

SADC – SOUTHERN AFRICA DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) has been in existence since 1980, when it was formed as a loose alliance of nine majority-ruled States in Southern Africa known as the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC), with the main aim of coordinating development projects in order to lessen economic dependence on the then apartheid South Africa. The founding Member States are: Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

SADCC was formed in Lusaka, Zambia on April 1, 1980, following the adoption of the Lusaka Declaration - Southern Africa: Towards Economic Liberation.

The transformation of the organization from a Coordinating Conference into a Development Community (SADC) took place on August 17, 1992 in Windhoek, Namibia when the Declaration and Treaty was signed at the Summit of Heads of State and Government thereby giving the organization a legal character.

SADC was established under Article 2 of the SADC treaty by SADC Member States represented by their respective Heads of State and Government or duly authorised representatives to spearhead economic integration of Southern Africa.

SADC braces for climate change challenge

by Tigere Chagutah and Mukundi Mutasa

SADC MEMBER States are taking bold steps to ease the impact of climate change as evidence points to continued warming and drier conditions across the mainland countries. Increasingly violent cyclones are forecast to hit the island and coastal states, especially in the Mozambique Channel.

Announcing various measures to address global warming in the region, SADC leaders attending the high-level meeting on climate change at the United Nations Headquarters in New York in September called for urgent global action, and local solutions to the climate menace.

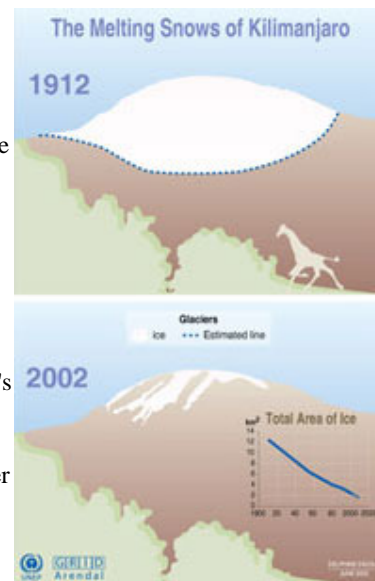
The discussion, which drew more than 100 Heads of State and Government and about 80 Ministers of Foreign Affairs, was the largest-ever gathering on climate change. Delegates witnessed a bold show of political will to tackle climate change by the region's leadership who stressed the need for action.

They announced various measures being taken by SADC Member States as they prepare to deal with the impacts of climate change, while also noting the challenges of low adaptive capacity.

Angolan President José Eduardo dos Santos reiterated his country's commitment to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol - the current global framework for reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 2012.

Among measures to reduce emissions, dos Santos told delegates that the oil-rich southern African country plans to cut the burning of gas resulting from oil production.

“My government is committed to the total elimination, by 2010, of such gas by transforming it into liquefied natural gas,” dos Santos said. Botswana indicated that it fully supports the UNFCCC as the



Convention provides an appropriate global framework for addressing the challenges of climate change.

“What we need is the political will to mobilise resources to facilitate effective implementation of the Convention,” said Mopati Merafhe, Botswana's Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, adding that his government has established “a multi-sectoral national committee on climate change” to advise on relevant issues.

Marco Hausiku, the Foreign Minister of Namibia said climate change is a global issue with serious implications for economic growth, sustainable development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Hausiku called upon “the private sector to join hands with governments to develop and apply technologies that can mitigate climate change.”

“The international community has to live up to its commitment to provide resources to developing countries to adapt to the effect of climate change,” he told the high-level meeting. “Namibia is not happy with the rate at which investments are made in the development of renewable and clean energy sources.”

President Levy Mwanawasa of Zambia, who is the current SADC Chairperson, stressed the low adaptive capacity to climate change by developing countries. “Our early warning systems are inadequate to face the new challenges by climate change. These include weather forecasting, disaster prediction and preparedness,” he said.

“The inadequacy in early warning systems makes it difficult for us to plan for our farming. It also undermines our ability to respond timely to crisis situations induced by adverse effects of climate change.”

Madagascar's President Marc Ravalomanana implored some industrialised nations who have been “dragging their feet” to move to enable the creation of an “ecological partnership” with Africa.

“The mission of this partnership would be to find creative solutions to these climate and environmental problems. Priority actions need to be agreed upon. A funding and investment strategy needs to be developed.

And a strategy for monitoring progress needs to be formulated,” said Ravalomanana. Over the past decade, Madagascar has experienced an increase in the number of violent cyclones from an average of two to five cyclones a year, to five to eight cyclones a year.

Madagascar's records going back 50 years show that the average temperatures have increased by 0.65 degrees Celsius. During the same period, the length of the growing period in the rice fields on the Madagascar Highlands has decreased as the number of days without rain has increased by one day per year.

In the United Republic of Tanzania, climate change studies reveal that there has been a general increase in temperature over the last 40 years, and rainfall has been decreasing in most parts of the country during this same period. With recent research showing that, due to global warming, the glaciers at the summit of Mt Kilimanjaro are melting so quickly that they will be gone by 2020, there is concern that human activities may have set in motion irreversible climatic changes.

Studies conducted in Zimbabwe show that the monthly highest daily maximum temperatures for most of the country are on the increase, by about 2 degrees Celsius per century.

¹ <http://www.sardc.net/Editorial/sadctoday/view.asp?vol=568&pubno=v10n3>

Data shows that the length of the cold winter spell is decreasing by about 15 days per century. “With predictions that agricultural productivity in Zimbabwe could decrease by up to 30 percent this century and marked by severe drought, climate change poses one of the most serious food security challenges of the 21st century in the country,” said Francis Nhema, Zimbabwe’s Minister of Environment and Tourism and current chair of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development.

Nhema called for the setting up of a ‘Special Adaptation Fund for Africa’ in order to build adaptive capacity on the continent. A number of countries confirmed that they have completed their National Adaptation Plans of Action (NAPAs) on climate change. These include Lesotho, Malawi, Tanzania and Zambia.

The NAPAs identify priority areas for which urgent and immediate action is required for the countries to adapt to the effects of climate change. The New York event was aimed at securing political commitment and building momentum for the UN Climate Change Conference to be held in Bali, Indonesia in December, where negotiations on a new international climate agreement should start.

That meeting will seek to determine future action on mitigation, adaptation, the global carbon market and financing responses to climate change after the expiry of the Kyoto Protocol.

Commenting on proceedings, the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, said, “I sensed something remarkable happening, something transformative - a sea-change, whereby leaders showed themselves willing to put aside blame for the past and pose to themselves more forward- looking questions.”

“Our job is to translate the spirit of New York into deeds in Bali,” said Mr. Ban. ²

² <http://www.sardc.net/Editorial/sadctoday/view.asp?vol=568&pubno=v10n3>