

Fifth Conference on Climate Change and Development in Africa

Africa, Climate Change and Sustainable Development: what is at stake at
Paris and beyond?

28 October 2015 to 30 October 2015

**Opening Remarks: Ms. Fatima Denton, Director, Special Initiatives Division,
Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)**

Vice President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, Hon. Emmerson D. Munangagwa

Hon. Oppah Muchinguri-Kashiri, Minister of Environment, Water and Climate,
of the Republic of Zimbabwe.

Hon. Vincent Mwale, Minister of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Zambia

Hon. Alieu Jammeh, Minister of Youth and Sports of the Republic of The
Gambia

Mrs. Rungano Karimanzira, Director of the Ministry of Science and
Technology Development, of the Republic of Zimbabwe

Mr. Almami Dampha, Representative of the African Union Commission

Representative of the African Development Bank, Ms. Mary Manneko Monyau

Mr. Bishow Parajuli, UNDP Resident Coordinator

Members the Diplomatic Corp, Ladies and gentlemen, friends and colleagues
of Africa, welcome to the historic and beautiful town of Victoria Falls. The
name of Victoria Falls, while a colonial legacy in its origins, is a relevant and
significant venue for this conference as it represents the idea of
communications and transportation across difficult barriers, in this case the
Zambezi River at the Falls after which the town is named. And yet the written
records, replete with the exploits of Europeans such as the intrepid David
Livingstone who had the temerity to name the Falls after the British monarch
of the day, overlays the vibrant African heritage that preceded the arrival of

Europeans in this place. Indeed, the local name Mosi oa Tunya – a name meaning ‘the smoke that thunders’ – tells of another identity and another longer social history that links Lozi, Tonga, Nambya, Matabele and other peoples who are represented in the language and rich culture of our kind host at this seminal African event.

I would like to present sincere regrets from my principals, the Under Secretary General and Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission of Africa, Mr. Carlos Lopes, and his Deputy Executive Secretary, Mr. Abdalla Hamdok, who, due to conflicting commitments are not able to be with us. I would like to thank you for honouring our invitation and for coming in such large numbers. Thank you. I would also like to thank the ClimDev Africa family and especially thank the African Union Commission for their continued unwavering support and sound leadership throughout the ClimDev journey. Thanks are also due to the African Development for its commitment and resolve to uphold the ClimDev values and work towards its success. Ladies and gentlemen, we have come far because our partners and friends believed in us, the European Union, the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom, the government of the Republic of France, Norway, the Nordic Group, Sweden and the United States Agency for International development for enabling this event to come to fruition and for generously supporting our work.

I would also like to extend our gratitude to our host, the Government of Zimbabwe, for graciously agreeing to host this conference and for sparing no effort in overseeing a complex logistical process, and for their rich contributions to the substantive technical discussions as is evidenced in the programme. Thank you, tatenda, siyabonga, Vice President and Honourable Ministers for all you have done.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

2015 has been a year of cascading transitions. Whilst these transitions can be branded as the end of the Millennium Goals, the ushering in of the Sustainable Development Goals or a successor treaty to Kyoto in Paris this

December, the reality is that we are making space for yet another new world order.

It is a new order that signals that it is no longer right nor ethical for one sixth of humanity to go to bed hungry every night; whilst the rest of us celebrate our increasingly huge appetite for consumable goods.

It is a new order that suggests that one of our most sacred capitals; our natural capital cannot be subjected to further reckless exploitation without a renewal process. It is, indeed, a new dawn to mark the importance of a people inclusive development and to send clear messages to ourselves and others that we cannot continue to countenance bankruptcy with our earth's systems by drawing on ecological goods and services that our children will most probably not enjoy if we continue to over-use our scarce natural resources.

We as actors, must ask ourselves this question: are we doing enough to stop the current haemorrhaging of the earth's natural resources?

This is also an important year to celebrate continental initiatives such as ClimDev Africa and to interrogate whether we have carried forward the bold ambition that gave our principals the license to dream of a better future and to envisage a strategy that will set the stage for Africa's response to climate change impacts.

Are we able to replenish, regenerate our soils to ensure that those most dependent on our natural capital do not find themselves held up in a cul de sac that bears no signposts?

This meeting is about our collective security for today and tomorrow. The ClimDev-Africa programme is essentially about expanding our choices, delivering on the basis of our knowledge new and old; enabling people to choose new vantage points; providing the best science and walking through the lens of strong observations systems and networks to improve agricultural productivity, to empower farmers, pastoralists and to give

decision makers confidence to plan ahead and make informed and strategic choices.

- ✓ Indeed, ClimDev remains responsive to the needs of member states. This has triggered our support to **African Small Islands Developing States (SIDS)**. An **Operational High Resolution Numerical Weather Prediction and Early Warning Systems** is being developed Africa-wide with specific focus on African SIDS.
- ✓ Likewise, ClimDev-Africa programme developed a **methodological framework for preparing Intended Nationally Determined Contributions**, and provided technical assistance for the **INDC preparations for Cameroon, Liberia, Malawi and Swaziland**.
- ✓ Through the Climate Change and Desertification Unit, technical support and input was provided to the **African Group of Negotiators on Climate Change (AGN)** in their **preparatory meeting for COP 21**, further **building their confidence to represent African priorities**.
- ✓ Responding to the challenges of finance climate change, the CDSF, Africa's Green climate Fund, has received a total of **132 proposals**, and **82 were deemed bankable**.

The urgent agenda now, however, is to figure out how fast can we run to repair and to respond to the critical cascading challenges that we witness ranging from an alarming rate of degradation of our water resources, soils, food systems, land, trees and forests and even the air we breathe and the rainfall and temperatures that we rely on to sustain our people.

Today is about what Africa can do for itself and with others within a new world order where it is able to act as the main purveyor of climate resilient development services. How can Africa process the bounteous natural resources that it has long enjoyed and open a new window for a service industry that will add value to its primary products? How can it change the current cycle of an agricultural system that is struggling to feed its people to

a climate smart development that rhymes with tradeable goods and new markets?

Today is also about ideas, strategies, plans and action that will support Africa to sever ties with energy poverty and to deliver on a plan of action that will enable its children to “power” up their future falling back on the continent’s rich energy reserves in geothermal, wind and biomass and translating the anecdotal energy potential into energy action.

Today is about a confident Africa, an Africa capable of giving new meaning to its growth story; able to use the argument on historical emissions to say to the rest of the world – you no longer have the license to emit on our behalf and we are prepared to invest in smart development by using our current atmospheric space to green our economies and to build climate resilient infrastructure.

Indeed, today is symbolised by a confident youth that is demanding a new and fair treaty, not merely one that regulates global emissions, but a social contract that will hold current generations responsible, **not** for what they did, but especially for what they are **not** doing. The price of inaction is as grave as the recklessness of continuing to pollute the earth as we continue to condemn our women and children to a lifelong exercise of searching for food, fuel and water.

Today we are confident enough to ask for what we want in Paris. As we sharpen our tools, refine our strategies; set our priorities, and put our best foot forward united in a common goal of inclusive development, we must take to Paris a new resolve of using our numbers, our collective voice, our agency and our strength in demanding a fair, just and binding treaty abetted by a means of implementation that will align our commitments to our development priorities, including those Intended Nationally Determined Contributions that will support our ambitions towards energy efficiency and agricultural transformation and demand financial commitments.

In Paris, we demand that the sacred principle of “common but differentiated responsibility be given a central place. But, whilst we revive this principle, we must also use it to remind ourselves that the job is not done until we, ourselves, take our rightful place in the effort to curb emissions, irrespective of our levels of culpability. This is about our own future.

Africa in a post Paris conference is about taking deliberate action as champions on green growth and blue economies; showing the world that we can get it right, even as late comers through sound technologies and capacity building that will plug the information and knowledge gap.

Ladies and gentlemen it is not in our interest to relegate Article 2 of the Convention on food security and sustainable development to a mere footnote reference. Inadequate mitigation ambition will have untold consequences, especially to Africa’s peoples, increasing global warming and will raise the costs of both adaptation and mitigation due to Africa’s constrained adaptive capacity.

Avoiding dangerous atmospheric interference requires a temperature goal that is commensurate with current levels of emissions; but it also means that we have to go beyond business-as-usual emissions. Africa is keen to be a strong participant and contributor to a successful outcome in Paris. It knows that what gets done, or not, in Paris, may well seal the fate for millions of vulnerable groups. But, most of all, the message for this conference is about what can we do today to ensure that no one is left behind.

It is in conferences such as this that we give meaning to Article 2, and that we recreate a new dance of diplomacy, global governance, solidarity and a quest for our collective security. Ladies and gentlemen, the climate risks that we face are real, but the opportunities for change and for designing a new climate business model are immense. Thank you.