

## **Inception Workshop of the Climate Change Adaptation in Africa (CCAA)**

### **Welcome Address by Mr. Abdoulie Janneh, UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of ECA**

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
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Your Excellency Dr. Abera Deressa, State Minister of Agriculture and Rural

Development of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia,

Dr. Gilles Forget, IDRC Regional Director for West and Central Africa,

Distinguished Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the I am delighted to be here with you this morning and to welcome you to Addis Ababa, Headquarters of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. The collaboration between ECA, the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and other partners in organizing this workshop, Your presence here demonstrates the importance we attach to partnerships in driving the climate change agenda forward.

The issue of climate change has become a pressing challenge for humanity and all of us are stakeholders in the quest for enduring answers to this key environmental concern . It is therefore quite encouraging that the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and ECA have collaborated in close partnership to organise this work shop . We are particularly glad to welcome Dr. Fatima Denton, IDRC, CCAA Team Leader whose commitment and leadership made possible this joint ECA-IDRC venture. It is also very good to have such a distinguished gathering of stakeholders such as policymakers, representatives of local communities and groups at risk , and climate journalists gathered here to deliberate on climate change adaptation in Africa.

Indeed, climate Climate change is now widely considered as one of the most daunting challenge s that humanity mankind has ever faced. Yet , both the Stern Review of the Economic Impact of Climate Change and the just-released authoritative Report of the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) strongly concur that Africa accounts for many of the countries that will suffer the most from the negative impact of climate change. Many African countries run the risk of experiencing aggravated water stress, reduced food security, increased effect of extreme weather events, displacement of millions of people , and increased transmission of vector-borne diseases. Strong and broad partnerships are undoubtedly needed to meet this And, addressing this challenge in Africa . calls for strong and broad partnerships. Indeed, climate change is mainly caused by greenhouse gases emitted by developed countries; yet its impacts already affect disproportionately developing countries, especially in Africa We salute efforts of countries like UK and Canada for their continued belief, advocacy, and support for the development of these partnerships as evidenced by their support for the current workshop. Both the Stern Review of the Economic Impact of Climate Change and the just-released authoritative Report of the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) strongly concur that Africa accounts many of the countries that will likely suffer most from the negative impacts of climate change. Many African countries thus run the risk of experiencing aggravated water stress, reduced food security, increased impacts from extreme weather events, millions of displaced people and increased transmission of vector-borne diseases.

I need not remind this knowledgeable group that c limate change is mainly caused by greenhouse gases emitted by developed countries; yet its impact disproportionately affect s developing countries, including Africa n states . Thus , W w hile the impact s of climate change may be geographically specific based on local climate and the national resource base, i t they may also engender pervasive and increased vulnerability because of the ir link ages to with many other activities that sustain the livelihoods of the poor. Increased vulnerability of poor people in the most affected countries would result not only from adverse effects on their health and livelihoods, but also from undermining the growth opportunities that are crucial for poverty reduction. In this regard the recently concluded Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development where 50 African countries were represented recognized that failure to take actions now to adapt to climate change could significantly jeopardize the achievement of the MDGs by 2015 and beyond. The theme of that conference was – “Accelerating Africa's Growth and Development to Meet the Millennium Development Goals”. We had written inputs from Sir Nicholas Stern, Economic Advisor to the UK Government and principal author of the Stern Report after our attempts to have him address the Conference through videolink unfortunately failed.

R esearchers have warned us that annual reduction rates in emission of greenhouse gases would have to become one percent steeper for every five years of delay, which means that delaying emission cuts by ten years would nearly double the required reduction rate in 2025, and that delaying action for twenty years would mean having to reduce emissions three to



seven times faster. Bold action therefore needs to be taken to enhance both the ability of poor countries and the resilience of their people to cope with climate change. In particular, industrialized countries need to heed these words of warning because successful adaptation in developing countries, which have no other options, still depends on stabilizing emission concentrations in the atmosphere.

To date, numerous calls to action have been made to address the problems of climate change, but the related specific proposals have often been partial, palliative or negative in approach. For instance, policy has mostly been geared to actions such as:

- Providing incentives to reduce emissions from deforestation and harmful land management practices;
- Encouraging the development and rapid deployment of zero or low-emitting energy and transportation technologies ;
- Allowing businesses to choose among a range of options as they strive to minimize greenhouse gas emissions and costs;
- Addressing energy efficiency and de-carbonisation in all sectors .

The point here is that even in the context of highly effective mitigation efforts, climate change is still bound to occur. It is therefore essential to prepare for and adapt to the impact of climate change. Indeed, it is necessary to pay closer attention to adaptation as compared to mitigation with regard to climate change in Africa. For instance, the number of actors involved in adaptation is higher as compared to mitigation, which mainly involves the energy and transportation sectors in industrialized countries and the energy and forestry sectors in developing countries. Actors involved in mitigation are generally well organized, sometimes constituting pressure groups, linked closely to national planning and policy making, and used to taking medium to long-term investment decisions. In contrast, the actors involved in adaptation represent a large variety of sectoral interests, including agriculture, food security, water supply, tourism and recreation, human health, coastal management, urban planning and nature conservation.

While all these sectors are potentially impacted by climate change, they differ in the sense that decisions as to whether or not to adapt are taken at different levels, ranging from individual farmers to national planning agencies. In spite of the potential magnitude of climate change, actors involved in adaptation often have little incentive to incorporate adaptation into decision-making, either because policy and market failures do not encourage medium to long-term planning, or because responsibilities for action are unclear, or because adaptation is concerned with collective goods such as safety, human health and ecosystem integrity.

Some other key considerations regarding mitigation and adaptation are that:

- The benefits of mitigation activities carried out today can only become evident after several decades because of the long residence time of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, whereas many effects of adaptation measures would be apparent immediately or in the short term. In addition, mitigation has global benefits, whilst adaptation typically takes place on the scale of an impacted system, which is regional at best, but mostly local.
- Irrespective of their diversity, mitigation options typically serve to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in view of global benefits, regardless of where the mitigation takes place. By contrast, the benefits of adaptation are the climate-related damage costs that one avoids by taking adaptation measures.
- Finally, mitigation decisions inevitably require some form of government intervention because of the public good nature of climate change damages, whereas adaptation decisions may be made more locally, even individually.

To date, numerous calls to action have been made to address the problems of climate change, but the related specific proposals are often too partial, palliative or negative remedies such as:

- Providing incentives to reduce emissions from deforestation and harmful land management practices;
- Encouraging the development and rapid deployment of zero or low-emitting energy and transportation technologies;
- Allowing businesses to choose among a range of options as they strive to minimize greenhouse gas emissions and costs;
- Addressing energy efficiency and de-carbonisation in all sectors; or
- Preparing for and adapting to the impacts of climate change, since climate change will occur even in the context of highly effective mitigation efforts.

The simplest solution to any suspect change is, of course, to stop it. Group action to supply public goods may work effectively if the group is small. If a large number of people are involved in the use of a public good, however, it is more difficult to respond to the demand of more effective resource management by means of voluntary agreements. In such cases, action by a higher authority with coercive power, such as government, may be required to limit free riding. Researchers have warned that annual reduction rates would have to become 1 percent steeper for every 5 years of delay, that delaying emission cuts by 10 years would nearly double the required reduction rate in 2025, and that delaying for 20 years would mean having to reduce



emissions three to seven times faster. I wish therefore to use this platform to call on the industrialized countries to take such warnings seriously because even adaptation in developing countries where there are no other options depend on stabilizing emission concentrations in the atmosphere.

It is against this background that I welcome the inception of the Climate Change Adaptation in Africa (CCAA) Programme which has received primary support from IDRC and DFID. This inception workshop should accordingly publicize the mandate and broad vision of CCAA and explore possibilities for enhanced regional cooperation in developing adaptation strategies in Africa. I also hope the project teams that have been pre-selected for CCAA funding will also take the opportunity to discuss their plans and benefit from an exchange of views in what should be a very interactive workshop.

The CCAA Programme should be seen as complementing other initiatives that have been launched to respond to the challenge of climate change. At this same venue a year ago, on 18-21 April 2006, For instance, a lmost a year ago to this date, ECA hosted a workshop similar to the present one and focused on the preparation of to prepare an Action Plan on Climate Information Needs for Development in Africa. The purpose of last That workshop , which that attracted participation from users and providers of climate information, was to identify the needs and fill the gaps and needs for climate observation s and services to support efforts to achieve in support of the MDGs. That workshop It gave rise to a major “Climate Information for Development in Africa” (ClimDev Africa) Programme slated for implementation over a 10-year period under within the partnership framework of the the auspices of the AU/ECA/AfDB Joint Secretariat.

The ClimDev Africa Programme sets out to address priority actions geared towards raising policy awareness, undertaking climate risk management, providing climate services, as well as upgrading climate observations, infrastructure and data management. Work in progress towards the implementation of the ClimDev-Africa Programme now focuses on untying the complex issues of setting priorities for target participating sectors, institutions and beneficiaries. I can assure you of the strongest commitment of the three continental organizations of the AU/ECA/AfDB Joint Secretariat to drive this major programme to effective fruition.

It would be quite evident therefore that ECA views the adaptation to climate change as a sustainable development issue in Africa, which requires an integrated and holistic approach. Inter-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary approaches to knowledge management are necessary to effectively address complex sustainable development challenges facing the world today. In this regard, experience sharing is an efficient and effective way of deepening and enhancing the learning process, and it is important to ensure that all relevant stakeholders are engaged in this process. I therefore commend the broad-based participation at this workshop, which encompasses the national, sub-regional, regional and international levels and includes representatives of NGOs, the private sector and development partners.

Many reasons plead for an appeal to adaptation compared to mitigation with regard to climate change in Africa. Firstly, mitigation primarily involves the energy and transportation sectors in industrialized countries and, to an increasing extent, the energy and forestry sectors in developing countries. Compared to adaptation, however, the number of sectoral actors involved in mitigation is limited. Moreover, they are generally well organized, sometimes constituting pressure groups, linked closely to national planning and policy making, and used to taking medium to long-term investment decisions. In contrast, the actors involved in adaptation represent a large variety of sectoral interests, including agriculture, food security, water supply, tourism and recreation, human health, coastal management, urban planning and nature conservation. While these sectors are potentially impacted by climate change, decisions as to whether or not to adapt are taken at different levels, ranging from individual farmers to national planning agencies. In spite of the potential magnitude of climate change, they often have little incentive to incorporate adaptation into decision-making, either because policy and market failures do not encourage medium to long-term planning, or because responsibilities for action are unclear, or because adaptation is concerned with collective goods such as safety, human health and ecosystem integrity.

Secondly, the benefits of mitigation activities carried out today can only become evident after several decades because of the long residence time of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, whereas many effects of adaptation measures would be apparent immediately or in the short term. In addition, mitigation has global benefits, whilst adaptation typically takes place on the scale of an impacted system, which is regional at best, but mostly local.

Thirdly, irrespective of their diversity, mitigation options typically serve to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in view of global benefits, regardless of where the mitigation takes place. By contrast, the benefits of adaptation are the climate-related damage costs that one avoids by taking adaptation measures.

Fourthly, mitigation decisions inevitably require some form of government intervention because of the public good nature of climate change damages, whereas adaptation decisions may be made more locally, even individually.

In short, ECA fully supports the central message of this CCAA inception workshop, i.e. we need local adaptation actions to climate change in Africa. I am confident that all of you present here will work hard to identify adaptive options to enable the continent adopt a proactive, rather than a wait and see attitude to climate change. I look forward to your deliberations resulting in an appropriate agenda for action and the broader dissemination of specific and practical measures for enhancing climate change adaptation capacities of African countries.

I welcome the promising new partnership between the CCAA and ECA, and thank most sincerely all those who have worked hard and contributed to ensuring the convening of this important workshop.



I wish you successful deliberations. Thank you.