

AFRICAN UNION

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OPENING REMARKS FOR THE AFRICA REGIONAL PLATFORM'S TECHNICAL SEGMENT BY MR. HARSEN NYAMBE HARSEN, DIRECTOR OF SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT AND BLUE ECONOMY (SEBE), AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION.

Hon. John Mutorwa, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Works, Transport and Communication.

Your Worship, the Mayor of the City of Windhoek

H.E. Kamal Kishore, Special Representative of the SG for DRR and Head of UNDRR

Excellencies, Ambassadors and High Commissioners

Representatives of RECs and Member States.

Members of the Media

The DRR Community

Ladies and Gentlemen

The Theme of this Conference is critical for the African continent, **“ACT NOW FOR THE RESILIENT AFRICA WE WANT”**.

For those of you who are conversant with Africa's development BluePrint known as Agenda 2063, you know that it has a vision for the Africa we want.

Let me provide a context:

How do we build resilience when about 400 million of our people have no access to clean drinking water and 700 million have no access to good sanitation.

Through the High Level Panel on Water Investment Programme, it was found that Africa has an investment deficit of between \$11 and 20 billion per year in water resources including related infrastructure that are critical for all our development.....this is for the continent to achieve SDG6 by 2030.

How can we develop without providing electricity to about 54% of the population currently in darkness on the continent, and this figure is higher in rural areas.

About 800 million people in Africa have no access to clean cooking means, which implies that they are exposed to black carbon which is risky for their health.

In an attempt to emancipate our people, African Heads of State and Government approved the Agenda 2063, whose vision is to achieve:

An Integrated, Prosperous and Peaceful Africa.

- It is an Africa that is build by its own people and which commands respect internationally.
- I believe that here we are talking about an Africa that is able to feed its own people instead of waiting for donations from abroad when there is severe drought or hunger.
- In other words, food can be moved from central Africa to relieve hunger in southern Africa. This implies elimination of trade barriers through the Africa Continental Free Trade Area.
- The Africa we want, will have fast trains moving across Africa and integrated road network, power pools and travelling as well as moving goods will become much easier.

- This is an Africa that the young people will be proud of, characterized by science and innovation.
- Access to education, health, clean water and sanitation.
- My favourite is the associated free movement of people and goods, in December I went to Botswana and my son used a Namibian Identify Card instead of a passport and I wanted to experiment with him as I cannot take such chances and all was well.....that is a step in the right direction and we thank our leaders for their vision.

There are many obstacles to realizing this Africa we want:

- There are too many conflicts across Africa and these are enemies of development as peace is one of the catalysts for the realization of the Aspirations of Agenda 2063, the Africa we Want”.
- Climate change is also a major obstacle as African nations are losing up to 5% of GDP due to climate change impacts – spending these resources on adaptation projects.
- Disasters are reversing our development gains and in addition to losing lives and infrastructure, we are also spending too much on emergencies such as drought, floods, and cyclones.
- In 2022 alone, weather, climate, and water-related hazards in Africa caused more than **USD 8.5 billion** in economic damages.

- Yet, the pledges of US\$792 to the Loss and Damage Fund at the COP28 to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change UNFCCC) in Dubai are like a drop in the ocean compared to the magnitude of the incidences and amount required to address loss and damage annually in Africa alone.
- Recent data from Zero Carbon Analytics show that the loss and damage costs in Africa are estimated to range between USD 290 billion and USD 440 billion between 2020 and 2030, depending on the level of warming.
- Our debt burden continues to climb as most of the resources that would have been used for other developmental projects are diverted to address the ever-increasing impacts of climate change.

According to the report released in August 2024 by Development Initiatives:

- Close to two-thirds (64%) of African countries are classified as among the world's most vulnerable to the negative impacts of climate change. The continent also hosts close to 60% of low-income countries either already in external debt distress or at high risk of external debt distress.

How is the African Union Commission contributing towards a solution?

Goal 7: Building environmentally sustainable and climate resilient Economies and communities.

1. We have developed policy frameworks and programmes aimed at assisting Member States and Regional Economic Communities to build resilience towards the impacts of climate change and disasters:
2. We have the Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy and its Action Plan for 2022-2032.
3. The Africa Integrated Strategy on Meteorology, Weather and Climate, and have the Climate Services Programme that is providing weather observation equipment to Member States to improve their weather forecast.
4. The multi-country programme which was approved by the Green Climate Fund in February 2024 to finance 15 member states to develop their readiness programmes for water resilience to climate change. Currently, the Commission is receiving applications for phase 2 of the same programme due to high demand by member states.
5. The Green Recovery Action Plan aimed at improving access to climate finance, building energy just transition, and resilient agriculture.
6. Urban Resilience Programme to address vulnerabilities within municipal areas where people are concentrated.
7. Multi-Hazard Early Warning Systems and Early Action Programme.
8. Working on the Civil Protection Unit and the Humanitarian Agency for Africa.
9. Circular Economy Action Plan, The Strategy for the Great Green Wall Initiative and Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan – Nature Based Solutions.

- Therefore, we have a multi-sectoral approach to building resilience for the Africa that we want. This conference will provide an opportunity for **learning and introspection**.
- It will come up with what Africa needs to do to fast track implementation of our disaster risk reduction actions.
- As I conclude, I would like to express our appreciation to the Government and People of the Republic of Namibia for the warm hospitality and the facilities put at our disposal.
- Appreciation also go to all our partners who are helping in the development and implementation of the programmes I alluded to and they are too many to mention.

I wish you fruitful deliberations.

Thank you.