

**ADDRESS BY HON PETER R MOKABA, MP - DEPUTY MINISTER OF
ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS AND TOURISM OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA ON THE OCCASION OF THE 4TH
CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES OF THE CLIMATE CHANGE CONVENTION**

Madam President, Honourable Ministers, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen

I thank the government of Argentina and the city and people of Buenos Aires for their excellent arrangements and hospitality, shown not only to South Africa, but also to all delegates.

We would like to use this opportunity to pause, and remember the thousands of lives that have been lost in Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador, Belize, Costa Rica, and Panama caused by Hurricane Mitch.

The South African Government extends its sincere condolences to the Governments and peoples of those countries in Central America. Hurricane Mitch and its devastating impacts are indeed clear signals for the International Community to realise that further scientific investigation of the impacts of climate change and its relationship to extremes of weather is crucial.

Accordingly, South Africa identifies itself with the "Resolution of the Conference of the Parties on Solidarity with Central America" which acknowledges that change in the Earth's climate and its adverse effects are a common concern of humankind and require the collective wisdom and action of all nations of the world.

This is only the second time that South Africa is participating in the Conference as a party to the Convention. In the relatively short time that we have been a Party to the Convention, we have seen a growing awareness in Africa of the importance of this international instrument for the future security of our continent and nations.

We have come to Buenos Aires determined like many of you, to build on the political momentum of Kyoto. For us the success of COP 4 will be defined by the adoption of a clear Programme of Work, the setting up of an appropriate inter-sessional Working Group to tackle all matters within the work programme and a Time Frame that will ensure that the targets adopted in the Kyoto Protocol and the Convention itself, are adhered to. Such a move will signal to the world and in particular the poor, that we are serious about their plight and about counteracting the negative effects of Climate Change and other forces of environmental degradation.

Background

Although economic growth – reinforced by globalization – has allowed some countries to reduce the proportion of people in poverty, marginalization has increased for others. Too many countries have seen economic conditions worsen and public services deteriorate; the total number of people in the world living in poverty has increased. Income inequality has increased among countries and also within them, unemployment has worsened in many countries, and the gap between the least developed countries and others has grown rapidly in recent years.

Reducing current inequities in the distribution of wealth and access to resources, both within and among countries, is one of the most serious challenges facing humankind. In many poorer regions of the world, persistent poverty is contributing to accelerated degradation of natural resources and desertification has spread. In countries seriously affected by drought and or desertification, especially those in Africa, their agricultural productivity among other things, is uncertain and continues to decline, thereby hampering their efforts to achieve sustainable development. Inadequate and unsafe water supplies is affecting an increasing number of people worldwide, aggravating problems of ill health and food insecurity among the poor.

In many developing countries, the debt situation remains a major constraint to achieving sustainable development.

The UN Framework Convention for Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol

For South Africa, one of the most significant Articles of the Protocol is the provision for the establishment of a Clean Development Mechanism. The concept of climate change as an integral component of sustainable development is now entrenched in the provisions of this Article. The others are: Technology Transfer as an element of technology co-operation, a new mandate for a restructured Global Environment Facility to fund both the initial and subsequent national communications of Non Annex 1 countries as well as building relevant national capacities in those countries, for Africa it is important that the activities implemented jointly pilot projects are continued in order to give us enough opportunity to gain experience as well as help us evolve smoothly into the Clean Development Mechanism once the rules, procedures and definitions have been defined.

The Clean Development Mechanism(CDM)

We see in the Clean Development Mechanism an opportunity to assist us in our goals of poverty eradication and fulfilment of our basic human needs.

To be successful the Clean Development Mechanism must be attractive to both host and investor. We recognize the fears of the Annex 1 countries particularly their private sector entities that the rules of the mechanism will be too onerous and too bureaucratic. However, we believe that a clear set of rules and procedures facilitates common understanding, which in turn provides a sound basis for co-operation between investor and host; that it has the potential to promote investment in sustainable development projects in a country while at the same time contributing to the stabilization of global greenhouse gas emissions.

Time is not on our side both from the perspective of the developed world and ours. We must therefore use this opportunity of being together in this beautiful

city to set a program of action which will allow us to finalize rules and procedures for the implementation of this mechanism by the year 2000. However, the rules and procedures for the Clean Development Mechanism cannot be seen in isolation from other items on the agenda.

Other Kyoto Mechanisms

i. Joint implementation and emissions trading

We also believe that the rules, procedures and definitions related to the CDM, should be designed and developed in a way that ensures consistency and complementarity with those that relate to the other Kyoto mechanisms such as Joint implementation and emissions trading. This consistency should eliminate competition among these mechanisms. The development of rules and procedures affecting all of them should however still prioritise CDM and not allow any linkage or conditionality with others that will hold the CDM hostage to them.

Accordingly, we expect COP 4 to reach an agreement on the workprogramme with timeframes that will allow the Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technical Assistance to address all issues related to the Kyoto mechanisms in such a way that the CDM could be operational by the year 2000.

The global impact of greenhouse gas emissions means that reduction which takes place anywhere on the globe is a positive contribution. Since the adoption of the Convention reduction of emissions in developed countries has been disappointingly low. Few of these countries are able to change consumption patterns dramatically enough to achieve reduction targets by domestic action alone. The Convention thus made provision for the concept of Joint Implementation which allows a developing and developed country to enter into an agreement by which some of the emission reduction required to reach a domestic target can be effected by projects in a developing country.

ii. Extension of Activities Implemented Jointly(AIJ)

In an attempt to allay the fears of developing countries that they would be exploited through this mechanisms, a pilot phase termed activities implemented jointly (AIJ) was introduced to test the approach. The pilot phase is intended to end in the year 2000.

The most recent report to the climate change secretariat on AIJ projects reveals that of the 95 projects reported on in terms of this initiative only one is in Africa.

South Africa, which only became eligible to participate on ratification in 1997, has three projects under consideration. A number of reasons can be elicited from African countries as to why the response has been so poor.

Unless African countries are assisted to build the capacity to overcome the problems already experienced with AIJ the potential benefits of this additional mechanism will also be lost to the continent. This would be particularly unfortunate as Africa is the continent most vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

We believe that an extension of the AIJ pilot phase to allow a more informed decision to be made on its further usefulness or a merging of this phase into a pilot phase for CDM would be beneficial to investor and host parties.

Technology Transfer

Similarly, technology transfer and technology-related investment from public and private sources, which are particularly important to developing countries, has not been realised as outlined in Agenda 21.

Technology transfer and co-operation remains one of the most important features of South Africa's industrial policy in general and cleaner production technologies in particular.

South Africa is currently working on the establishment of a technology transfer centre particularly to assist our emerging industrialists. We hope to see a

decision from this Conference which will initiate a more concrete approach to the establishment of technology information and transfer centres in our region.

Financial Mechanisms and National Communications

South Africa has recently completed the first draft of a preliminary emissions inventory and now recognizes the complexity of this task. We hope that a decision will be taken with respect to policy guidance to the GEF, which will extend funding of national communications beyond the first one.

Our application for funds to prepare our first national communication has recently been approved and we are about to start the process of compiling the necessary information. We have recently held workshops with civil society on our Discussion Document on Climate Change policy. The comments received will be incorporated in a Climate Change Policy for South Africa, which we hope to complete by the end of 1999.

We therefore hope to see GEF funding made available for increased capacity building to prepare countries for the task of hosting CDM projects, prepare subsequent national communications as well as carry out all other activities related to Climate Change.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to draw the attention of the Conference to the main concerns of a continent that we often forget of particularly during times of global stress, namely Africa. This continent is currently negotiating its Renaissance. It is determined to eliminate from its face the scourge of poverty, underdevelopment, wars and debt. But its efforts are often reduced to naught by the frequency of environmental related disasters, including those related to the El Nino phenomenon, desertification and Climate Change. The question that Africa poses for this Conference are:

1. What must Africa do to attract the development investment in general and climate change projects in particular?

2. How far will the sinks be included for consideration in the Convention and the Kyoto mechanisms?

It is important that we build the partnership between Government and the Private Sector including Labour and Non Governmental Organisations in our further work into the next century. This is something that can be celebrated as one of the victories of this COP, particularly with regard to Technology Transfer and co-operation.

For us it is critical that Africa is helped to attain ecologically sustainable development, eliminate poverty and unemployment, achieve industrial development, peace and social progress in conditions of harmony between its people, their environment and the world.