

State's tardy approach to emissions under fire

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A group of civil society organisations has submitted a complaint to the public protector, saying that the government is dragging its feet in setting targets to limit greenhouse gas emissions, as required by policy.



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The groups say the government's failure to implement its climate change policy exposes the economy and financial institutions including pension funds, to "unnecessary and unacceptable risk".

In terms of the government's 2011 white paper on the state's response to national climate change, desired emission reduction outcomes (Deros) needed to have been set within two years. But to date, these have not been done.

Deros for 2020 are in the works, but Deros were meant to be set for the medium term, 2030; and long term, 2050. Yet they had been held back because of lack of integrated energy planning, in particular integrated resources planning for electricity supply, said the organisations.

In July, the national climate change committee - a multi-stakeholder committee - indicated that, in effect, discussion would have to wait for the Integrated Resource Plan, the state's long-term plan for electricity generation, the latest version of which has been stalled for six years. But in an explanation note in August, it appeared there would no attempt to set medium- and long-term objectives, the organisations said.

"All the signs suggest that they are giving up altogether," said Richard Worthington, associate researcher to the Alternative Information and Development Centre (AIDC). It was this that had prompted the approach to the public protector, he said.

Worthington said investors whose portfolios included fossil fuels needed some certainty on future carbon emission limits to manage their risks. This was particularly so for long-term investors such as pension funds, he said.

The AIDC is the non-governmental organisation leading the complaint, along with 12 others.

With Khulekani Magubane

Source: Business Day

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