#Sona2024 - “Far Too Many Inconsistencies Between Government’s Rhetoric And Its Actions”
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While President Cyril Ramaphosa shared, in his state of the nation address (SONA) on 8 February, a seemingly positive vision and outlook for what South Africa can achieve, the Southern Africa Faith Communities’ Environment Institute (SAFCEI) says his rhetoric and government action to address the energy crisis do not align. The president’s speech recognised the challenges that the country is facing and presented various mechanisms with which to address those challenges. However, SAFCEI’s Executive Director Francesca de Gasparis says, “The president spoke about green jobs, the green economy and the just energy transition, but his words and vision, so far, have not translated into decisions being taken about energy.”

“There was no mention of the contested energy alternatives that have been included in the latest IRP, such as nuclear energy, gas and coal. Since civil society has been contesting the IRP for its inclusion, we find it interesting that the President did not make any mention of these” adds de Gasparis.

SAFCEI further elaborates that there is also a gap between the president’s rhetoric and government action on the current energy crisis, namely loadshedding. As the energy department continues to promote Karpowerships, gas exploration and nuclear energy - in SAFCEI’s view, erroneously so - community-based organisations are working on the frontlines to help the most affected who are suffering from the impact of the power cuts.

The Kgatelopele Social Development Forum (KSDF), which runs feeding schemes in three areas in the Northern Cape, has expressed grave frustration with vandalism of its facilities during power outages. Just in the last two weeks they have had daily break-ins.

Sophia Booysen, who runs the feeding schemes at KSDF, says “We never find the people who break in during loadshedding. Even the South African Police Service can not trace them. Nothing is happening.”

“As a multi-faith, environmental justice organisation, we remain concerned about whether the president’s words will translate into reality for people living in South Africa. This means that we need words that translate into action. And that action means implementation of energy systems that are affordable, safe, reliable and quick to install,” concludes de Gasparis.

The Kgatelopele Social Development Forum (KSDF) is a beneficiary of the Rural Action for Climate Resilience (RACR) program, which receives funding from the Embassy of Ireland.