

# ‘Signed-off’ energy plan has civil groups fuming at Mahlobo

A GROUP of civil society organisations last night said they were seeking legal advice about the government’s proposed nuclear deal and the revelation this week by Energy Minister David Mahlobo that the Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) had been signed off by the cabinet.

“It seems the minister wants to scare us into submission or confuse us with alternative facts,” said Liz McDaid, an energy expert at the Southern African Faith Communities’ Environment Institute (SAFCEI).

“On Wednesday, he stated that the IRP had been approved by the cabinet, but formal notification is yet to be made public. We will continue to fight for our right to be involved in these decisions and won’t be discouraged, particularly since we have the law and the constitution on our side.”

The IRP outlines how South Africa’s future electricity demand should be met.

“According to the minister, nuclear energy will always be a part of South Africa’s energy mix. How does the government keep coming to the conclusion that nuclear energy needs to be part of the country’s energy planning? Globally, and locally, all the scientific and experiential evidence points to the end of the nuclear era,

and the dawn of a dynamic renewable and just energy future,” said McDaid.

Her colleague, Zainab Adams, SAFCEI’s outreach co-ordinator, said Mahlobo had “blatantly snubbed civil society by deliberately excluding us from his energy indaba”, which made it clear South Africa did not have ethical democratic governance.

This week, protests erupted outside the “hastily arranged” indaba as a coalition of civil society groups including Greenpeace Africa, GroundWork, Earthlife Africa and the Centre for Environmental Rights said they did not see the indaba as legitimate.

They had met Mahlobo on Tuesday, when he indicated there would be no further public participation on the contents of the IRP for electricity, its approval by the cabinet and its subsequent publication.

“The IRP is the country’s future roadmap for electricity planning and there has been conversation among interested parties about which energy sources – such as coal, nuclear and renewables – the country should adopt,” said the coalition.

“We now await the publication of the IRP, following which we will decide the way forward, which may include further litigation.” – Sheree Bega