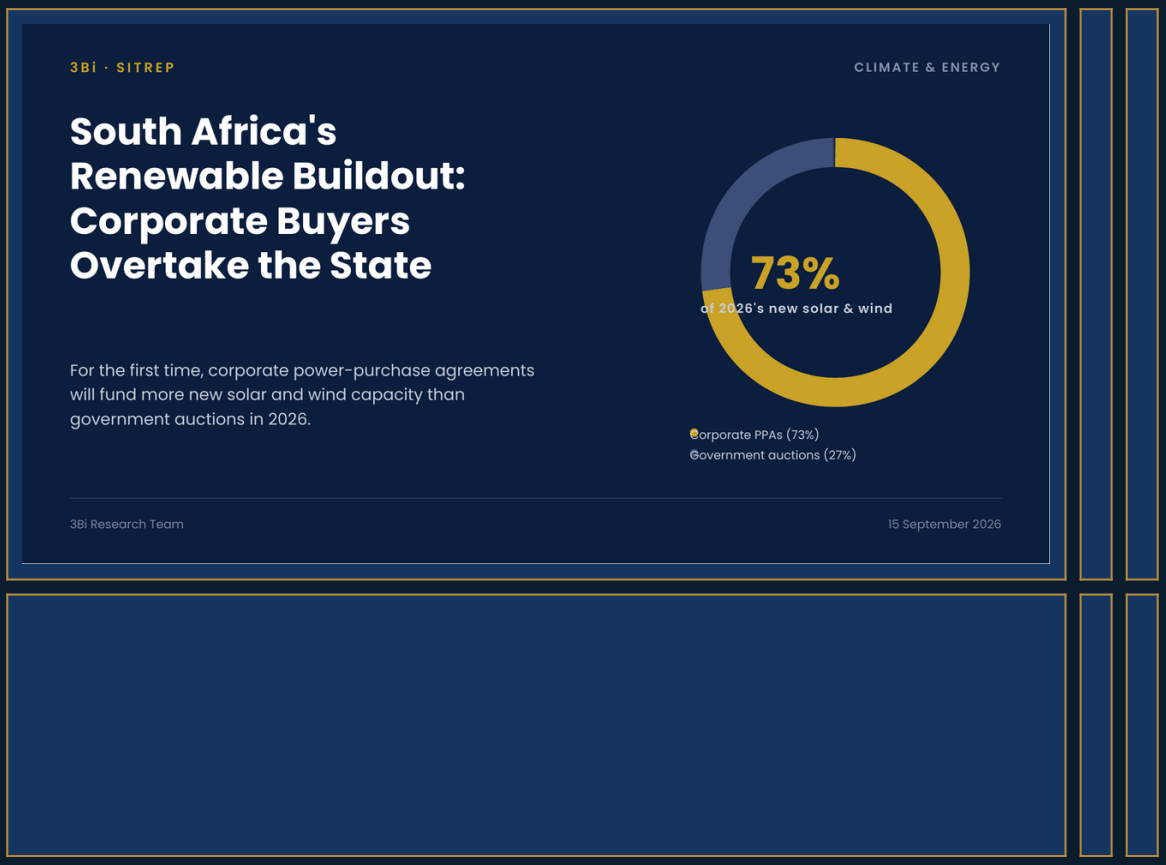
BUILD BACK BETTER INITIATIVE · SUDAN & EAST AFRICA

Evidence for Resilience - Policy. Communities. Change.



SITREP: South Africa's Renewable Buildout — Corporate Buyers Overtake the State

Research Team

WWW.3BISUDAN.ORG

Contents

Headline Fact 1
Timeline 1
What We Know / What We Don't 2
Do-No-Harm Note 2
What to Watch 2
Sourcing & Next Update 3

For the first time, corporate power-purchase agreements will fund more of South Africa's new solar and wind capacity than government auctions in 2026 — even as national renewable investment fell 41% in 2025.

First edition | Information cut-off: 15 September 2026, 08:00 GMT

3Bi Research Team

Headline Fact

For the first time, private companies buying clean power directly — not South Africa's own government auctions — will fund the majority of the country's new utility-scale solar and wind capacity in 2026. BloombergNEF's South Africa Transition Factbook, released in early September 2026, puts corporate power purchase agreements (PPAs) behind 73% of the 2.3 gigawatts (GW) of solar and wind due to come online this year (BloombergNEF, September 2026; reported by attaqa.net's Energy Research Unit, 14 September 2026).

Timeline

- 2024: Renewable energy investment across Sub-Saharan Africa's largest market, South Africa, reaches $8.6 billion, the region's high point for the period (BloombergNEF, September 2026).
- 16 May 2026: South African utility Eskom completes 365 consecutive days without load-shedding — the country's longest outage-free stretch since September 2018 — as returning coal capacity and rising private generation stabilize the grid (widely reported; corroborated via BloombergNEF's 2026 Factbook).
- 2025 (full-year data, published September 2026): South Africa's renewable investment falls 41% year-on-year to $5.4 billion. Utility-scale solar investment drops 57% to $1.4 billion and onshore wind falls 30% to $2.1 billion, even as small-scale ("rooftop") solar investment rises 35% to $1.8 billion. Coal still supplies 78% of the country's electricity in 2025, down from about 90% a decade earlier (BloombergNEF, September 2026).
- Effective March 2026: A 150% first-year tax deduction for zero-emission-vehicle manufacturing investment takes effect, part of South Africa's Automotive Investment Scheme incentives (South African government policy, cited in BloombergNEF's Factbook, September 2026).
- 8 September 2026: BloombergNEF publishes the Factbook's headline finding — that 2026 will be the first year corporate PPAs outpace government renewable-energy auctions in South Africa (Mining Weekly, 8 September 2026; BloombergNEF, September 2026).
- 14 September 2026: attaqa.net's Energy Research Unit publishes an Arabic-language

synthesis of the Factbook, the source that brought this story to 3Bi's attention (attaqa.net, 14 September 2026).

What We Know / What We Don't

Confirmed: The 73%/2.3GW corporate-PPA figure, the 41% drop in 2025 South African renewable investment ($8.6bn to $5.4bn), the 78% coal share of 2025 generation, and the March 2026 EV tax incentive are all attributed directly to BloombergNEF's published Factbook and corroborated by a second outlet (Mining Weekly). China's role as supplier is also Factbook-sourced: Beijing accounted for 98% of South Africa's solar-panel imports and 95% of its battery imports in 2025.

Not yet independently verified by 3Bi: BloombergNEF's forward-looking 2050 scenario — 35% electricity-demand growth to 319 terawatt-hours, with solar and wind meeting 69% of demand and coal falling to 21% — is a modeled projection, not a confirmed outcome, and should be read as such. The precise pace at which South Africa's transmission-grid expansion will constrain (or fail to constrain) new renewable connections is flagged by BNEF as a risk, not yet an observed bottleneck with a public timeline.

Do-No-Harm Note

This edition concerns corporate and government energy-market data, not individuals or communities; no named person, household, or community is identified or put at risk by any detail in this report. The conflict-sensitivity review under 3Bi's editorial guidelines was run and found no applicable concern.

What to Watch

- Whether South Africa's transmission-grid expansion pace, flagged by BNEF as the sector's next constraint, produces a public capacity-upgrade timeline before year-end 2026.
- Full-year 2026 investment and capacity-addition totals, expected in BloombergNEF's next annual Africa update (historically published mid-year).
- Whether the corporate-PPA financing model now emerging in South Africa — a market with a functioning grid operator, credit-worthy off-takers, and a decade of auction experience — becomes a template regional donors and financiers point to for other Sub-Saharan African grids, including conflict-affected ones like Sudan's, where no comparable private off-take market currently exists.
- Sub-Saharan Africa's region-wide 2025 renewable investment total, $14.6 billion per BloombergNEF, against which South Africa's $5.4 billion remains the largest single-country share despite this year's decline.

Sourcing & Next Update

Primary source: BloombergNEF, South Africa Transition Factbook (September 2026), as reported by attaqa.net's Energy Research Unit (Mai Magdy, 14 September 2026) and corroborated via Mining Weekly (8 September 2026). This is a first, stand-alone edition; 3Bi will issue a follow-up only if a material new development (a grid-capacity announcement, revised 2026 investment data, or a policy shift) warrants one.

This piece was produced through 3Bi's automated daily publications workflow, which monitors regional and international climate and energy reporting.

This publication is produced with support from 3Bi's institutional donors; see the full funder list at 3bisudan.org.