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South Africa: Motlanthe Highlights Importance of Low Carbon Economy

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Midrand — President Kgalema Motlanthe has expressed hope that the National Climate Change Conference will through its deliberations draft a national framework which will lead South Africa in becoming a low carbon economy.

The President, addressing the conference on Tuesday, said stakeholders must agree on a policy that would forward the country's response to climate change with the aim of halving South Africa's carbon emissions peak between 2020 and 2025.

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"We are duty-bound to define the future response of our nation to this growing challenge of climate change. It is not a surprise that climate change has jumped to the top of government's agenda.

"What is necessary is for comprehensive and concrete global action in order to deal with the growing challenge.

"South Africa is playing a proactive role in the fight against climate change and is active in multinational organisations," the President said.

He added that by the time nations meet at the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference in December 2009, they must have achieved the delicate balance between the needs of developed and developing countries.

Africa is least responsible for climate change, but will pay the highest price for it, Mr Motlanthe said, explaining that the conference was taking place against the backdrop of a global financial crisis.

He said the economic crisis is similar to climate change in that developing countries were not responsible for it but would bare the greatest brunt of its effects and in particular the poor.

"Poor communities are the innocent bystanders in this situation, but we must act and act now. We hope that the summit will draft policies that lead South Africa into a transition to a low carbon economy," Mr Motlanthe said.

Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism Marthinus van Schalkwyk similarly told the conference that the world had learnt much about climate change in the last four years.

Previously a number of climate change sceptics disputed the scientific fact that climate change was destroying the environment and the issue of climate change never featured prominently in government discussions, Mr van Schalkwyk highlighted.

Last year, however, China, India, Brazil, as well as South Africa and other countries drafted various white papers, policies and draft regulations to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Minister van Schalkwyk expressed hope that political and public support is mobilised at the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference in December 2009, accompanied by massively upscaled support for policy implementation.

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