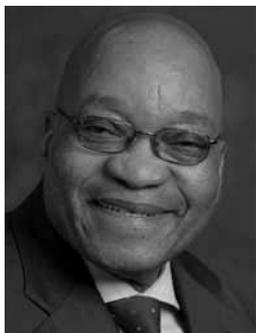


Address by President Jacob Zuma to the Informal Ministerial Consultations on COP 17



Jacob Zuma is the President of the Republic of South Africa.

Honorable Ministers; Ladies and Gentlemen;

It is a great honour and pleasure for me to welcome you on the occasion of this informal Ministerial consultation on climate change here in the O.R. Tambo Building in Pretoria.

The fact that we are gathered here is an indication of the importance and urgency of the climate change challenge that is facing us all.

This meeting is particularly important as we prepare for the formal UN inter-sessional meeting in Panama next month. This meeting is a timely opportunity to provide leadership and political direction to our negotiators to address the more difficult political issues in Durban at the end of the year.

We have all agreed before that a global response is the only effective and sustainable answer to this global challenge.

We also agree that the impact of climate change is already evident globally in the increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, coastal erosion and flooding as a result of rising sea levels, increase of the occurrence of certain diseases, loss of biodiversity and economic impacts and an increase in the number of environmental refugees.

The conference in Durban presents us with an opportunity to shape the future global response to climate change. I have found the number of principles that have formed the basis of climate change negotiations over the years instructive to guide a credible response to this challenge.

Although Parties have different positions on the elements on which agreement might be possible in Durban, any outcome in Durban must remain true to these principles.

I therefore encourage you, as Ministers responsible for climate change, to apply these principles in your discussions and to ensure that the outcome in Durban is faithful to these principles.

These include the principles of multilateralism, environmental integrity, common but differentiated responsibility and respective capabilities, equity, and honouring of all international commitments and undertakings made in the climate change process.

The strengthening and preservation of the multilateral response to climate change is paramount. Climate change is a global problem that needs a global solution and the

concerns of all Parties must be heard and addressed.

Parties have always maintained that the multilateral rules-based system must prevail as without it there can be no guarantee that countries will do what they have committed to do and all the gains made over decades will be lost.

It is only through the preservation of the multilateral rules-based system that markets can be secured. Funding is essential to developing countries and without multilateral commitments to provide adequate and sustainable funding, developing countries would be even more seriously affected.

Furthermore, any outcome in Durban has to be adequate enough to respond to the principle of environmental integrity.

A less ambitious outcome that would not address the urgent needs of those seriously affected by climate change and that fall short of allowing future generations the opportunity to grow and to live in a secure environment in which to pursue their own destinies, would simply not be acceptable. More so since the Durban Conference is taking place on the African continent, which is particularly vulnerable to the impact of climate change. In this context the low level of ambition is a serious concern.

I call on the international community to honour the international commitments and undertakings made under the climate change process and not to shy away from these decisions.

There is a growing realisation among developed and developing countries alike that there is a gap between the current level of emission reduction targets and the levels required by science.

It is therefore my hope that our discussions here will produce creative ideas on how Parties can raise their levels of ambition in a manner that would take the process forward.

The principle of equity, currently expressed through the Convention principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, is especially

pertinent for a fair and credible response. Climate change is the most pressing sustainable development challenge of our time. The principle of equity must be addressed in the context of sustainable development.

Similarly, an agreement that does not address the necessary means of implementation – finance, technology and capacity-building – will not be equitable. All Parties based on common but differentiated responsibility and respective capabilities, will have to do more to reach our agreed long-term global goal of limiting average temperature increase to below 2 degrees Celsius.

I call on the international community to honour the international commitments and undertakings made under the climate change process and not to shy away from these decisions.

All Parties need to provide leadership towards the future not only based on self interest, but also guided by the common good. While the time for negotiations before Durban is extremely limited, progress must be made on the operationalisation of the Cancun Agreements, including the establishment of the key mechanisms and institutional arrangements agreed to in Cancun, including the Green Climate Fund. Similarly, the commitment made in Bali must also now be addressed, as it was left unresolved in Cancun.

For an outcome in Durban a solution needs to be found that would preserve the balance between the continuation of the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol, the continuation of the work under the AWG-LCA as it relates to mitigation, adaptation and means of implementation and the operationalisation of the institutions created by the Cancun decisions.

As the COP President, I look to Parties for creative solutions that can preserve the balances and at the same time will adhere to the principles of the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol in order to produce a credible outcome in Durban. It is my understanding that in some areas, such as the operationalisation of the institutional arrangements established in Cancun, Parties are not far from agreeing with each other.

As we consolidate progress already made in these areas, we must also apply our collective will to address the bigger outstanding political issues that cannot be postponed beyond Durban. Although a solution

for the mitigation question is critical, Honourable Ministers, you will need to balance this solution with a credible outcome on adaptation that avoids the current fragmented approach and deals with adaptation in a coherent and effective manner.

Adapting to climate change is a key priority for many developing countries, particularly small island developing states, least developed countries and Africa.

Ministers, you will agree that finance remains an issue of critical importance, not only for a comprehensive climate deal, but also to place the global community on a path that will allow us to build resilient societies.

In Cancun, a package that included a collective commitment by developed countries to provide new and additional Fast Start Financing through international institutions in the amount of 30 billion US dollars between 2010 and 2012, as well as setting a goal of mobilising jointly 100 billion US dollars by 2020, was agreed.

It has become equally important to seriously address the scaling up of the delivery of climate finance between 2013 and 2020, and initiate a formal process that will assess the sources and scale of long term finance and to ensure the capitalisation of the Green Climate Fund.

Moving forward is not merely an option in Durban, but essential. What is needed now is political guidance to steer the negotiators. We need to think creatively to accommodate each other and create the space to decide how to address problems for which possible solutions at present are perhaps not matured enough.

I would like to urge you, Honourable Ministers, to approach all ideas and options with an open mind. In this regard, I understand that various Parties have put forward options for a way forward. We are therefore not without answers. Many answers seem to be available and what is now essential is to find a middle that will lead us to a credible outcome.

In addition, we cannot avoid addressing the end of the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol in 2012. The international community will therefore be once again at a crossroads in Durban.

Any decision on the future of the Kyoto Protocol will inevitably be part of the broader question of the future and nature of the climate change regime.

I understand that in order to address this issue in Durban a wide variety of interests and positions will have to be balanced.

I wish to remind you that a meaningful balance will honour the principles of multilateralism, environmental integrity, equity, common but differentiated responsibility and respective capabilities, and honouring international commitments and undertaking – principles that have underpinned the process since the beginning.

Returning to practical matters, the challenge remains to reflect consensus in decision text.

I have been informed that negotiating texts in some areas are well advanced, but on many issues there is a lack of negotiating text.

Therefore, Honourable Ministers, I call on you to urge your negotiators to translate ideas and positions into text and to capture common understanding reached during the negotiations.

Without the availability of texts, our task in Durban will be so much more difficult, even on matters that should be within easy reach of agreement. We should respect the principle that this is a party driven process and that transparency and inclusivity are paramount.

As such we are accountable to the global citizenry. Ordinary people that suffer daily from the impact of climate change hold high expectations from their leaders.

They want leaders to be responsible and to find effective solutions to the threat that climate change presents to their livelihood, quality of life, dignity, and in many cases, their very survival.

We have a massive responsibility and working together we will have a successful session which will contribute to making the world a much better safe for all, especially the poor.

I thank you.