

**ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS, MS BUYELWA SONJICA, MP, TO THE SOUTH EAST AFRICAN CLIMATE CONSORTIUM, HELD AT THE NELSON MANDELA METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY, PORT ELIZABETH**

**10 MARCH 2010**

Programme Director  
Vice chancellor of NMMU Professor Derrick Swartz  
Vice Chancellor of the University of Fort Hare, Doctor Mvuyo Tom  
Vice Chancellor of the University of Rhodes Dr Saleem Badat  
Sir David King of the Smith School of Environment and Enterprise at Oxford University  
Professor from University of Oldenburg, Joachim Peinke  
Leadership and academia of the Nelson Mandela University  
Leadership and academia of Rhodes University  
Leadership and academia of Fort Hare  
Representatives of the Seas Trust and the Wilderness Foundation  
Honoured guests  
Ladies and gentlemen.

Molweni, good morning, goeie more!

It is with profound gratitude that I accepted your invitation to address this auspicious gathering here today. Programme Director, allow me to congratulate the founding partners of this consortium, i.e. the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Rhodes University, University of Fort Hare, the Sustainable Seas Trust and the Wilderness Foundation on the profound initiative taken to form a platform to deal with climate change, mitigation and adaptation issues.

This initiative here in the Eastern Cape, a province with high levels of poverty, many water challenges, but yes splendid beauty and biodiversity, comes at a time when we need the academic institutions of your calibre, particularly as previously disadvantaged institutions, to become more involved on matters pertaining to climate change. As government we welcome such initiatives that form a partnership that can provide a nexus between academia, government and business.

More profound is your aim as the consortium to use your strengths in communication and education to reach the people of southern and eastern Africa, particularly within the Eastern Cape, to measurably change behaviour thereby lead to sustainable livelihoods, sustainable development and an improved quality of life for all.

Programme Director, as the Department of Environmental Affairs we believe it is long overdue that partnerships need to be formed with government to provide the knowledge that might guide planners and managers in urban, rural and coastal areas, produce graduates and postgraduates in climate change, share expertise cost-effectively in teaching undergraduates and postgraduates, as well as promote public awareness and inspire actions for sustainability among everyone. I would certainly want us to practically engage with one another again beyond this meeting and concretely put together a plan of action.

Public awareness of climate change, and its solutions, is worryingly low. The voice of previously disadvantaged universities is sorely missed in the entire spectrum of the evolution of climate change decisions and therefore I am confident that this initiative is a step in the right direction.

*There is a clear need for government to build public support for climate policies that will enable us to deliver on our national objectives of creating decent work, overcome the challenges in education and health, address land and rural developments and in so doing not to forget to tackle crime.*

Ladies and gentlemen, South Africa is an energy intensive and coal dependent economy. As such we are a greenhouse gas intense economy. At the same time we are vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, particularly if global temperatures rise by more than 2 degrees Celsius by 2050. Being a responsible global citizen in the climate change challenge means, we must act and contribute to a world that ensures that the impact of greenhouse gasses does not lend us into a situation where we cannot adapt to changes in climate from historical industrialisation.

As a signatory to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), South Africa is equally committed to carrying out its responsibilities within the framework of the Convention and in accordance with the principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibility. We also believe that climate change, if left unmitigated, has the potential to undo or undermine many of the positive advances made in meeting South Africa's own development goals and the Millennium Development Goals. Government further acknowledges that climate change adaptation, dealing with the unavoidable impacts of climate change, is a mechanism to manage risks, adjust economic activity and development plans and reduce vulnerability.

We believe that the Copenhagen Accord that came out of the Climate Change talks in December last year - which is a political agreement - can contribute towards a multilaterally agreed outcome and must be concluded within the next year

or two. If Mexico cannot deliver this much anticipated legally binding deal when it hosts COP 16 in December this year, all hopes will be pinned on South Africa when we host COP 17 next year.

Climate change threatens to undermine many of the UNs Millennium Development Goals, including that of eradicating extreme hunger and poverty, with severe consequences for the worlds poorest people, millions of whom may be forced off their land and become climate refugees. It is for this reason that as South Africa together with the African continent we hold the firm view that the developed countries should accept greater responsibility for assisting developing countries to adapt to climate change, while ensuring climate policy directly contributes to poverty eradication. To this end, developed countries need to achieve a step-change in their efforts.

As many of you would know, The Department of Environmental Affairs is the lead agency for directing and formulating the national climate change response programme and has the responsibility of ensuring that South Africas obligations in terms of the UNFCCC and the IPCC are fulfilled. DEA is represented on the National Committee of Climate Change (NCCC) which has a number of government departments represented as well as industry, NGOs, research and parastatals. The participation of all sectors of our society in this structure is important, particularly that this year we intend gazetting the National Climate Change Response Policy.

Programme Director, in looking at the role of universities, I wish to highlight that a significant body of evidence points to the threats that the African continent faces due to climate change. Several efforts are underway already to support adaptation research and action, but capacity remains limited as the challenges mount. Thus, my aim in targeting university-based actors like yourselves and say that we need to urgently build sustainable capacity to deal with global environmental change over the long term.

This will contribute to the strengthening of the African voice in international climate change and global environmental change discussions. We believe that African intellectual products should be informed by local needs and should inform simultaneously the development of local and international policy. We believe that we need to support movement beyond instinctive responses from communities at risk by supporting research, teaching and outreach at universities. The universities need to also stimulate their interaction with civil society, policy makers and communities and assist communities with sustainable transformation of their practices in consideration to global environmental change. The time has come to support sustained academic efforts and to integrate non-academic professional inputs into research and teaching.

As South Africa and Africa need science, monitoring and the creation of knowledge bases, thus our partnership will contribute to meeting these needs through university-based efforts. Building and supporting expertise to scale up to address the bigger picture of mitigation and adaptation and global environmental change will require embracing new agendas and interacting with a range of actors.

We would like to support the need to capture indigenous knowledge and build that indigenous knowledge as legitimate. We therefore wish to support a long-term engagement with a pragmatic vision that builds on existing and emerging capacity that will be inventive and creative and push boundaries in its work. We are looking to create networks and build a network of networks working on the continuum of university-centered and NGO activity related to climate change adaptation and global environmental change.

Why do we need to engage the universities, ladies and gentlemen? We know that universities are currently slow to respond to climate change adaptation and mitigation challenges for a number of reasons. Some university leaders, for example, believe that climate change adaptation efforts are beyond the universities mandates. However, we believe that work needs to be done to speed up the universities responsiveness and responses to climate change as essential developments in building sustainable adaptation capacity are required. We see universities as offering better economies of scale in using existing organizational, intellectual and financial resources.

Our partnership, we trust, will speak to broad challenges of African academe today. From questions of relevance of research to economic development to the role that higher education should play in society as it faces climate change challenges. I dare say that our partnership should help transform the higher education landscape even through this specific effort to build climate change adaptation capacity.

This work will need to address challenges of enhancing and, in some cases, changing centrally-defined academic programmes and also the real need to adjust approaches to teaching and learning. And as collaborative work almost by definition spawns better analytical approaches to complex problem solving, the trans-disciplinary nature of adaptation will require new approaches and spaces for collaboration.

We understand that the nature of education at present does not, in some cases, support collaboration, hence we need to build a culture of shared thinking and collaboration. It is important for South Africans to have a more assertive international presence to improve the quality of the global discussions. Backing this up with clusters of colleagues working together at established institutions will help anchor the South African, the African voice, and at the same time it provides space for sharing multidimensional ideas that cut across sectors and traditional lines of thinking. This approach is one that I will engage further on with my Cabinet colleagues in Education.

Ladies and gentlemen, strengthening capacity of African universities to embrace and be involved in global change research is essential. While we see a number of excellent researchers who are affiliated with academic institutions, their work is not necessarily appreciated or even welcome at the institutions where they are teaching and researching. This situation exacerbates the already critical but fragile existing knowledge gap in climate science and global change science. The climate science first developed with simple modelling of carbon dioxide and temperature in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, which developed to include the land mass in the late 60s, and further included the oceans in the late 80s.

The future of the science is in how these changes relate to specific resources, such as water, biodiversity, as well as to the economy and social organisation. We must work to develop and demonstrate the emerging intellectual leadership in climate change that is both based at institutions of higher education and embraced by institutions hosting this leadership.

Part of the outcome of this engagement has to result in a skilled pool or cadreship of previously disadvantaged individuals who can contribute into the larger climate change debate. This will ensure that the African child will assist his/her community especially as they will be having a profound understanding of the ways of life of the communities they come from.

Through the proposed network with universities, we will build the profile of climate change adaptation as a legitimate focus for scholarship, teaching and research and therefore begin the self-perpetuating intellectual endeavor of continuing to train future generations of scholars, researchers, practitioners and policy makers who will carry forward Africa's work in climate change adaptation and global environmental change.

Programme Director, I also welcome indications of interest in this work from civil society organizations, NGOs and other knowledge platforms that might wish to engage in this work but do not yet have established partnerships with university-based efforts.

These indications of interest will be matched, where possible, to university-based proposals. I have said earlier on that we need to engage again after this meeting, so let me share some thoughts on what ideally we can begin to support each other on:

- \*relationships with other organizations and knowledge platforms and ideas for other/alternative ways of sharing information and gaining knowledge and how these will feed into the emerging work
- \* a vision for enhancing university teaching and research with community outreach, short-term training with various relevant constituencies, policy proposals and interventions, and how all of this work is complementary and mutually reinforcing in building the science/policy/practice interfaces of adaptation
- \* a plan for how the work will extend beyond the proposing institution to benefit a wider audience
- \* a plan for adapting research products into policy briefings of use to government, business and other stakeholders
- \* a plan for action-oriented research for use at grassroots level amongst others.

Our aim is not to be interventionist, but we see opportunities to connect identified winning edges as an important part of this effort. I am confident that we can do it.

Programme Director, distinguished guests, in this context, on the 6<sup>th</sup> December 2009 on the eve of the Copenhagen Talks, President Zuma announced that South Africa would take nationally appropriate mitigation action to deviate its emissions trajectory relative to Business As Usual (BAU) by 34% by 2020 and 42% by 2025. As outlined in the UNFCCC and agreed in the Bali Action Plan the extent to which this action can be implemented depends on the provision of financial, technology transfer and capacity building support. Therefore, this support needs to be delivered through an ambitious, fair, inclusive and effective international climate change regime, which now has to be agreed to in Mexico in December 2010.

This year we will ensure that we conclude the National Climate Change Policy and White Paper by the end of this year (2010), with a draft Green Paper to be drafted in the first quarter of the year. This policy development process builds on the Long Term Mitigation Scenarios (LTMS) study on mitigation and an understanding of our vulnerability as outlined in the Second National Communication (SNC). This policy aims to provide leadership and be an enabler to government, academia, business, and civil society broadly on how as a country we will respond to challenges of climate change. The policy will however be preceded by a broad consultative process directed towards both getting input for the policy positions in the Green Paper, as well as being used to build a broad understanding of the potential consequences of climate change for South Africa into the future. Surely your contribution will be expected and highly appreciated.

In conclusion, Programme Director, Climate change is the defining human development issue of our generation. It with this in mind, that we must include a gender dimension to climate change. While underscoring the vulnerability of poor women to climate change, it should also be acknowledged that women play an important role in supporting households and communities to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Across the developing world, women's leadership in natural resource management is well recognized. For centuries, women have passed on their skills in water management, forest management and the management of biodiversity, among others. Through these experiences, women have acquired valuable knowledge that will allow them to contribute positively to the identification of appropriate adaptation and mitigation techniques, if only they are given the opportunity.

Again, ladies and gentlemen, my sincerest appreciation for inviting me and for the acknowledgment that together we can do more. May I wish you all the success with the rest of the conference.  
We are excited that Minister van Schalkwyk has been approached to take over the position of Mr De Boer when it becomes vacant in July. Cabinet is fully behind the possibility.

Thank you for your attention.

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