



**Seventeenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 17)
and the seventh session of the Conference of the Parties
serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP 7)
Durban, 28 November 2011**

**Opening address by
Christiana Figueres, Executive Secretary
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change**

H.E. Mr. Jacob Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa,
H.E. Mr. Idriss Déby, President of Chad (representing the Economic Community of
Central African States),
H.E. Mr. Fernando da Piedade Dias dos Santos, Vice President of Angola
(representing the Southern African Development Community),
H.E. Kgalema Motlanthe, Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa ,
H. E. Ms. Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, incoming President of COP 17/CMP 7,
H.E. Ms. Patricia Espinosa Cantellano, President of COP 16/CMP 6,
Ministers and Vice Ministers,
His Worship the Mayor of Durban, Mr Nxumalo,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to address you on African soil and to welcome you to COP 17 and CMP 7. In the Zulu language, I greet you “sanibonani nonke!”¹ My sincere thanks go to the City of Durban and to the South African Government for their tireless work – both in terms of logistics and in terms of substance. Madame President, Mayor Nxumalo, through you may I thank each and every member of your very committed teams for the detailed and most effective preparations.

Ladies and gentlemen,

When the distinguished Nelson Mandela walked to freedom in 1990, nobody imagined that South Africa was on its way to becoming an inspiration to the world. When the CODESA² negotiations started 20 years ago almost to this day, nobody imagined that South Africa would become the world’s model for negotiations for a better future. But when the first free and fair elections were held in this beautiful country in 1994, everyone knew that South Africa had achieved the impossible, that it had mastered its biggest challenge and that it had created a new and better future for

¹ Common greeting to groups; literal translation: “I see you” (pl.).

² CODESA = Convention for a Democratic South Africa.

itself. For the world, it was plain to see that South Africa stood proud and tall upon the political and moral high ground that it had built.

And rightfully so, because almost against all odds South Africa had successfully negotiated change. To quote the great former President Mandela: “It always seems impossible until it is done.”

It would seem to me that this can-do attitude is something of a hallmark of this country’s people. And it would seem to me that this positive mindset is the inspiration we all need at this moment.

We meet here at a time when more and more, the impacts of climate change are threatening people’s lives and livelihoods. As one of the regions most vulnerable to such impacts, many Africans unfortunately already have first-hand experience of the suffering that climate change can cause.

We meet here at a time when greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere have never been higher, when the number of livelihoods that have been dissolved by climate change impacts has never been greater and when the need for action has never been more compelling or more achievable.

Ladies and gentlemen, the process needs to take two decisive steps here in Durban: finishing the tasks from COP 16 and answering the key political questions that remained unanswered in Cancun.

Finishing the tasks from Cancun means translating policy into concrete action. This includes:

- Launching the Adaptation Committee, approving the modalities and guidelines for national adaptation plans and progress on approaches to address loss and damage.
- The full operationalization of the Technology Mechanism in 2012 and a clear process for selecting the host for the implementing arm of the mechanism.
- Consideration and approval of the Green Climate Fund’s governing instrument and contributions for a prompt start-up of the Fund.
- Continued progress on the emerging guidelines for monitoring, reporting and verification.
- Defining the “what” and the “how” of the review.
- Gaining more clarity on fast-start finance, including via the secretariat’s new fast-start finance portal, which provides easy and transparent access to that information.

These issues have progressed and can be concluded so that further action on the ground can be much stronger. At the same time, the unresolved political questions

have not benefitted from the same progress this year, and need to be significantly advanced in Durban.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my hope that through constructive negotiations you will master this critical challenge

As you seek constructive ways forward on the Kyoto Protocol, the emerging mitigation framework and long-term funding, I urge you to remember “It always seems impossible until it is done.”

It is clear that the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol is linked to launching a process towards a broader multilateral rules-based system under the Convention, providing greater rigour and structure to the global effort to tackle climate change. And this may only be possible if it is both:

- **Fair:** grounded on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities; and
- **Responsible:** enabling Parties to tackle the gap in the level of ambition needed to limit global average temperature increases to below two degrees Celsius in a timely fashion.

Finding a workable way forward in this complexity is the defining issue of this conference.

On finance in the long term, there is a critical need to build trust that funds will continue to be scaled up post-2012. I urge you to decide on a pathway to secure mid- and long-term sources of finance, including innovative sources, as part of the outcome of this conference.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This conference needs to reassure the vulnerable, all those who have already suffered and all those who will still suffer from climate change, that tangible action is being taken for a safer future, both in adaptation and in mitigation.

You need to reassure each other that you are all committed to finding concrete solutions.

And you need to reassure the world that you are following the path of ambition with perseverance.

Negotiating to master these challenges won't be easy, but I am convinced that South Africa's example can inspire you. I am convinced that you can take the next decisive step together. It may seem impossible, but you can get it done.

Sukuma sakhe³!

³ Zulu expression; translation: “get up and build”

Thank you.
