

FRACKFREE

SOUTH AFRICA

Statement of the participants from a dialogue on fracking and the expansion of fossil fuels to build unity, solidarity and learning, held in the Eastern Cape town of Matatiele on the 3rd to 5th of October 2016.

Matatiele Manifesto - Some for all, forever!

We recognise the growth of fracking for extraction of unconventional gas globally, while we witness the worldwide resistance to this expansion of the fossil fuel industry. In South Africa, people's resistance to the fossil fuel expansion is evident in various corners of our land. We have gathered in this critical water factory of Matatiele because the applications for exploration for gas, oil and coal with future fracking are most advanced here.

We reconfirm our commitments to the outcomes of the people's gatherings in Steytlerville in May 2013 and Graaff Reinet in August 2014. The struggle against fracking is embedded in responding to three challenges: ensuring an agro-ecology based on land reform and food sovereignty; securing our scarce water resources; and ensuring that people have a direct say in how energy is produced and used through the principle of energy sovereignty. Critically, the people's voices of this gathering were clear: "We say no to fracking." This we reconfirm as an outcome of our dialogue.

Several transnational and local corporations, including Rhino Oil and Gas, Afro Energy, Sungu Sungu and Motuoane Energy, currently propose exploring for unconventional gas in our region, which, if discovered, will result in fracking in the shale and coal seams. The global track record of the fracking and extractives industry is one of destroyed lands, polluted water and air and harm to people's health and devastation of livelihoods. Fracking has been banned in Scotland, Ireland, Wales, France, the Netherlands and most recently in Germany. It has also been banned in various US States, including Maryland, New York and the counties of California, Texas and Ohio. We in South Africa must do the same.

In our dialogue we have shared our experiences with these corporations and the Petroleum Agency of South Africa (PASA) and noted the critical absence of relevant government departments and elected political leadership at public meetings where the exploration proposals are being pushed. We are concerned that our democracy is being outsourced to consultants and corporations. There is only a veneer of public participation which ignores our constitutional livelihood rights.

We shared experiences on the following:

- The undemocratic and divisive tactics used by corporations and government in our communities to push their version of a development agenda;
- The communities living on the edge of mines experiencing the impacts first hand;
- The voices of the women who are being silenced in many rural areas;
- Our traditional leadership has often been captured by false promises and then becomes unresponsive to the communities they serve;
- The brutality of the process of fracking for unconventional gas and other mining where our community people have been murdered, the environment trashed and their property destroyed, as in the case of Marikana, Xolobeni and Somkhele;

- The false promises of the extractive industry in South Africa, as the projects are sold as “development” plans which are needed for the community;
- Profits are sent overseas, not remaining in South Africa through using global financial systems that extract money from the South;
- That decisions for invasive development such as for fracking and other extractives are taken in forums where local community representatives are not present so the outcome is imposed on them;
- That the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process, critical to environmental justice, is a system that is now being used to rubber stamp extraction rather than seriously consider community voices and protect the environment which supports our lives and livelihoods;
- That public participation is seldom meaningful, and often because of language, technical complexity and non-traditional ways of dialogue, people do not understand what is being presented to, and subsequently, imposed on them; and
- Land reform must take place now, as it is integral to this process.

There are alternatives in terms of the energy needed to power us and the ways to improve lives and livelihoods. These are sustainable and successful in many places, including Matatiele.

We recognise that Eskom:

- is a state-owned enterprise – meaning it is ours, and it is meant to service people first;
- is continuing to invest in coal-fired power stations, which is an outdated technology for providing energy to the people;
- is pushing nuclear energy which is costly both financially and in terms of the cost to the health of people and the environment which supports our lives and livelihoods;
- does not want to enable independent renewable energy projects to be further established in South Africa; and
- does not provide those that need energy the most, the poor in SA, with meaningful, affordable energy, as Eskom’s systems, dependent on coal, do not make locally owned, decentralised renewables possible.

We heard from the local municipality that agriculture, tourism and nature come first in the Matatiele Integrated Development Plan (IDP), so we find it difficult to understand how the Rhino Oil and Gas application to frack in the uMzimvubu Catchment could be considered, let alone allowed to proceed by PASA.

We visited homesteads using alternative energy sources including biogas, the sun and the wind in the rural areas of Matatiele and noted the local innovation and innovators. We have discussed the alternatives and affirmed that we can have energy without burning coal and fossil fuels. Critically, there is “Life after Coal”. We have seen this in Matatiele with our own eyes.

We have also witnessed gentle land use by local people who live with the land, restoring and nurturing the landscape to provide what is needed for themselves now, and their children in future. These sustainable livelihoods are improving with time through the uMzimvubu Catchment Partnership, an alliance worthy of duplication for sustainable development in our rural areas.

We have watched documentaries about the environmental injustices and impacts of fracking and extraction on communities and our hearts were broken again by the images of the brutality of the state and private companies in the pursuit of our country’s wealth extracted from the ground.

We also understand that extraction and burning of fossil fuel leads to climate change and that Africa is and will be worst affected by the impacts, and that fossil fuels extraction and burning damages what very little arable land, clean water and air we have left for adaptation. We have to adapt and become resilient to what is in store for us in terms of climate change impacts. We have

no choice but to move away from fracking and fossil fuel extraction if we want to survive. We will work with our municipalities to ensure that at the local level where we use energy, we are in control of generating and sharing local, safe, renewable and affordable energy for all.

Based upon our experiences, on our dialogue, and on what we have witnessed in Matatiele, we reaffirmed that our lives and livelihoods are supported by the ecosystems we are destroying, so we will do all it takes to safeguard them for future generations. We say no to exploration and extraction!

Mawubuye umhlaba wethu – Bring back our land

Some for all, forever!

Organised by:

FrackFreeSA, groundWork, Environmental & Rural Solutions (local organizer and host), as part of Umzimvubu Catchment Programme

Attended by representatives from:

African Conservation Trust
Alfred Nzo Community Radio
Bakoena Traditional Council
Church Land Programme
Concerned Residents of Msinga
Conservation South Africa
DUCT Enviro-Champs
E. Cape DEDEAT
Eastern Cape Parks and tourism Agency
E. Cape Provincial House of Traditional Leaders
Endangered Wildlife Trust
FrackFree SA
Fuleni Environmental Justice Youth Development
Karoo Environmental Justice Movement
Machibini Residents Association
Maloti Drakensberg Transfrontier Park
Matatiele Local Municipality
Methodist Church
Mfolozi Community Environmental Justice Organisation
Moshesh Traditional Council
Mpophomeni Conservation Group
Mpukunyoni Community Property Association
Nature Stamp
Nkosana Traditional Authority
Royal Bakoena Community Development Trust
Rural Network
Sibi Traditional Leader
South Durban Community Environmental Alliance
Southern Cape Land Committee
Ubumbano Youth Organization
UKZN Centre for Civil Society
Xolobeni community