

We must act on climate change, says Motlanthe

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Africa is one of the regions least responsible for climate change, but it is the most affected and least able to afford the costs of adaptation, President Kgalema Motlanthe said in Midrand on Tuesday.

Opening the second National Climate Change Summit, Motlanthe, citing a report by a Nigerian scientist, said an additional 100-million African people would go hungry by 2050 as a result of rising temperatures and lower rainfall.

"We must act. We owe it to the millions of people who will be directly affected."

Motlanthe said acting on climate change presented an opportunity to overcome the global economic crisis.

"As with climate change, this [economic crisis] is largely a crisis that is not of our own making but one which, like climate change, will affect us all and the poorest the most," he said.

"For us in South Africa, the climate change challenge is therefore not only one of climate stabilisation, but it is ultimately also about combating poverty and promoting healthy livelihoods, energy security and sustainable development."

It was the purpose of the summit to lay a firm foundation for the policy development process and ensure all stakeholders were clear on their roles and responsibilities.

Motlanthe said that while South Africa should be proactive and play a constructive role, it was a global problem and should be addressed accordingly.

This required a coherent and coordinated action by developed and developing countries under the leadership of the United Nations.

"It is only through coordinated and comprehensive global action that humanity will effectively deal with this threat."

He said the government was addressing the problem seriously but South Africa could not do it alone.

"The worst impact of climate change can be avoided if the rest of the world takes up the challenge in a similarly serious way," Motlanthe said. -- Sapa

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