**11 November 2022**

**MEMORANDUM:**

**To: eThekwini Municipality and the Department of Minerals, Resources and Energy**

**From: South Durban Community Environmental Alliance and allies:**

**• Ubunye Bama Hostela •** **Traditional Healers**

**• Abahlali BaseMjondolo •** **Blackburn Community**

**• Market Users Committee •** **Wentworth Communities**

**• KZN Subsistence Fishers Forum • Anti-Pollution Watch Dog’s**

**• Green Thumb Society • Kings Harvest Academy**

**• Poor Flat Dwellers Movement • Newlands East and Bonela Youth**

**• Mam Ntombela's Girls • MCEJO**

**• Merebank Community • SDCEA Youth**

**The following concerns are expressed by the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (SDCEA) and allied organisations.**

SDCEA and allies are mobilising on 11 November 2022 to march against oil and gas exploration on our coastline by Total, Shell, Impact Africa, PetroSA and others who have applied to conduct offshore seismic blasting. In past years these firms also included Sasol, ExxonMobil, Equinor, ENI and Silver Wave, all of which held dubious licenses without having engaged in proper environmental impact assessments.

We march against the risks of oil and gas exploration in our ocean, the impact on our marine life, the livelihoods of all the fisherfolk who rely on the ocean for their survival, dangers to eco-tourism and the hospitality industry, and above all, the climate catastrophe which threatens much life on earth for future generations. We residents of Durban are raising awareness about the negative impacts of fossil fuels on the poor and the marginalised along the entire value chain from exploration to extraction to processing and refining to transport to combustion. In each case, Big Oil firms and the petrochemical complex in and around Durban and Richards Bay are playing a life-threatening role, while recording unprecedented profits.

More than 500 lives were lost on April 11-12 during the 350mm Rain Bomb, and not only was more than R50 billion in damage done to public and private infrastructure. The eThekwini Water and Sanitation system broke, as hundreds of major pipeline breaks occurred during mudslides and torrential water flows. Our municipality was woefully prepared, as most adaptation resources have been directed to maintaining riverine buffer zones inherited from the apartheid era, not to strengthen our own habitats. The lack of state funding for Loss & Damage repaids, and for further spending on better stormwater drainage

We are therefore protesting the new rush of fossil fuel companies trying to drill for oil and gas more than 3 kilometers deep in our beautiful Indian Ocean, in the world’s second-most dangerous current (the Agulhas). And we are also protesting the funders of new fossil fuel projects, especially the World Bank which in 2019 began work on an LNG terminal at Richards Bay alongside Transnet, having made its largest-ever loan for the corrupt *skorokoro* Medupi power plant in 2010, which we led an international campaign to halt. We are already protesting in the courts against ecologically-damaging Karpowerships and also against Eskom’s attempt to establish a 3000MW gas-fired power plant in Richards Bay, because with leakage of methane, scientists consider gas to be 85 times more potent than even CO2 in causing the climate crisis.

In all these cases, we are concerned that since South African offshore gas is so deep and difficult to reach, with hundreds of beach protests over the past year and court cases blocking big oil, the incoming gas inputs to Eskom’s grid will consist of what is termed “Blood Methane,” 3000km northwards on our same coastline, from Cabo Delgado, Mozambique. There, French president Emmanuel Macron insisted his Paris-based TotalEnergies be protected by more than 1000 SANDF troops, so as to ward off an insurgency that in March 2021 threatened a $20 billion gas plant at one of the world’s largest methane fields. The troops should come home and Mozambique should be paid climate debt for Loss & Damage in 2019 when Cyclones Idai and Kenneth swept through. And there should be sufficient payments made to persuade authorities leave the gas underground, *with the same principle of compensation that South Africa is demanding when negotiating the $8.5 billion Just Energy Transition Partnership.*

We are especially concerned about our government's decision to allow offshore oil and gas exploration, which has the potential to destroy our climate, shoreline communities and tourism industry, recreational opportunities including surfing and diving, marine life and the associated sustainable livelihoods such as subsistence fishing. (We oppose, similarly, any of the methane fracking plans being developed by Shell, Rhino and other oil firms for the Karoo or Drakensburg.)

The gas extraction process inevitably leads to toxic refining and processing. In South Durban, SDCEA and allies have struggled for environmental justice for poor and marginalised people who continue to suffer from ill health linked to the atrocious levels of petro-chemical pollution, even after two massive refineries closed (Engen in late 2020 after an explosion, and Shell/BP in April 2022). Moreover, transport of fossil fuels on road, rail and pipelines is just as dangerous. The brand new Transnet Multiproduct Petroleum Product Pipeline is already subject to tsotsi syndicate bunkering, with no apparent solution. The Rain Bomb showed how vulnerable Transnet’s rail lines are, as they too have not been climate-proofed. Massive truck accidents confirm that Gauteng consumers are inadvertently causing chaos along the N3.

Moreover, since the 500 Rain Bomb victims were all black and low-income, with vulnerable shack housing due to the collapse of eThekwini’s shelter programme, and since their treatment in municipal halls and new home construction have been pitiful, we know who suffers most from a changed climate, one which will be amplified as Big Oil drills offshore our Indian Ocean coastline.

We are facing interconnected social, economic and ecological crises, which require us to transform our archaic and harmful energy and oil/gas sector to ensure a more socially, economically and ecologically just future. We need transformative action now, which is what we are demanding summarised below.

**We demand:**

1. A rapid and just transition to a more socially owned, renewable energy powered economy, providing clean, safe and affordable energy for all, with no worker and community left behind in the transition, as the state and society urgently embark on the “One Million Climate Jobs” programme.
2. No to any new polluting, GreenhouseGas-emitting, corrupt and expensive coal, oil and gas fossil fuel projects.
3. An end to fossil-fueled corruption, with the Departments of Minerals and Energy and Public Enterprises, the Presidential Climate Commission, PetroSA and other state agencies to be investigated for their irregular deals dating to the late-2000s onslaught of coal-fired power plants and other fossil projects.
4. Reject the corrupt, costly and unnecessary Karpowerships programme, as well as the Richards Bay Transnet/World Bank LNG terminal and Eskom methane gas plant, and indeed all offshore gas and oil drilling including those projects involving the South African military or fossil corporations in Mozambique (Sasol) and Namibia (Impact Oil & Gas).
5. Shoreline communities and fisherfolk – both men and women – must have the “right to say no!” to oil and gas projects, based on free, prior and informed consent, and the right to sustainable alternative modes of development, just as the Xolobeni community and other Wild Coast activists have won in the courts and on the beaches through their heroic struggles. This includes areas where Special Economic Zones are already – or anticipated to become – ultra-polluting sites (Richards Bay, Dube, Coega, Musina-Makhado, etc).
6. Government should reject projects that could potentially harm our marine life, fishing, shoreline recreation, eco-tourism and related activities, as well as damaging our health as toxins are released when exploration, drilling, refining, processing, transport and combustion occur.
7. We need a Green New Eskom, undoing privatised Independent Power Producers so as to build socially-owned renewable projects and more storage capacity inside the utility, ultimately driving a truly Just Transition.
8. Damage done by the April 11-12 Rain Bomb must now be prioritised for repair and climate-proofing, not only at the emissions-intense Toyota and other South Durban industrial facilities with massive state subsidies, but to benefit all the people who suffered extreme Loss&Damage. A massive public works programme must begin to make our city and region climate-resilient, since there will be many more extreme weather events in coming months and years. And in spite of all its internationally-broadcast rhetoric to the contrary, eThekwini municipality departments – plus local industries and households – again and again show they are woefully prepared to withstand the climate crisis. Their incompetence and lack of caring should be the subject of a national investigation, and if the Treasury is to blame due to its unprecedented austerity policy since late 2020, that too must be reversed.

SDCEA Office Coalition, Desmond D’Sa Member of the Executive Council

eThekwini Municipality, Office of the Mayor Department of Minerals, Resources and Energy, Senior Manager