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Climate change a top priority, Motlanthe affirms

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South Africa's President, **Kgalema Motlanthe**, on Tuesday affirmed that climate change was an issue at the top of the government agenda, as he officially opened the National Climate Change Summit at the Gallagher Estate in Midrand.

He said that the summit formally launched the process of developing South Africa's national climate change response policy. The summit would lay a firm foundation for the policy development process and would also ensure that all stakeholders, both public and private, were clear on their roles and responsibilities.

"We are duty bound to define the future response of our nation and of course the world community of nations, to this far reaching, global and growing challenge. It is therefore no surprise that this issue has moved to the top of the government's agenda, along with many other defining challenges that we face as a country," he stated.

He noted that this challenge came against the backdrop of the global economic crisis, which was another crisis affecting Africa, despite the continent playing very little in the part of creating it.

"Acting now on climate change presents the best possibility to overcome the challenges of the global economic crisis - through investment in pro-poor job creating and sustainable green growth. If the world community does not take decisive action soon, it is the poorest that will be hardest hit," he emphasised.

Motlanthe stated that South Africa has committed to see greenhouse gas emissions peak between 2020 and 2025, then stabilise for a decade, before declining in absolute terms before mid-century.

"This will be possible of course, if technology, policy and investment are identified as keyplanks in our strategic framework, and brought together into a coherent strategy," he said.

He hoped that the deliberations of the summit would produce recommendations that would form the basis of giving effect to many government's mandates of formulating sound policy frameworks for transition to a low-carbon economy.

He added that developing nations were looking to developed countries to take the lead with absolute emissions reductions and to support the efforts of developing countries in concrete ways.

In terms of the government decision in July, "State-led policy interventions will need to play a key role and will need to focus on getting the economic incentives, investment structure and where necessary the legislative and regulatory framework right, while at the same time increasing long-term development and research spending," he stated, noting the importance of the decisions that were hoped to result from the summit deliberations.

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