

# SA can keep coal-fired plants running longer, climate committee says

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South Africa's top climate policy body on Monday, 15 May, suggested the government could delay retiring its ageing coal-fired power plants to address electricity shortages, adding a power crisis had put the country on track to meet its climate goals anyway.



Aerial view of parts of a residential area in Johannesburg affected by load shedding. Source: Reuters/Siphwe Sibeko

The ANC has recommended that Eskom delay the decommissioning of its ageing coal-fired power stations to help minimise rolling electricity outages.

However, it is also committed to a plan - partly funded to the tune of \$8.5bn by the United States, Britain, France, Germany and the European Union - to accelerate a shift away from coal and towards solar and wind energy.

President Cyril Ramaphosa has said that the total cost could prove ten times higher than what Western donors are offering to finance.

"The least-cost approach is to pull the coal plants off when they reach the end of their economic life," said Crispian Olver, executive director of the Presidential Climate Commission (PCC), adding that this would be the point at which it costs more to maintain them than let them go.



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**Good progress being made on emissions reduction, says Olver**

"Moving the decommissioning ... by a couple of years is ... not going to fundamentally affect our NDC (nationally determined contributions to emissions reductions)," he added. "We are making good progress (on) emission reductions partly because of the extent of (power cuts) ... and anemic economic growth."

South Africa is heavily reliant on coal for electricity. As a result, it coughed out 430 megatonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> in 2021, making it the world's 14th biggest carbon emitter, according to the latest data from Global Carbon Atlas. That put it ahead of Britain, Mexico and Australia, all of which are much bigger economies.

South Africa's national target for emissions reductions is 398-510MtCO<sub>2</sub>e by 2025 and 350-420MtCO<sub>2</sub>e by 2030.

Donors did not immediately respond to requests for comment on whether this would be acceptable under the terms of the energy transition deal.

A South African government source, who declined to be named because they were not authorised to speak, said South African officials had met diplomats from the donor countries over the possibility of delay on 28 April.

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