

Facing the Challenge

MWAI KIBAKI addresses climate change and the African development dilemma



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The climate change Convention and its Kyoto Protocol provide a good basis for multilateral action. Although some progress has been made in the implementation of these instruments, the actions are far from adequate. This is primarily because of the limited scope of the commitments of developed country parties and inadequate implementation of these commitments. The extent to which developing countries can comply with their commitments and therefore contribute towards the ultimate objectives of the Convention, is dependent on their being facilitated by developed Country Parties. The climate change negotiation process and the outcome of these negotiations need to be fair to all countries.

Africa is the region most vulnerable to the impact of climate change despite the fact that it is the least responsible for contributing to greenhouse gas emissions. The implementation of practical adaptation activities with predictable and secure funding therefore is a top priority for Africa in this Conference. In terms of mitigation, equity is needed in the implementation of the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM).

While this is a largely private sector venture, there are certain actions governments can take to even out the ground. Specific targets need to be set to redress the imbalances in the geographical distribution of CDM projects. Africa supports the exploitation of other options for mitigation, including those which may not be covered by CDM, and particularly those that promote local sustainable development objectives.

Working within the principles of equity and common, but differentiated, principles, it is important that we view climate change as an opportunity to address the challenges of achieving sustainable development, rather than framing it as an environmental problem. There is need for countries to have a flexible global regime to cater for the changing circumstances. At the core of this regime must be elements relating to adaptation, technology development and transfer.

I wish to state that in the interest of sustainable development of our region, we are keen to be associated with global efforts to foster long-term cooperative action to address climate change by enhancing the implementation of the climate change Convention and its Kyoto Protocol.

We realize that for all these efforts to succeed, action must start at the national level. Kenya is prepared to face this challenge together with other nations of the World ■

Mwai Kibaki is President of the Republic of Kenya.

On behalf of the Government and the people of Kenya, I wish to extend a warm welcome to all the delegates and other visitors who have come to Nairobi to attend the twelfth Conference of the Parties. Kenya is honoured to host the twelfth Conference of the Parties which is also the second meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (COP/MOP2) in November this year at the United Nations Offices in Nairobi.

It is appropriate that the Conference be held at the premises of the only United Nations headquarters in the developing world and we look forward to a successful and memorable conference. climate change is a reality which affects all countries but its impact is and will be most acutely felt in the developing world, particularly in African countries. climate change is threatening to frustrate poverty eradication efforts and make the prospect of meeting the Millennium Development Goals far less certain.