

**STATEMENT BY THE INCOMING COP17/CMP7
PRESIDENT, MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
& COOPERATION, MS MAITE NKOANA-MASHABANE,
DURING THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF COP17/CMP7
28 NOVEMBER 2011, ICC, DURBAN**

Programme Director,

Your Excellencies,

Honorable Ministers,

Members of the UNFCCC Secretariat

Distinguished Delegates

Colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen

It is with great honor that I accept the responsibility to preside over COP17/CMP7 on behalf of my country, South Africa, and its people. To the President of South Africa, Mr. Jacob Zuma, thank you for entrusting me with this mammoth task.

I am privileged to receive this baton from a friend and colleague (Minister Patricia Espinosa) whom I hold in high regard for her stewardship of COP16/CMP6.

I have another friend to thank, the Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC, Ms Christiana Figueres, who has been there for us with her dedicated team. I am sure this will continue into the future as we attach great value to a good relationship with the UNFCCC Secretariat.

We have developed a warm chemistry with members of the Bureau as well as Chairs of the various bodies of the UNFCCC process, and this is something we will continue throughout our COP Presidency.

But ultimately, it is Parties, through your respective delegations and negotiators, who are the life-blood of the UNFCCC process with whom as the COP Presidency we must work, and work very well, together.

It is for this reason that I held and participated in a number of formal and informal consultations in our preparations for this Conference. One of such informal consultations was the *African Continental Consultative Dialogue on the Impact of Climate Change on Women* that we organized last week-end in Pretoria whose outcomes will be made available to delegates. I am singling out this consultation not that others were not important but because we now have women leaders at the helm of this COP and the CMP! If you want any work to be done, give it to women!

The concern with climate change goes beyond the walls of this hall to thousands and thousands of our people out there in the street who are calling for climate justice. Yesterday, together with our Executive Secretary, I received a petition from our faith-based community demanding action and leadership from us.

Yes, we are in Durban with one purpose, and that is to find a common solution that will secure a safe future for generations to come. As I have promised, I will do my very best to bring Parties together and to facilitate consensus. You will appreciate that we have very limited time at our disposal to get through a large and

pressing volume of work. I intend to follow a UNFCCC Party-driven process, which will be transparent and inclusive in our endeavor to reach a balanced, fair and credible outcome which should be informed by UNFCCC principles such as multilateralism, environmental integrity, fairness (common but differentiated responsibility and respective capabilities), equity and the honouring of all international commitments and undertakings made in the climate change process.

I am optimistic, however, because as Parties, you have demonstrated to us in the many interactions we have had with you, your willingness to find each other and tackle difficult questions. We will count on your boldness and courage within the next two weeks.

Durban is a decisive moment for the future of the multilateral rules-based regime which has evolved over many years under the Convention and its Kyoto Protocol. The 1st Commitment Period of the Kyoto Protocol is about to come to an end. In the negotiations the fate of a 2nd Commitment Period is made dependent on the decision on the legal nature of the outcome of the negotiations under the Convention, as it is a question that has

been left unanswered from Bali. It is also clear that if this question is not resolved, the outcome on other matters in the negotiations will become extremely difficult. Therefore, a solution must be found!

In addition, it is important that we also operationalise the Cancun Agreements, including the establishment of the key mechanisms and institutional arrangements agreed to in Cancun such as the Green Climate Fund. When we focus on the Cancun Agreements, Adaptation has to be an essential element for any outcome as it is a key priority for many countries.

Colleagues

The bottom line is that we need to create an environment from where we will be able to work together. In this regard, I am hopeful that in the next two weeks we will consider what we need to do **now or immediately** and what we need to do in the **future**. I believe this approach will help us to find a way forward from here.

Let Durban be the place where Parties will be able to work together, giving each other the necessary re-assurances, to secure a platform of trust.

We owe this to the memory of our brother, Mama Konate from Mali and the Chair of the SBSTA; and Mathaai Wangari, another soldier in the struggle for sustainable development.

To our distinguished Excellencies who have graced this occasion, thank you for your guidance, wisdom and support.

Excellencies, dear delegates, colleague and friends,

Indeed, we can prevail in the next two weeks when we work together to save tomorrow today!

I thank you.