

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE  
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DR AYANDA  
NTSALUBA AT THE CLIMATE RESPONSE POLICY SUMMIT,  
GALLAGHER ESTATE, MIDRAND,  
5 MARCH 2009**

Delivered on his request by Adv Sandea de Wet, Chief State Law Adviser (International Law) and Acting Deputy Director General: Multilateral of the Department of Foreign Affairs

**Chairperson, Advocate Sandile Nogxina;  
Senior Government officials;  
Distinguished Panelists;  
Distinguished Delegates;  
Ladies and Gentlemen:**

**THEME: The State of International Negotiations – The South  
African Response**

Climate change is clearly one of the biggest challenges of this century and is regarded by the South African government as one of the greatest threats to our planet and to our people. If unmitigated climate change has the potential not only to undermine but, more devastatingly, undo many of the positive advances made in meeting our own development goals and the Millennium Development Goals.

Furthermore, climate change and its impacts is a global challenge that calls for global solutions. As an acute global concern, it

requires special global cooperation in dealing effectively with the problem. Traditional strategies and alliances are becoming ineffective to address the multiple threats that climate change have for all countries, but especially for the most vulnerable. Addressing the challenges posed by climate change calls for new thinking in foreign policy. An adequately attuned foreign policy can further the climate change agenda in the international arena and South Africa will continue to play an active and constructive role in this regard.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

2009 is an important and in many ways a decisive year for the climate negotiations. We are faced with undeniable facts that industrial development and our current energy intensive lifestyles have contributed to global warming and climate change at an unprecedented level to the extent that the delicate balance of our environment, and livelihood of most nations and in some cases their very existence, is threatened.

Although the impacts of climate change do not discriminate between countries, it is true that those who are least responsible, and most vulnerable to climate change, happen also to be the hardest hit and most unable to deal with its devastating economic, environmental and social impacts. This poses a special problem for the African continent, and it is important that we address the vulnerability of African nations to ensure that sustainable development is not compromised, which is one of the primary goals of our foreign policy.

The responsibility to adequately and urgently address climate change is a common one, but cannot be considered without its historical context. The developed world is historically the main contributor to the levels of green house gases in the atmosphere and thus has to bear the greatest responsibility to take urgent and real measures to address climate change.

The Stern Review emphasised that, “the benefits of strong, early action on climate change outweighs the costs.” What is needed is a sustained and urgent change in the way we do things - an entrenchment of a business unusual approach to the way we use our energy. At an international level leadership should be displayed by the developed world, with *the necessary support in place for developing countries to cope with the double burden of adapting to the impacts of climate change, while ensuring a sustainable developmental path to growth and prosperity.*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The present negotiations is conducted within an existing international framework, namely the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol. The Convention that enjoys almost universal acceptance by all countries of the world, provides the guiding principles and framework for our negotiations.

At the 14<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties (COP14) in Poznan, Poland, a work plan for the conclusion of negotiations in Copenhagen in December this year was adopted. It is important that this work programme delivers on the components of the *Bali Action Plan*, especially those that support the ability of the developing world to make a meaningful contribution and to cope with the implications of climate change, namely, adaptation, technology development and transfer, and increased provisions of financial resources and investment. Giving the magnitude of the means of implementation needed, a very sharp focus should be placed on the funding requirements to meet the challenges of climate change, especially actions to adapt to climate change.

The financial support needed should not affect current Official Development Assistance (ODA) levels. Climate change is an added burden to development and thus additional effort needs to be made over and above ODA to secure the sustainable growth and development of Africa and the developing world. It must be emphasised that developing countries participation and coping levels would be directly proportional to the level of financial and technical assistance provided.

It is our view that the negotiations should not be hampered by the current global financial crisis, as the problem remains pertinent regardless of the financial constraints that the crisis entails. Climate change is an integral part of our common burdens and in itself a crisis, which cannot be ignored or postponed until our financial situation has stabilised. Addressing climate change will have to remain a global priority. I am also very pleased to see the

explicit recognition by the European Commission that the financial and economic crisis is no reason to postpone action against climate change. Delay will only make it harder and more costly to reduce emissions later.

South Africa is of the view that climate change is a common threat that necessitates all parties to take up their responsibility. We thus noted that the European Commission has reached an agreement to commit to legally binding targets and to cut greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2020, with 20% percent, to establish a 20% share for renewable energy, and to improve energy efficiency by 20%. While the EU move is welcomed, it should be borne in mind that, based on recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports, for mitigation action to be meaningful, the next round of commitments for Annex 1 Parties need to be ambitious with absolute emission reductions of -25% to -40% from 1990 levels by 2020 and reductions of -80% to -95% by 2050. South Africa will continue during the negotiations to work towards the achievement of the deepest GHG cuts possible in order to reach an ambitious international climate change agreement in Copenhagen by the end of the year.

Of course, making any meaningful global effort to tackling climate change necessitates the participation of all developed nations, including the United States of America. Though we remain hopeful given the recent statements by President Obama, real and meaningful actions by the USA need to be established with binding commitments comparable to the commitments of the other

developed countries. It is essential for the USA to come on board and take up its responsibility.

Regarding the nature of any agreed binding outcome in Copenhagen, what is required is firstly an amendment to the Kyoto Protocol that sets out deep emission reductions targets during the second commitment period for Annex I Parties. Secondly, a legally binding instrument must be established that will be clear and unambiguous in setting out the obligations of developed countries towards combating climate change, especially towards providing adequate financial resources to developing countries to address the impacts of climate change. It should also recognise in a measurable, reportable and verifiable manner the voluntary actions undertaken by developing countries and setting up a mechanism for measuring the comparable efforts of developed countries under the Kyoto Protocol and the Convention.

In our engagement with the G77 and China, we will continue to seek the cooperation and solidarity of the South on issues of major concern in the negotiations. It is vital to the interest of all developing countries that unity among nations of the South is secured when pursuing the interests of the vast majority of the world population who are severely threatened by the impacts of climate change.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Climate change concerns have moved out of the margins of international discourse to occupy a central position, and must be

dealt with appropriately at this level. National actions should work towards adjusting to global trends if we are to utilise the opportunity that such international focus affords us to develop in a cleaner and more sustainable manner. Regardless of the outcomes at the international level, it is prudent to adjust our sails given our own energy needs to a more sustainable and environmentally friendly developmental path without compromising our immediate requirements for poverty alleviation and development. It is often the case that national prerogatives inform foreign policy, however, the special global nature of climate change provides an opportunity for the mutual reinforcement of global and national efforts to secure a better and sustained environment for future generations.

I thank you.