encouraged to develop projects in these coal and gold mining regions – such as eMalahleni in Mpumalanga – where the closure of State-owned Eskom's power stations in the coming years is projected to have a negative impact on the economy and citizens alike.

Other regions – such as Klerksdorp – where gold mining has slowly been waning over the past decade, will also be targeted.

The roadmap is closely aligned with the redefined industrial strategy created by the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition, the Competition Commission's Initiative, as well as the Public Private Growth Initiative behind President **Cyril Ramaphosa's** campaign to attract \$100-billion in investment between 2018 and 2022.

Additionally, the roadmap complements the Presidential Climate Change Commission, with the shared goal of creating a low-carbon economy in South Africa.

The South African Renewable Energy Council (SAREC) is in favour of extending the solar-focused strategy into the Renewable Energy Industry Development Plan.

SAREC is also in the process of consulting with Mineral Resources and Energy Minister

Gwede Mantashe on the significant contribution of renewable energy in accelerating growth.

One solution introduced by the plan was to extend the timeframes for power purchase agreements in order to lower tariff charges, the statement said last week.

The Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries will declare eMalahleni and Klerksdorp, as well as Beaufort West and eight other areas, as Renewable Energy Development Zones (REDZs). These towns were selected in a previous Strategic Environmental Assessment, according to the statement released by the organisers of the upcoming Africa Energy Indaba.

The objective of the REDZs is to build an intricate framework that has the potential to maximise industrialisation and employment by leveraging the benefits of wind and solar energy.

"A long-term framework is necessary to realise the vision," the statement said, adding that these initiatives could range from offering previous coal miners employment preferences in the new renewable-energy projects to establishing manufacturing enterprises that have capacity to supply renewable plants.

Ultimately, the statement stated, "there is a need for a shared vision along with a steadfast plan to lower scepticism regarding the impending change through the just transition and its reinforcement".

This sentiment coincides with prevailing debates and discussions set to take place at the Africa Energy Indaba 2020, where sessions will delve into renewable energy as a viable investment option for economic growth, thereby using climate change as an opportunity rather than a looming threat. 