



**African Conference of Ministers in Charge of Environment
on Climate Change for post-2012
Algiers, Algeria
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**Address by Yvo de Boer, Executive Secretary
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change**

Honourable Ministers, distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

It's a pleasure for me to address you at the opening ceremony of this important conference.

I am encouraged by the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment's active drive towards strengthened climate change action beyond 2012.. Indeed, Africa's Road Map from Johannesburg through Africa to Copenhagen is a key contribution to the negotiating process under the Bali Road Map negotiations.

Your work under the African Road Map is critical because much is at stake for this beautiful continent:

Africa is the continent hardest hit by climate change. Its vulnerability stems not only from climate change impacts such as sea-level rise, severe droughts and floods, but also from the current levels of poverty, which limit Africa's ability to cope with these impacts. Africa is also the continent that has benefited the least from the current international climate change regime.

Over the years, a variety of funds have been established to help developing countries cope with and act on climate change but a lot of them are still empty bank accounts that have not delivered anything major yet. Capacity-building and technology arrangements have been similarly insufficient.

The Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism provides a vehicle to finance sustainable development projects while reducing greenhouse gas emissions in developing countries. While it has done well in other parts of the world, it has not sufficiently taken off in Africa. So far, Africa accounts for only 27 registered CDM projects, in only 7 countries. Clearly, this overall situation needs to be rectified.

Africa needs to be tied into the international response to climate change, both with regard to adaptation, as well as mitigation.

Africa needs to derive real benefits from strengthened international climate change action. This is not only due to Africa's vulnerabilities, but also because of economic growth rates in many African countries.

According to the World Bank, the economic outlook for Africa is improving after a decade of growth of 5.4%. Although there are still wide variations, it is clear that the bigger economic picture has been steadily improving. As a result, Africa needs help to leapfrog the emissions-intensive stage of economic development, to ensure that the mistake of the West is not repeated.

The climate change negotiations need to move forward despite complex developments on the international level.

The negotiations on strengthened international climate change action under the Bali Road Map are taking place in a difficult and complicated international environment.

The global financial crisis has led some to argue that moving the world to a global low-emissions economy is too costly and that climate change abatement should be put on the backburner until the credit crunch is over. But as you know, procrastinating on mitigation will only increase the human and economic cost of climate change and the need for adaptation.

Rather, a global low-emissions economy needs to be an integral part of economic recovery. The financial turmoil may then be seen as an opportunity to deal in a fundamental manner with both the financial and climate change crisis. In this sense, the agreed outcome to be reached at Copenhagen 2009 represents an opportunity for the world to put in place a framework that kick-starts the economy in a climate-friendly way, with long-term benefits that help outgrow possible repercussions of the financial crisis.

So, for Africa, an ambitious outcome at Copenhagen needs to create green economic opportunities and advantages by fully tying the continent into a green global economy. And, crucially, Copenhagen 2009 needs to deliver on adaptation.

The international climate change process must move towards a self-financing climate compact.

Moving towards such a self-financing climate compact is an important way to circumvent some of the possible negative repercussions of the financial crisis.

I was very encouraged in Bali when developing countries agreed to increase their mitigation efforts over and above what they are already undertaking, provided they get measurable, reportable and verifiable support. Copenhagen 2009 needs to put in place mechanisms that spur measurable, reportable and verifiable support for developing countries' mitigation actions.

The carbon market presents an important starting point towards a self-financing climate compact. The higher the level of ambition of industrialised countries, the higher the level of e.g. green investment flows, technology transfer, or funds generated for adaptation through the Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism.

Valuable a starting point as this is, the carbon market structures in their current form are insufficient to meet the challenge. A clever financial architecture to mobilize financial resources for both adaptation and mitigation needs to be developed. The question then is: how could a funding mechanism through the carbon market be expanded? And: are there other types of mechanisms that could be established within the Convention to generate solid resources? How can appropriate mechanisms bolster the concept of a self-financing climate compact?

Another option would be mechanisms enabled through the rules of the Convention. An interesting example in this respect is the idea of auctioning emission rights to use the money to support adaptation activities in developing countries. There may also be mechanisms outside the Convention that are nonetheless linked to it.

So where are we on the road to Copenhagen 2009?

During 2008, Parties focussed on gathering ideas, clarifying their positions and presenting initial proposals on many issues. Proposals included possible approaches to boost adaptation, mitigation and the types of institutions that are needed to ensure progress on mitigation. At the Accra Climate Change Talks in August, Parties agreed to compile proposals into a document, which could serve as a first version of a negotiating text at the upcoming UN Climate Change Conference in Poznan.

It is critical that Parties go into full negotiating mode at and after Poznan. We need to face facts: there is still an enormous amount of work that needs to be covered if Copenhagen 2009 is to be ambitious and hold real benefits for hard-hit regions such as Africa. Many issues haven't nearly reached the stage at which they could be presented in initial negotiating texts.

Poznan is the half-way mark in the negotiating process, and it is critical that real progress is made towards Copenhagen 2009. Parties have to advance on-going work, as well as work under the Bali Action Plan. With regard to on-going work, there are some important items on the agenda, such as adaptation, capacity-building and technology transfer.

The Adaptation Fund needs to be fully operationalised. This fund needs to begin funding real adaptation projects in Africa as of 2009. This would constitute a real benefit for the continent. Improving the Clean Development Mechanism, especially in terms of geographical scope, is also on the agenda. This is your chance to further ideas that would make the CDM work for Africa. Boosting emissions reductions from reducing deforestation is another important consideration for improving the CDM.

Under the Bali Action Plan Ministers will discuss a shared vision for long-term cooperation during the High-Level Segment in Poznan. It is important that Ministers arrive at a shared vision of how developed and developing country actions can cooperate in the long term. Ministers need to give a strong signal as to the shared vision on the type of mechanisms and the financial architecture that are needed to deliver.

In conclusion

The road from Bali via Johannesburg and Algiers to Copenhagen presents African countries with a golden opportunity to change things for the better and design a Copenhagen

deal that works for Africa. Wangari Maathai once said: “It is important to nurture any new ideas and initiatives which can make a difference for Africa.”

An ambitious agreed outcome in Copenhagen can make a real difference for Africa. But for this to happen, you need to nurture and push creative solutions that help Africa adapt and that green Africa’s economic growth.

Thank you.

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