

**Speech delivered by Ambassador GJ Mtshali on occasion of third World Climate Conference (WCC-3) on behalf of the Honourable B Sonjica Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs Republic of South Africa**

4 September 2009

Secretary General of the United Nations  
Secretary General of the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO)  
Heads of United Nations (UN) agencies and other international organisations  
Excellencies  
Distinguished delegates

South Africa would like to firstly, congratulate the WMO on the successful hosting of this third World Climate Conference and secondly, thank the government and people of Switzerland for their warm hospitality. Mr Chair, the science of climate change has been widely accepted by the international community. We all agree that this is a major global challenge with significant impacts that require global and multi-lateral solutions. The science has also clearly demonstrated that the adverse effects of climate change are already being felt and that these impacts will be most severe in developing countries, with the African continent and small island developing states being uniquely vulnerable.

South Africa's actual experience of the adverse effects of climate change and climate variability thus far, include, short term impacts of extreme weather events; medium term impacts such as seasonal drought cycles and long term impacts related to the gradual temperature increase, sea level rise, decadal shifts in precipitation patterns and ocean acidification.

Mr Chair, let me be absolutely clear; as a developing country, South Africa's over-riding priorities are poverty reduction and socio-economic development. In this context, our immediate priorities include the urgent delivery of basic human development services to the poor and most vulnerable and include ensuring access to housing, water, sanitation, food security, energy, transport, education and public health services.

However, in many African countries, it is becoming increasingly clear that our ability to deliver on these fundamental developmental priorities, at all levels, is being persistently undermined by these short, medium and long term climate impacts. Therefore, we stress that an agreement on a comprehensive international adaptation programme is a priority outcome of the current international climate change negotiations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Supporting and building capacity to adapt to the impacts of climate change and manage climate variability risks to society and the economy at national, regional and global levels, has become a high development priority.

Mr Chair, experience has taught us the importance of the interface between science, policy and society to ensure that development priorities are effectively and efficiently addressed. Therefore, we stress the need to underpin any adaptation and risk management responses with reliable science-based information which is matched to user needs, full stakeholder participation and effective communication frameworks.

It is against this background that South Africa enthusiastically supports and welcomes the resolution of this conference to establish a global framework for climate services. We consider this global initiative an important step to ensure that our collaborative management of the adverse effects, risks and impacts of climate change and climate variability are informed by science and are needs-based and country-driven with the full participation of stakeholders.

South Africa stresses that the global framework is not about re-inventing the wheel but must in fact build on, create coherence among, support and strengthen existing initiatives, programmes and institutions and support the dissemination of best practice, particularly those in developing countries. For example, South Africa is already significantly participating and investing in the various elements that could be included in a global framework.

These efforts should be strengthened and identified gaps filled, such as:

- Investments in base infrastructure such as high performance computing, earth observation systems, weather radars, lightning detections systems, and automated weather stations
- The World Meteorological Organisations' severe weather forecast demonstration pilot project to allow for timely and accurate forecasting of high impact weather events
- Supporting the newly established Meteorological Association of Southern Africa (MASA)
- The development of a risk and vulnerability atlas, to facilitate access by stakeholders to relevant information on climate, risk and vulnerability and which incorporates the use of traditional and indigenous knowledge
- Data communications between national weather services remain a major weakness in Africa resulting in the loss of data and limited provision of meteorological information and requires appropriate technology transfer and needs driven capacity support.
- Renewed global efforts and resource mobilisation to increase observations in developing countries is urgently required to improve our adaptation capabilities.

In conclusion, the South African delegation and I would like to commend the delegates in this conference for advancing the discussion on the interface between science, climate policy and fundamental livelihood sectors needed to contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. South Africa is committed to continue playing an active role in the development and implementation of the global framework for climate services.

I thank you.

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