



24 Jan



'Move the dial': Renewables action plan aims to get more than just the power going

news24 Lameez Omarjee

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The renewable energy masterplan has to detail how different industries will be developed to ensure inclusive growth.

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Renewables should create benefits for South Africans beyond electricity, says Gaylor Montmasson-Clair.

The newly appointed facilitator of the SA Renewable Energy Masterplan is optimistic it can be signed off this year.

Montmasson-Clair is inviting a "coalition of the willing" to make their mark in ensuring the renewable energy industry is inclusive.

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An "extremely detailed" action plan, with specific interventions for implementation, is in the works this year to ensure renewable energy yields benefits beyond electricity, says Gaylor Montmasson-Clair, newly appointed facilitator of the South African Renewable Energy Masterplan.

Initial analysis cited in a **draft plan published by non-profit GreenCape last year** indicates that localising 70% of components (required for renewable energy plants such as solar PV and wind), as well as drawing on local service providers for operations and maintenance, could support 36 500 jobs by 2030 and contribute R420 billion.

Now, Montmasson-Clair is inviting a "coalition of the willing" to make their mark in the plan that will detail how renewable energy will stimulate new industries such as manufacturing and promote inclusive economic growth and meaningful jobs.

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The collaborative work – between government, labour, research institutions and the private sector - is overseen by the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition and the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy.

Following the initial analysis by GreenCape, which promotes the green economy in South Africa, the targets and timelines have to be refined, and this is where Montmasson-Clair comes in. He will be building on the work of the draft by setting out a "painstakingly detailed" action plan of how to deliver on objectives.

"It will be extremely detailed in a sense there will be specific interventions to be implemented by the stakeholders ... It is really an action plan," he says.

Montmasson-Clair says he is engaged in consultation with stakeholders across the board - including government, labour, industry and civil society.

His goal is to have a working document within the first half of the year and then to have further consultation before the document is finalised and signed off in the latter half of the year.

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Montmasson-Clair is optimistic about meeting these timelines because so much work has already been done, and there are structures in place.

Among these structures are nine workstreams with relevant task teams.

The workstreams target issues such as local content policy, support for new entrants, support for trade and exports, skills and technology transfer, ensuring transformation and input materials, and balancing imports with supporting the competitiveness of the local industry.

Another workstream focuses on market certainty. Unfortunately, South Africa's experience is that when government stalled the Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Procurement Programme (REIPPPP) after 2016, quite a few local manufacturers in the **solar PV industry closed down**.

Since GreenCape's draft was released in March 2022, there have been significant changes in the electricity sector – particularly to respond to the power crisis. For one, there is a growing private sector market, which means demand for renewable energy goes beyond the state's REIPPPP, Montmasson-Clair notes.

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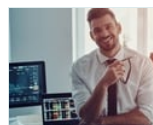
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As to whether the masterplan depends on government's energy planning policies – such as the Integrated Resources Plan (IRP), Montmasson-Clair says that it should be aligned with government's demand projections.

"We need to have an idea of what will happen in the public sector, and in that sense, the IRP is important," says Montmasson-Clair. The masterplan will consider the existing IRP (and its next iteration) as it informs public sector procurement. The masterplan will also take into account the fact there will be a massive market for renewables from the private sector.

Montmasson-Clair notes that the masterplan supports the rollout of renewable energy, which will play a role in resolving South Africa's energy challenges.

Equally important is maximising the benefits of having more renewable energy.

"We are trying to maximise benefits coming from renewable energy in terms of employment, manufacturing and inclusivity," says Montmasson-Clair.

"We are not expecting that Sarem [South African Renewable Energy Masterplan] will solve all the problems.

"But the goal is that it must move the needle or dial when it comes to industrial and inclusive development into renewable energy," he adds.

Coalition of the willing

Since inviting the public to support the work of an inclusive and sustainable renewable energy industry, Montmasson-Clair says his inbox has been flooded with people who are interested in helping.

Some include manufacturers in the industry, "big" procurers of renewable energy like mining companies, and innovative technology companies.



"For me, that gives comfort – that there is a coalition of the willing – people who are really keen

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to get going," he says.

Montmasson-Clair says he wants to grow this coalition of the willing and support of the masterplan as much as possible. The invitation is open to those who want to contribute.

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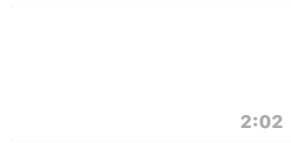
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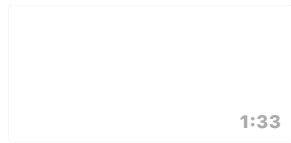
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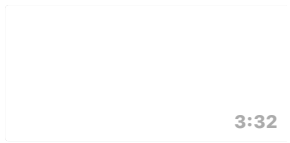
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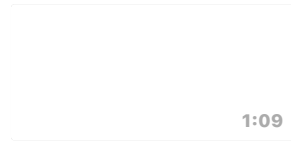
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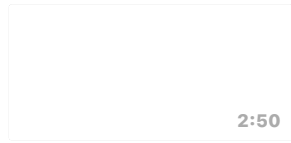
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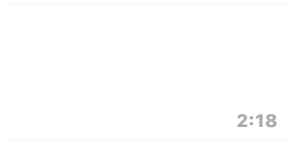
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