

Role of Parliament in Responding to the Energy Crisis

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1 Introduction

- The energy crisis, in South Africa, has notably manifested in the form of successive rounds of load-shedding or load-reduction. The crisis is mainly attributed to underproduction and hence, growing demands of electricity exceeding supply, that is as a result of the following:
 - poor maintenance of infrastructure,
 - increasing population,
 - lack of storage,
 - power plant commissioning delays,
 - unused renewable options,
 - political obstruction,
 - over consumption and energy waste.

2 Response to the Main Presentation

- Lesotho
 - The Lesotho Highlands project not only provides the much-needed water resources but also additional energy in the region through hydro-power generation.
 - The planned expansion of the project is likely to see additional hydropower generation into the grid.
 - Interactions between Water, and Energy Crisis – viewed and resolved through the nexus approach (specifically the Water-Energy-Food nexus) could offer resilient and just transition towards low carbon economic and sustainable development. For the just transition to be realized reforms are needed across these sectors taking into account their interrelationship, competition and interdependency. A nexus approach could offer and/or contributes towards the addition of green and low carbon power generation, such as solar, methane, etc. while reducing the impact of our interaction systems – low energy consumption.

3 Critical Analysis of Presidents' Proposed Strategies towards addressing the Energy Crisis

- Scrapping of licensing requirements for private energy projects – issues that come to mind or are of concern is procurement and unethical behaviour. An example of how the covid-19 funds and budgets taught us an important lesson and the need for proactive oversight mechanisms on the part of Parliament.
- Procurement from Private Public Partnerships – Parliament should ensure that government implements this in a fair and equitable procurement process through its oversight tools and mechanisms
- Importing of Surplus Power from neighbouring states, namely Botswana and Zambia – Parliament should ensure that the prices for procuring and importing energy outside of South Africa are cost-effective and take advantage of the Africa Continental Trade deal
- Locally manufactured green economy projects – even though this initiative is encouraged, local entities need to be strengthened to participate and also Parliament must ensure that the necessary policies (from IP, labour relations, etc.) to guide this process are implemented and equitable.

- Battery Storage proposals to be released in September 2022
- Specialised legislation addressing legal and regulatory abstracts – Parliament should ensure that there are clear and well-ring-fenced policies that align with the relevant policies and prescripts of the laws in South Africa.
- Increase in Eskom's critical maintenance budget – project-based auditing and oversight throughout the process is required not only to ensure the planned maintenance is conducted but also that the funds are used for that purpose.

It noted that the Hon Speaker of Parliament has requested the Head of Business Government and Deputy President of the Republic to keep Parliament updated on interventions in the energy crisis – These initiatives from the Speaker are welcomed, a good first step, however, Parliament should be kept updated on projects, their procurement, costs of energy from neighbouring countries as this will have an impact on the local affordability of electricity. Parliament is encouraged to be more proactive in its oversight role and not conduct oversight after the fact.

The extent to which PPPs will be involved and the period need to be clearly articulated, such as costs to end users, and the implementation process.

4 Oversight Role of Parliament

- The Executive has established a joint- intergovernmental approach or sectorial approach to addressing the energy crisis. Parliament needs to also form a similar oversight structure as Government in responding to the energy crisis, this will ensure sufficient capacity and representation of the different sector governments can provide comprehensive oversight.
 - Procurement of energy – from PPPs and buying power from our neighbouring countries to ensure fairness and also protected our national entity in the process.
 - Ensure that increasing the private sector involvement doesn't disadvantage or replace Eskom over time, as this translates to cascading impacts on the economy
 - At the same time, Parliament should ensure that Eskom addressed challenges and can fulfil its intended mandate in the long term.
- Parliament must implement an impact-based approach to their oversight – where value for money used is equal to the implemented project or services rendered.
 - This will ensure that Parliament oversight and government moves towards a just transition – where costs and benefits of climate actions are aligned.
- Parliament should implement an indicator based and tracking – this will enable committees in parliament to be able to track and help to identify potential risks and vulnerabilities – This can also be used in tracking committee resolutions proposed to Departments or Governments for intervention or mitigation of identified risks.
- Parliament through its available mechanisms and others must implement stricter consequences management
- The proposed legislation – while ensuring economic development ad sustainability should also adhere to the constitutional imperatives and prescripts, as well as related policies
- Budgeting and Procurement
- Parliament should ensure that Government meets our international agreements in terms of greenhouse gas reduction, and related air quality.
- There is a strong need for Parliament to increase the internal capacity for the committees to efficiently and effectively conduct their oversight roles while keeping up with the fast pace changes.