

South Africa to increase coal-fired energy, sparking climate outcry

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Coal is cheap and plentiful in South Africa, and an environmental nightmare according to climate groups

South Africa's government announced Friday that the country would increase its use of coal-fired energy, provoking outrage from climate groups.

Africa's biggest polluter and most industrialised nation was facing rolling blackouts—in part due to ageing [coal plants](#)—as the government released its [energy blueprint](#) for the next decade.

Mineral Resources Minister Gwede Mantashe unveiled the long-awaited Integrated Resource Plan, saying "[coal](#) will continue to play a significant role in electricity generation."

The 10-year plan includes increasing the country's current 47,000 megawatts of energy by 1,500 megawatts from coal, 2,500 megawatts from hydro, 6,000 megawatts from solar and 14,400 megawatts from wind.

Mantashe said coal would contribute 59 percent of the country's energy, as "the country has the resource in abundance" and coal-fired [power plants](#) "are going to be around for a long time."

Greenpeace Africa and the Life After Coal campaign condemned the coal energy increase as "dangerous, expensive, and unnecessary" in the face of existential climate change.

"Coal plants built in the 2020s will be scheduled to run well past any reasonable deadline for zero carbon emissions, and are likely to be abandoned as stranded assets long before they are paid off," the groups said in a statement.

The main opposition party Democratic Alliance said the plan was already outdated and the country needed to decrease its reliance on coal.

"Renewable energy is the future and South Africa cannot be left behind," it said in a statement.

Mantashe launched the plan as the country struggled through its third-straight day of scheduled power rationing, known as load shedding.

Embattled state-owned utility Eskom, which generates around 95 percent of the country's electricity, said the outages were "in order to protect the power system from a total collapse."

Eskom has long struggled to produce enough power due to ageing and poorly maintained coal-fired power stations as well as decades of mismanagement and alleged corruption.

In June two environmental organisations launched a lawsuit against the government for pollution they said was in "violation of the constitutional right to clean air"—a legal first in South Africa.

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