

Honourable Members;

According to Chapter 2, Section 24 on the *Bill of Rights* in our country's progressive Constitution, and I quote:

"Everyone has the right:-

(a) To an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being; and

(b) To have the environment protected, for the benefit of present and future generations, through reasonable legislative and other measures that:-

(i) prevent pollution and ecological degradation;

(ii) promote conservation; and

(iii) secure ecologically sustainable development and the use of natural resources while promoting justifiable economic and social development."

The advent of climate change therefore poses a serious threat to the existence of living organisms, the endangered fauna and flora, and plant species at large. Climate change is a serious threat to our food security and health status, given the anticipated consequences increasing temperatures such as flooding. If our farming areas are covered by water, food production would be affected and water borne diseases like malaria would increase.

We owe it to future generations to protect our environmental assets and natural resources, which provide ecosystem goods and services we rely on for our own existence. It is our only source of life in the form of the air we breathe; it is our only source of energy in the form of the food chain, amongst others.

From Monday next week – 28 November, world countries will converge in Durban to continue talks on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, which are the major contributor to global warming, during the 17th Conference of Parties,

commonly known as *COP17*, under the banner of the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*. This gathering, which will last until 9 December, is intended to come up with a legally binding agreement to enable world countries to reduce their levels of emissions drastically.

As South Africa, we hope for at least two positive outcomes, that is:

- 1) Making the **green climate fund** operational, meant to pay for the implementation of climate change mitigation strategies for developing countries. The argument on coming up with a green climate fund intended to be biased towards developing countries, like ours, is based on the fact that developed countries are principally responsible for the current high levels of the greenhouse gas emissions, as a result of more than 150 years of industrial activities; and
- 2) Ensuring the continuation of the Kyoto Protocol. The Kyoto Protocol, adopted in Japan on 11 December 1997 and entered into force on 16 February 2005, sets binding targets for 37 industrialised countries and the European community to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by an average of five (5) percent against 1990 levels by 2012. It now places a heavier burden on developed nations under the principle of “*common but differentiated responsibilities*.”

Honourable Members would recall that at the end of COP16 in Cancun, Mexico last year, parties amongst others agreed:

- to commit to a **maximum temperature rise of 2 degrees Celsius** above pre-Industrial levels, and to consider lowering that maximum to 1.5 degrees in the near future;
- to make fully operational by 2012, a **technology mechanism** to boost the innovation, development and spread of new climate-friendly technologies;

- to establish a **Green Climate Fund**, which I earlier alluded to as an anticipated outcome of COP17, and is intended to provide financing for projects, programmes, policies and other activities in developing countries via thematic funding windows.

As the saying goes, 'a journey of a thousand miles begins with taking the first step;' we must therefore as individuals, continue on this journey in order to make sure that we *Save Tomorrow, Today!*

Working together, we can do more to protect our environment, for the benefit of present and future generations, through reasonable legislative and other measures.

As Mpumalanga, we recently hosted a Provincial Summit on Climate Change as a build up to the Durban talks. At the end of the two-day summit, all stakeholders collectively agreed, amongst others:

- To mitigate our climate change impact through reducing greenhouse gas emissions;
- To co-operate with affected sectors such as agriculture, water, mining, forestry, local authorities, industry, energy, transport, to reduce the impact;
- To ensure conservation of biodiversity in the province;
- To educate and create awareness by establishing programmes and projects in partnership with all stakeholders to respond to the challenge of climate change;
- To promote the development of a green economy through the implementation of the waste management hierarchy, cleaner technologies and development mechanisms;

- To ensure the contribution of ecosystem goods and services to the social and economic development of the Province; and
- To increase the contribution of a low carbon footprint in the economy of the province through the promotion of renewable energies and the creation of sustainable livelihoods.

Honourable Members, the declaration we signed at the end of the two-day Provincial Climate Change Summit recognises that all levels of government, communities and sectors, play a key role in our collective response to the challenge of climate change, and publicly demonstrates our collective commitment to *Work Together in order to Save Tomorrow, Today!*

Moving forward to COP17, the National Government has released what is called the *National Climate Change Response White Paper*, which will be our basis during the Durban talks. Our government's response in this regard is anchored round two objectives, namely:

- To effectively manage inevitable climate change impacts through interventions that build and sustain South Africa's social, economic and environmental resilience and emergency response capacity; and
- To make a fair contribution to the global effort to stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that avoids dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system within a timeframe that enables economic, social and environmental development to proceed in a sustainable manner.

As the Department leading in this regard, we commit to ensure that any strategy developed in relation to mitigating the impact of climate change, is in line with the *National Climate Change Response White Paper*. We are in the process of

developing a Climate Change Strategy that supports and enables this National White Paper.

In terms of Provincial sector coordination, it should be recognized that Government Departments and state-owned enterprises will need to review the policies, strategies, legislation, regulations and plans falling within their jurisdictions to ensure full alignment with the National Climate Change Response within two years of the publication of the policy. It is also imperative that we should develop, a Climate Change Response Monitoring and Evaluation System, in line with the country's one. The *MTPA* will play a crucial role in this regard, since the functional mandate of monitoring and reporting on biodiversity and ecosystems trends lies within its responsibility. It cannot be over-emphasised however, that high level support in this regard is required.

Honourable Speaker, Honourable Members;

Our government regards *Climate Change* as one of the greatest threats to sustainable development. We believe that if unmitigated, climate change has the potential to undo or undermine many of the positive advances made in meeting South Africa's own development goals and the Millennium Development Goals. Just as adapting to the impacts of *Climate Change* is a new challenge, it is also a shared challenge, and a shared responsibility.

I must also indicate upfront that climate change mitigation and response strategy is not necessarily rocket science; each one of us can contribute by doing basics such as:

- **If you are not using it, switch it off;**
- Implementing the three R's, that is, **Reduce, Re-use and Recycle**. In this way we will help to conserve energy, reduce pollution and greenhouse

gases from resource extraction, and subsequently help to fight global climate change, or at least minimise the rate of the change;

- **Using public transport or joining lift clubs.** Scientists argue that 20% of greenhouse gas emissions come from the transport sector.
- **Greening your own environment** by planting trees. Scientists have proved that trees have a potential to trap the greenhouse gases.

Working together, we can do more to mitigate the impact of *Climate Change*.

I thank you!