

# SA needs more ambitious emissions target, government commission says

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South Africa should set a more ambitious emissions reduction target in the leadup to a United Nations climate conference this year for economic and health reasons, a commission advising the president has recommended.



Lethabo Power Station near Sasolburg. Reuters/Siphwe Sibeko

President Cyril Ramaphosa asked the commission of officials, scientists and activists to advise him on the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) the government will submit ahead of the COP26 conference in Glasgow in November.

A draft NDC released by the environment department in March significantly lowered the upper limit of the target range for greenhouse gas emissions in 2030 to a range of 398-440 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (Mt CO<sub>2</sub>e).

But the Presidential Climate Commission recommended a lower range of 350-420 Mt CO<sub>2</sub>e in 2030, the commission's report showed. Climate Action Tracker estimates South Africa emitted roughly 480-490 Mt CO<sub>2</sub>e last year.

Setting a more ambitious target "opens up the prospect of greater levels of international climate finance support", would make the economy more competitive in the long term and achieve health benefits by reducing air pollution, the climate commission said.



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## Eskom one of the worst offenders

Africa's most industrialised economy is also its biggest emitter of greenhouse gases. State-owned power utility Eskom, which chiefly burns coal to generate electricity, is one of the worst offenders.

But under Ramaphosa, who became head of state in February 2018, the government has promised to take swifter action to combat climate change and unveiled reforms aimed at embracing power generation from renewable sources.

A senior Eskom official told Reuters in an interview this week that the company was pitching a \$10bn plan to global lenders that would see it shut the vast majority of its coal plants by 2050.

The commission highlighted the risks South Africa faces from a rapidly decarbonising global economy, including potential trade barriers on emissions-intensive products.

In a statement issued by the presidency, Ramaphosa said the commission's recommendations, along with public comments made during a consultation process, would form part of his cabinet's deliberations on the draft NDC.

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