

REPUBLIQUE GABONAISE

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**THE 18TH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE UNITED NATIONS
FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE 8TH
CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE KYOTO PROTOCOL**

(HIGH LEVEL SEGMENT)

Speech by

His Excellency Ali BONGO ONDIMBA

President of the Gabonese Republic

Doha, 4 December 2012

Verify on delivery

- His Highness,
- Distinguished Heads of State and government,
- Mr. President of the Conference,
- Mr President of the United Nations General Assembly,
- Mr. Secretary general,
- Excellencies,
- Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your Highness, it is a pleasure to be here with you in Doha at this important meeting.

In Copenhagen in 2009 we agreed to work together to limit the global temperature rise over the next century to 2° Celsius.

Today this goal is eluding us. A 4°C rise seems more and more likely, with dreadful consequences for our planet and for all of us.

Mr. President,

Too many broken promises; too many unfulfilled commitments, lead me to regretfully conclude that we are reaching a tipping point, beyond which Mother Nature and generations to come, will suffer unpredictable damage.

An ecological and human catastrophe is looming, reversing the centuries of scientific and technological innovation that have seen nations and peoples prosper and thrive.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

These are grave times. Scientific evidence on the deregulation of our climate and its devastating consequences is conclusive. I believe climate sceptics are wrong in not recognizing this reality.

The nations and the peoples of the developing world, in Africa and in the small islands of the Caribbean and the Pacific, will pay the greatest price, but I am convinced that no nation will be spared.

In 1992, as we launched our common action to stabilise Global Climate, many already had their feet in water; many were suffering from falling agricultural yields, and many were facing the destructive power of cyclones.

At the time we may not have fully understood the drivers of these natural catastrophes. But since then scientists have quantified and documented our respective responsibilities in the process of climate change and degradation.

As a result, a new global consciousness has emerged on the fact that we all share the same planet; on the need to better manage the planetary goods common to all of humanity; and on the debt of responsibility and equity we owe to future generations.

In the course of 20 years of negotiations, we have made commitments to work equitably together to preserve climatic stability. This has been reason for hope, particularly amongst the most vulnerable of us.

At this crucial juncture, are we ready to bear the collective responsibility to forgo the commendable investment we made in the Kyoto Protocol?

How will we be able to explain that the urgency we all felt yesterday to save our Planet is no longer there?

Our credibility as leaders will suffer if we do not add another milestone to our common effort here in Doha.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The slow progress made over recent negotiations is having the unintended consequence of dividing nations and peoples. It is also undermining the confidence we have established between those who are responsible for the problem and those who are not, between rich and poor nations, between those who take action and those who do not.

This is why we should strive for common action. Our Planet, the populations suffering from the effects of Climate Change and the species threatened with extinction are desperate for such action: Common, concerted, responsible and effective action that is our only hope for a confident future.

It remains an immense challenge. But I am deeply convinced that we are up to this challenge. I am also convinced that there is still hope to see our collective promises to move towards climate sensitive development fulfilled.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Every one of us counts. Every one of us must assume their responsibility and take action.

In my country, Gabon, we have formulated a low carbon development plan as our contribution to our collective effort to stabilize the climate. Furthermore, our national industrialisation strategy aims at minimizing emissions and combating climate change.

I am pleased to announce that gas flaring, our largest source of Greenhouse gas, has been reduced by 10% since 2009. We expect to see this figure rise to 60% reductions by 2015.

Our forest cover today is 88%, with an average deforestation rate well below 0.01% per annum for the period between 2000 and 2010. **This represents a 6-fold reduction compared to the previous decade.**

This reduction was directly related to new laws and management efforts initiated by the government.

We are working on a national land-use plan in order to optimize the management of our territory.

We have just completed a national adaptation plan for Gabon's 800km of coastline.

The Gabonese Parliament is currently examining a Sustainable Development Law that will require a sustainable development impact assessment for all projects.

At an institutional level we have created a Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, charged with ensuring the environmental coherence of our national economic and social policies.

Together these actions constitute our strategy to ensure that we fulfil our responsibilities to the Gabonese people, whilst contributing to our common efforts to address the consequences of Climate Change.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our world is already divided on many issues. Maintaining a stable climate should be a unifying issue for our community of nations.

But the clock started ticking the day humanity realized that certain development choices have a negative impact on our climate. The countdown for concrete and pertinent actions is running away from us!

It is the climate that reminds us that we all belong to the same planet; that we have a common destiny that, if no action is taken, looks likely to be a tragedy.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I do believe that the Kyoto Protocol is still the most effective instrument we have to structure climate governance and formalize our international partnership, even if it has not satisfied all our collective ambitions.

The Protocol has made it possible for certain amongst us to shoulder their responsibilities, and to offer hope that we can achieve economic development that will build a sound future.

That is why I believe we should all strive for a second commitment period. We must progress towards a governance of the climate that is more equitable, more efficient, and that takes into account the diversity of needs and situations.

If we fail to do so, how will we be able to convince our peoples that we will do tomorrow what we were not able to do today?

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The fight against climate change is neither a choice nor an option. Our political and moral responsibility compels us to achieve a common vision, coordinated actions and faultless solidarity regarding the necessary means needed to achieve our goals.

Unless we all engage there is no hope of success.

Thank you.