

Anti-nuke NGOs fear the worst

INDABA: MAHLOBO REFUSES TO ALLOW DISCUSSION ON THE POWER PLAN AT GATHERING

» **Energy minister to present power generation proposal to president by next week.**

Amanda Watson

Opponents of a R1 trillion nuclear power station-build programme fear the worst: that Energy Minister David Mahlobo and President Jacob Zuma will push it through even though South Africa currently has an electricity surplus.

They demonstrated outside the Energy Indaba in Midrand yesterday, voicing concern that for the ANC government nuclear energy is not even up for debate.

And discussions on where South Africa should source its energy from in the next few years were firmly closed before the indaba even started.

Yesterday, Mahlobo said that by next week he would give Zuma “the plan” – the Independent Resource Plan (IRP), which he must then make available to South Africans, to grow the sector.

“President Zuma is our father as a nation and he has worked very hard for us to be sitting here today with other leaders of the ANC and freedom fighters so that together we can convince this room to shape our future and our destiny,” Mahlobo said

However, many organisations have a problem with “the plan” and have threatened legal action.



MAKING A POINT. Various anti-nuclear groups protest outside the Energy Indaba in Midrand yesterday in opposition to the government’s nuclear energy plans. Picture: Neil McCartney

The Coalition for Environmental Justice, Dargle Conservancy, Earthlife Africa Johannesburg, Far South Peninsula Community Forum, Federation for a Sustainable Environment, Frack Free South Africa, Greenpeace Africa, groundWork, and the Centre For Environmental Rights (CER) are just a handful of the organisations

at their wits’ end with Mahlobo.

CER and a few others have threatened legal action, depending on the contents of Mahlobo’s “plan”, which will detail how South Africa will source its energy in the years to come.

The organisation noted at a meeting this week that Mahlobo had “made it clear” there would

be no further public participation on the contents of the IRP before its approval by Cabinet.

Mahlobo also apparently told representatives that the Energy Indaba “was not intended to address the IRP in any way, shape or form – instead it was for business, labour and government to discuss ways to reinvigorate the energy

sector in order to stimulate economic growth”.

The Organisation Undoing Tax Abuse (Outa) was also one of a few organisations protesting at the indaba.

“This is not consultation,” said Outa’s Ben Theron afterwards.

“We absolutely reject the indaba as any form of public consultation as the [department] chose who should attend.

“Outa will fight this manipulated and flawed process.”

Zuma, who has pushed for a new nuclear power station-build programme in spite of Finance Minister Malusi Gigaba’s protestations that South Africa could not afford it, said nothing to allay fears that it was already in the pipeline.

“We want to ensure that we never experience an energy shortage again,” said Zuma.

“In this regard, we will continuously invest in power generation, transmission and distribution infrastructure.

“We are pursuing our energy security master plan. We are looking at an energy mix that includes coal, solar, wind, hydro, gas and nuclear.”

Theron said: “The energy policy process and, particularly, the attempts to include the nuclear build, is hugely controversial and the department of energy clearly knows this.

“Discussions and decisions on these matters must involve clear, legal and effective public participation, which doesn’t include hastily arranged meetings with a limited guest list.”

– amandaw@citizen.co.za