

**SPEECH BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF SALGA AND THE  
EXECUTIVE MAYOR OF THE CITY OF JOHANNESBURG, AT THE  
AFRICITIES 4<sup>TH</sup> SUMMIT, NAIROBI – KENYA**

**20 September 2006**

Symposium Chair: Stephen Kabuye, Mayor of Entebbe and Vice  
President of ICLEI

ICLEI President: David Cadman

ICLEI Secretary General: Konrad Otto-Ziemaman

UCLAGA Secretary General: Jean Pierre Elong Mbassi

Mayors and Councillors

Presidents and Chairpersons of Local Government Associations

Representatives of Tertiary Institutions

Representatives from Business and Donor Organisations

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Programme Director, the South African Local  
Government Association (SALGA) is honoured to be given the  
opportunity to address the 4<sup>th</sup> Africities Summit side event on Climate  
Change.

We remain aware that Local government is that sphere of  
government that is located closest to local communities. That elected

public representatives and local government practitioners are at the coal face of service delivery and development.

The objects of local government are:

- To provide accountable and democratic government to local communities,
- To ensure a safe and healthy environment,
- To promote local economic development,
- To involve community organisations, other stakeholders and communities in local government related matters and;
- To ensure that all this work is done in keeping with available resources and in a sustainable manner.

Sustainability is about preserving the planet earth for future generations. This question should and is indeed one of the critical global challenges that local government have to grapple with in an ongoing manner.

Ladies and gentlemen, global challenges are obvious to all of us. Do all of our citizens have sufficient access to drinking water? Can they breathe clean air? Is the soil that we are using to grow food protected from erosion and toxification? Are our cities resilient to disasters such as earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, tsunamis or fires? Do our citizens have shelter and jobs? Are our communities peaceful and safe?

Do the ecological footprints of our cities altogether fit on this planet, meaning: are our urban lifestyles sustainable so that the Planet Earth can support them in the longer term?

Today, perhaps one of the most critical issue that face the world is global warming. Placed before us in a palpable manner, presented with unassailable evidence is the world that is seriously affected by climate change. Local communities and governments are particularly vulnerable to this challenge. The supply of food and water, the risks of flooding, the spread of disease, heat stress and similar experiences are becoming a common phenomenon.

It is now common knowledge that the root cause of Climate Change includes the current pattern of consumption, production, trade and investment that are clearly unsustainable.

Therefore, the central question that the African Cities Symposium on Climate Change must answer is: what must we do and how must we act to turn the world from its current path of unsustainable development, and decisively act to defeat poverty and underdevelopment, particularly in Africa.

An examination of Climate Change suggest that there are clear links between poverty, current wealth creation and environmental degradation in Africa. This question has a direct negative impact on the quality of life of people. It is the current wealth creation process that produces tons of waste, the current negative consumption

patterns and the strain that is particularly exacted on water and energy.

We will do well do remember that it is the poor who reside close to or on landfill sites, get directly affected by mine dumps, who are forced to drink polluted water, experience the effects of poor waste management, literally live with air pollution in their homes, experience open raw sewerage that runs down the streets.

We also live in a global world that is characterised by an unhealthy relationship between the developing South (poor) and the developed North (rich) countries. We have a responsibility at local government to ensure that programmes that seeks to protect the environment in the North do not shift the burden of industrial waste to the South. The recent scandal in West Africa if the media is accurate in its reporting lays this problem bare for all to see. We have a collective responsibility to protect the environment.

The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) was able to successfully mobilise global citizenry to focus attention on key environmental and development issues. These range from: access to clean and safe water and sanitation, clean and safe energy, food security, peace, poverty, unemployment and loss of biodiversity. The WSSD held in Johannesburg in 2002, reaffirmed sustainable development and the Millenium Development Goals as the key

priorities to be pursued by the community of nations and every Multilateral Institution.

In 1987 the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED, 1987) concluded that, *"a low energy path is the best way towards a sustainable future...it will buy time to mount major programmes on sustainable forms of renewable energy, to so begin the transition to a safer, more sustainable energy era."*

In June 1992 the United Nations formally recognized the effect of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions as a key contributor to Climate Change. We now know, that this led to the adoption of the 1997 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Kyoto, Japan.

At local government level one can note that some Cities on the African continent, in whatever limited way, have been grappling with the issue of Climate Change. Some have been active participants in the ICLEI's Cities for Climate Protection (CCP) programme. They have adopted policies and implemented measures aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions, ensuring improved air quality, engaging in efforts that seek to ensure energy efficiency, enhancing the quality of life and living conditions in local areas.

This Summit has a responsibility:

- To call on all municipalities on the African continent to consider and implement specific measures to save the Planet.
- To reduce carbon dioxide emissions.
- To upgrade the efficiency of power plants.
- To promote the use of renewable energy.
- To provide tax incentives on key sustainable and environmental development initiatives.
- And to further call for a significant increase in our efforts to educate and raise awareness amongst African citizens on Climate Change and related matters.

Local governments and Cities should embrace Climate Change programmes. We should exploit opportunities arising from the need to maintain infrastructural development and the laying out of new infrastructure to introduce appropriate environmental friendly technologies.

It is important to remind ourselves that the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) met for the 11th time in Montreal, Canada, in late 2005, and pronounced that Kenya would host the second Meeting of the Parties.

This will be done in conjunction with the twelfth session of the Parties to the Climate Change Convention which will be held here, in Nairobi, from 06<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> November 2006.

Organized Local Government in South Africa and in the Continent should stand ready to play a meaningful supportive role in the run-up to this African Conference of Parties (COP).

The African Union, the African Renaissance and NEPAD provides us with a broad framework to engage issues on Climate Change. In addition, the establishment of UCLGA in May 2005, has further provided us with a platform to deepen our engagement and broaden our effort in pursuit of the Climate Change and related agenda.

Let me conclude by saying, every available opportunity should be utilised to table Climate Change issues at the various local legislatures for debate and communication. The need to deepen awareness and consciousness on this matter is critical.

Thank you