

**MS DIPUO PETERS' OPENING REMARKS HIGH LEVEL SESSION ON
SUSTAINABLE ENERGY ACCESS FOR ALL, 8TH DECEMBER 2011**

VENUE: DURBAN

Honourable President of the Republic of South Africa

Ministers of our various sector departments

Energy Ministers and Deputies present from both the Continent and outside

World Bank Senior Officials

The Director General of UNIDO and IRENA

Business Executives

Community Representatives

Members of Parliament(s)

International agencies represented

Senior government officials

Honoured guests;

Ladies and gentlemen

The South African Government through the Department of Energy together with the African Union, particularly the Commission on Infrastructure and

Energy, the World Bank and the United Nations Industrial Development Organisations welcome all of you to this important event of ensuring that we work towards 2012 as the International Year of Sustainable Energy for All. . We are encouraged by all those have committed to be part in paving the road to Durban. We would like to foremost extend our gratitude to the honourable President of the Republic of South Africa, His Excellency, Honourable Mr Jacob Zuma for gracing this event, and a warm welcome to all our guests from all corners of our continent and beyond.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

The main debate is located at the global scale, where the main issue is how to increase energy access whilst significantly reducing total emission of GHGs. With African countries contributing just over 4.9% of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions of all signatory countries of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the continent is increasingly under tremendous pressure and running the risk not to sustain economic growth and poverty reduction, the quality of life, and political stability in the world.

The use of energy is highly correlated with the quality of living, and it is expected that as we increase our standards of living, our use of energy will also increase. For most, this means an increased use of fossil fuels in most cases as the Clean Energy sector is too expensive to afford due to the high initial capital investment required. To respond to the scale of the challenges we face, we need to diversify our energy supply mix, including increased use of renewables and intensifying the use of energy efficient technologies.

As we are gathered here now, you will agree with me that Governments should stimulate investment in the energy sector and accelerate implementation through the development of the right policies as well as strategies to support them. Developing policy frameworks is one thing while enforcing that is another. It has been demonstrated worldwide that the contribution of renewable energy to the provision of reliable power supply cannot be disputed.

Programme Director;

The power sector, especially the generation capacity infrastructure in Africa is extremely underdeveloped and we urgently need to attend to this matter as it remains a hindrance or an obstacle to embark on major energy projects/investments that would allow ease of interconnectivity across the continent. We acknowledge the establishment of the regional power pools and the good work that has been undertaken thus far but we still need to do more to realise an enabling environment for power trade from country to country.

The impact of this underdevelopment manifests itself in the electricity consumption and energy security of supply. The power infrastructure generates a small fraction of what other regions of the world provide.

Ladies and Gentlemen

We do recognise that there are several barriers facing the renewable energy sector today such as the high capital costs associated with renewable energy technologies. Positive investment climates and effective

market models are critical to the uptake of new technologies and increased access to energy for economic growth. The growth of the global renewables market means that there is now a suite of well established technologies, which can provide energy cost-competitively under the right conditions.

It is indeed true that we need lasting solutions, and we need them now. Africa, Time to implement has arrived and it is now. We can no longer afford talk shows. We must walk to the talk of course with the support of our international partners. However, we should also say without any fear of contradiction that it is unavoidable for the continent not to rely (in the foreseeable future) on the economic growth path that is highly emissions-intensive. It is a reality that we will continue to take advantage of our natural resources, but we will “as humanly possible” do so in a manner that will take into consideration the environment and human health hence the call for cleaner technologies.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This conference is faced with a huge task of intertwining the expectations and the needs of the poor of this continent with the capabilities and capacities within the continent, while ensuring that the ambitious goals to achieve the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, and the developmental imperatives, which depends on certainty international community will act to support ambitious, fair, effective and binding multilateral agreement under the UNFCCC and its' Kyoto Protocol.

Funding is at the core of lack of energy infrastructure and energy poverty in Africa. I will therefore hope and trust that our deliberations in this event will help Africa strategise on how best to raise, mobilise and administer funding to deliver energy access to those in need to come up with innovative and realistic outputs in terms of how Africa can embark on a journey for energy access for all as per the UN 2012 declaration on Access to Energy for All, meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and with that of the eradication of poverty in our continent.

I thank you