Opening Address by the Minister of Energy, Ms. Dipuo Peters, MP at the South African Carbon Capture and Storage Conference
Sandton Convention Centre, Johannesburg

08h30, Tuesday, 29 September 2009

Mr Chairman,

Honoured Guests,

I am delighted to welcome you to our beautiful country which is located right at the bottom end of the African continent.

In this hall, gathered here, is a myriad of people hailing from different parts of the globe, who are concerned about the negative impact of climate change on our planet; who believe that we do not have the luxury of indulging our differences – which unfortunately was the case up until recently – to the exclusion of the desire to work together to do what our **President, Jacob Zuma**, told the **United Nations General Assembly in New York**, a few days ago that, "**we should reduce emissions across the globe without constraining development in countries of the south**" such as South Africa.

Interestingly, **President Obama** also agreed with President Zuma when he told the same gathering that a way has to be found to "**reduce emissions without inhibiting growth**"

Chairperson

We gathered here; because we are part of a people who believe that we can no longer afford the luxury; of burying our heads in the proverbial sand by indulging in the ignominy of irrelevant and countless debates.

The debate at the United Nations, which is continuing as we speak, has demonstrated that even the United States and other developed nations have promised; to join and lead the efforts aimed at mitigating the negative impact of climate change.

President Obama led the charge when he delivered his first speech at the United Nations. He called, "**on wealthy nations that did so much to damage to the environment in the 20th century**" and he called on them to "…**to lead this reversal**". To which our president emphasised that this must be done in a manner that, "… **is inclusive, fair and effective".**

Programme Director

What transpired at the UN Session is a much clearer indication, of both the developing and developed nations' desires, to work together in mitigating climate change challenges.

We are once more witnessing the return to multilateralism at the level of the United Nations; and this augur positively well for our preparations towards Copenhagen.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

South Africa is a country of diverse cultures, diverse languages, diverse climates and diverse landscapes. However, when it comes to energy resources, our diversity is limited.

We are endowed with an abundance of coal and sunlight. Cheap coal buttressed by the presence of a well known and (now) developed technology has enabled South Africa to build an economic power house based on this primary energy source.

On the other hand, the harnessing of sunlight suffered economic and technological challenges that led to the previous widespread use of solar energy being side-lined.

Over the last two centuries, humankind's technical advancement has been driven by the use of fossil fuels – first in the form of coal, and then towards the mid- and latter- twentieth century, oil and gas.

The decision to use coal, oil and gas fuels may have been the right one in the past; but the very technologies and scientific advancements catalysed by the use of fossil fuels has revealed ominous aspects to the use of fossil fuels – the major one of which is climate change.

The world united to address this common challenge; and eventually led to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol. South Africa is a non-Annex I Party to the Kyoto Protocol and aligns itself with the G77 and China Grouping.

Although South Africa has no binding obligations under the Kyoto Protocol to decrease greenhouse gas emissions, it was recently announced, during the Climate Change Summit in Johannesburg in early 2009, that we will responsibly continue to increase our carbon dioxide emissions until 2020/25, plateau for a decade, and then 2030/35 decrease such emissions in real terms.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

In 2008, the then Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism released a Long-Term Mitigation Scenarios plan that addressed a number of technologies to limit greenhouse gas emissions.

Amongst those was that of energy efficiency. In that regard, my Department has a programme to increase energy efficiency in South Africa with a target of 12% by 2015. Energy efficiency is a 'no-brainer' as it increases the competitiveness of our industry and places more disposable income into the hands of the consumer.

The recently enacted National Energy Act makes provision for a South African Energy Development Institute that will, apart from energy research and development, undertake energy efficiency activities.

Chairperson

Another approach of the Long-Term Mitigation Scenarios is increasing the use of renewable energies. In this case, South Africa also has a target for renewable energy use – namely 10,000 Giga Watt-hours by 2013. As I stated earlier, we have an abundance of solar influx that can be harnessed. Already a few renewable energy projects have been implemented.

The government has recently introduced a renewable energy feed-in tariff that is designed to be a catalyst towards creating economically viable commercial renewable energy projects. As government we are committed; to acceleration of the introduction of renewable energy technologies.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

In the context of this conference, another of the technologies also addressed by the Long-Term Mitigation Scenarios is carbon capture and storage. I have addressed the topics of energy efficiency and renewable energy to contextualise the purpose of the subject matter being addressed by this conference.

We cannot afford to neglect any technology that will assist us, both as a nation and as a world, to address the matters of energy security and global climate change.

There are only three types of primary energy available to humankind; fossil fuels, nuclear and renewable. Nuclear energy is widely used on a global scale and new and safer forms are continually being developed – including in South Africa where we are undertaking work on the pebble bed modular reactor. Renewable energies are likewise being developed and implemented – although not fast enough. However, notwithstanding the progressive work on nuclear and renewable, the International Energy Agency has forecast an increase in the extraction and use of fossil fuels. This forecast also applies to South Africa – as I stated earlier, South Africa will increase its carbon dioxide emissions until 2020/25, plateau, and then decrease after 2030/35.

The question then arises; quo vadis climate change.

The answer is carbon capture and storage. The world needs to wean itself from fossil fuels onto both nuclear and renewable energy. That process will take time and carbon capture and storage is seen as a transitional measure.

South Africa first indicated its interest in carbon capture and storage by joining the Carbon Sequestration Leadership Forum during 2003. That was immediately followed by a study commissioned by the then Department of Minerals and Energy to ascertain whether there was potential for this technology in South Africa. The results of that study were released during 2004 and the answer was a resounding 'YES'.

During the year 2006, the South African National Energy Research Institute was operationalised, and that body ran with the carbon capture and storage programme.

With the South African industry funding, the South African National Energy Research Institute; initiated the study for a Carbon Geological Storage Atlas during 2008. The purpose of that Atlas is to locate and characterise potential geological storage sites for carbon dioxide. That Atlas, which is scheduled to be published mid-2010, will form the basis for future geological storage work in South Africa.

Chairperson;

Furthermore, on 30 March, 2009, a South African Centre for Carbon Capture and Storage was established in the South African National Energy Research Institute.

The official launch of that Centre will take place at a special dinner this evening. This Carbon Capture and Storage Week celebrate the official launch of the Centre

The mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions and in the case of carbon capture and storage in particular, is a global matter requiring a global approach and therefore, international co-operation is an essential feature of that approach.

It is therefore with great satisfaction and pride that we welcome our international participants to this Conference. We welcome international visitors from Australia, Canada, France, Netherlands, Norway, and the United Kingdom, who bring with them expertise to assist with our capacity building in South Africa.

We also welcome delegates from our fellow African countries with whom we share our activities. The diversity of delegates at this gathering is an indication of the international nature of the problem and the commitment to solve the matter jointly.

As stated above, South Africa has acceded to the Kyoto protocol as a non-Annex I Party. We will undertake actions that address climate change matters, both adaptation and mitigation, but these must be balanced with the need to develop our poorer communities.

Remember as developing countries we still have huge challenges of poverty, hunger and devastation of humanity by preventable diseases.

Ours is to gravitate towards the millennium development goals (MDG) targets of halving poverty and unemployment.

In order to help us achieve the mitigation and adaptation balance, we are grateful to the support that we are receiving from our partners from the developed north. Not only have they, along with South African industry, contributed financially to this Conference, but also to the South African Centre for Carbon Capture and Storage.

In the case of this Conference, I would like to acknowledge the financial support from:

- The Australian initiated Global Carbon Capture and Storage Institute; and
- The Norwegian government.

I would also like acknowledge financial support for this Conference from;

- Sasol;
- Anglo Coal
- Department of Energy
- Eskom
- Exxaro
- Centre for Carbon Capture and Storage

The mere fact that industry and Government support this initiative is indicative that both sectors in our country are serious about this technology.

Finally, Mr Chairman, carbon capture and storage is one of the key technologies that the South African government is investigating to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions. This Conference, and indeed this week of conference, workshops and courses is an important step in the process of developing carbon capture and storage in South Africa.

We live in an epoch where our destiny is shared: the strength and size of our economies in relation to each does not matter any more. Our historical division of the Cold War has ended, more than a decade ago.

History has to judge us a generation that chose to see, "(the proverbial) shoreline beyond the rough waters ahead"; that comes together, at this cross current of history, to tackle head on the challenges posed by climate change.

We are all driven by the insatiable desire to end conflicts which may arise as we reap the consequences of our own inaction; when we end the possibility that we will be eclipsed by the spectre of wars; over refugees and resources. This could be worsened by the devastation of drought and famine.

I am convinced that this is a proverbial first step in a journey of a thousand miles to create a planet without the negative effects of climate change.
Thank you