

Climate change intervention vital to addressing food security

By **Annerie Weber MP** – DA Member of Parliament's Portfolio Committee for Environment, Fisheries and Forestry

"The evolution of humanity says that Africa reaffirms that she is continuing her rise from the ashes. Whatever the setbacks of the moment, nothing can stop us now! Whatever the difficulties, Africa shall be at peace!" – Thabo Mbeki from his "I am an African" speech

For too long, climate change was seen as an issue for the elitists, the environmentalists and academics. The SA government never seemed to realise how much the climate crisis will affect ordinary South Africans. As we stand here today, we cannot deny how the two are interlinked. South Africans are feeling the severe impact of climate change.

Honourable Chair, 30.3 million of SA are not at peace. Their difficulty and setback is poverty and hunger. They are desperately trying on a daily basis to rise out of the ashes, to get employed, to fight off poverty, but to no avail. 13.8 million South Africans are experiencing severe food poverty. This is an absolute disgrace.

South Africans are experiencing the serious consequences of climate change. We experience heatwaves, droughts, water scarcity and food insecurity. A few examples:

- Day zero in Cape Town;
- The garden route fires;
- The impact of cyclones Eloise and Ana to Mozambique and how close this has come to South African coastal cities;
- The Nqweba dam in Graaff Reinet;
- The heat wave in Cape Town;
- Droughts all over the country – impacting crops and cattle production; and
- Floods in KwaZulu-Natal.

Before Covid-19, the FIES analysis indicated that SA already had a very serious food insecurity problem of almost 10 million people.

The high levels of poverty across SA leaves many without the resources to buffer themselves and recover from the changing climate. Poor people do not have access to food. They do not have money to buy food and with the petrol price so high, they cannot afford taxis or transport. Self-sustainable vegetable gardens can only be effective if there is water and the correct temperatures. Children in our country are dying due to malnutrition and hunger.

We cannot turn a blind eye anymore and think that climate change does not have an impact.

South Africa needs leadership that will effectively and actively combat climate change to ensure that the earth doesn't warm with another 1.5°C.

No strategic plans, or internationally signed Paris-agreements, will make a difference without political will or proper implementation. Government's ineffective enforcement of the law to ensure the prosecution of perpetrators is ghastly.

Coal fossil fuel power stations keep polluting with no consequences. The mining industry, especially illegal miners, do not rehabilitate destroying ecosystems and waterways, which causes temperatures to keep rising. Industries continue as always as there are no consequences for their behaviour. Their contribution to climate change is disastrous. Climate change interventions need to form an integral part of budgets, and should not be regarded as optional.

The people of SA deserves more. They deserve a government that cares, a government that will ensure that there is food security, a government that will ensure there are consequences to those that jeopardise the lives and food security of other South Africans. Then only can we speak about peace.