

Minister of Mineral Resources Susan Shabangu's comments that government is going to be moving ahead "decisively" on shale gas exploration in the Karoo is in stark contrast to what people in the Karoo want. As part of their constitutional rights, they are asking for agrarian transformation; employment and decent jobs; decent levels of affordable basic services and infrastructure; and at minimum, the basic goods of human life, starting with the most basic levels of goods like nutritious food, and safe and comfortable accommodation. This is what is needed for the Karoo, not a plan for fracking that is extractive and will leave the Karoo with a toxic environmental and social legacy.

It is critical that government listens to those who will be the most vulnerable to the impacts of fracking. It is not about "a public campaign to visit communities who may be affected to explain what will happen", as the Minister says will happen. It is about doing the right thing for the well-being of the people of the Karoo and their natural environment. Telling people what will happen is an agenda of the elite who will benefit from the extraction of gas from the Karoo basin.

This is an undemocratic agenda, and undemocratic process. We urge government to *properly consult* the people in the Karoo and workout an inclusive developmental strategy that will improve the livelihood of people in the Karoo. The people of the Karoo need to be given space to come up with a developmental plan that suits them, and a plan that will benefit them over a long period of time. Fracking will not benefit the majority of the people in the Karoo, like any other extractive industry, only a few high profile individuals will benefit from it. In the long term, their natural environment, upon which they rely, will have been lost to the profit of outsiders.

Minster Shabangu's agenda, and indeed government agenda is clearly articulated in the Minister's address to the IHZ McCloskey South Africa Conference 2014: Cape Town, 29 January, where she promised that investments in fossil fuels (coal was the reference) will be protected by government when she stated that changes in the Minerals and Petroleum Resources Development Bill will "protect the sanctity of investments in the context of national development imperatives." This is what fracking is about in the Karoo, creating wealth for the elite, and ensuring that this happens with government protection in an undemocratic manner.

We recognise that people of the Karoo are connected to the world by the global crisis we face on the destruction of nature, the failing economic system and an ever more ruthless system of capital accumulation that dehumanises peoples' labour. Globally, people are pushing governments to say no to fracking; we will again become a pariah state.

The struggle in the Karoo is embedded in responding to three challenges: ensuring an agro-ecology based on agrarian reform and food sovereignty; securing the Karoo's scarce water resources; and ensuring that people have a direct say in how energy is produced and used in the Karoo through the approach of energy sovereignty, that is non extractive.

We believe the government should develop a meaningful and locally based response to the proposed fracking for gas in the Karoo and ensure that people have a clean, healthy environment where they live and work.