

**KEY NOTE ADDRESS BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF ENERGY, HER EXCELLENCY  
MS BARBARA THOMPSON AT COP 17  
THEME: MEETING THE MILLENIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS – FINANCING ENERGY  
ACCESS FOR ALL  
DATE: 5<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2011  
VENUE: SA CCR EXPO**

Programme Director,

Members of Parliaments represented,

Representatives of various international agencies and organisations;

Business Executives and Senior Governments officials

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Morning,

Programme Director, I am privileged to be part of this important discussion today more especially that South Africa is hosting this historic United Nations Framework Convention Climate Change Conference dubbed the “Seventeenth Conference of the Parties also serving as the Seventh Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol. As you might be aware, this session takes place at the backdrop of other important discussions held over the past few days, which amongst other things, touched on building Energy Efficiency, the diversification of energy mix towards low carbon economy, Nuclear Energy seminar, Carbon Capture and Storage, Transport Fuel efficiency, financing technological option for clean energy, the effectiveness of energy efficiency policing in relation to financing etc.

All of the above events demonstrate robust deliberation on the stark reality manifested by the high levels of poverty in the country and the continent at large. This reality is an expression of the relatively low access to modern energy in Africa compared to developed countries. The challenges pose a

huge risk for the advancement of the millennium development goals – (MDGs) which countries committed to meet these targets by 2015 notwithstanding the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) energy initiatives.

It was here in South Africa when the people of the world converged in Johannesburg during the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in 2002 to review progress since the 1992 Rio Summit and reaffirm these goals by coming with a plan of implementation “dubbed” the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI). We cannot over emphasize that if these MDGs ideas are not adequately addressed, women, youth and children and particularly the continent’s rural poor will not be ameliorated from the chuckles of extreme poverty

Ladies and gentlemen, I can only be hopeful and trust that I am not under illusions to suggest that the solutions we seek as the citizens of the world and Africans in particular during this COP 17 period, will only serve to strengthen, our resolve to ensure that not only access to energy for Africa is a reality, but also that the international community plays part in providing the necessary support to ensure funding of such interventions is accelerated and realized.

We need proposals that will offer lasting solutions to our rural poor in particular and the ordinary but courageous women (and no doubt men too) of our continent who for decades, despite the severe energy poverty conditions, displayed amazing courage and resilience as they grappled with daily chores to ensure that their children, despite the dark and cold nights of our continent, are able to be fed and educated.

We are not oblivious to the global threat that the changing climatic conditions are posing for the energy sector and our continent. The challenge of addressing energy access, supply and security, and the commitment to reduce poverty by 2015 in Africa as espoused by the MDGs behooves all of us to ask whether we are doing enough both individually and severally in shaping energy planning processes in our respective regions and the continent. With the deadline for achieving the MDGs only 5 years away, I am

challenging the role of private sector in influencing progress in ensuring its effectiveness towards achieving the said targets.

Ladies and Gentlemen, according to the Business Impact Report of 2010, the report reveals that pursuing business activities leads to employment creation, value creation, and supply chain effects of all of which contribute to economic development and various MDGs. Most notably, commercial activities have a significant impact on alleviating poverty. By impacting poverty alleviation, MDGs 2, 4 and 5 are also impacted.

Programme Director,

Let me take advantage of this interaction at the risk of stating the obvious, remind everybody present in this session that the solutions we need to shape should speak to the reality of the MDG1 to “eradicate extreme poverty and hunger”, so that never again shall the women of the continent experience what we witnessed recently in Somalia, and many other parts of the continent over the recent past.

Ladies and gentlemen, according to an article by Morgan Bazillian and others in Science Direct on Environmental Sustainability, 2011 – approximately three billion people do not have access to modern cooking fuels and technologies. This has clear and significant impacts on social and economic development, adverse health consequences, and gender impacts. Adoption of the MDGs has served to help focus global attention to providing the basic human needs of all people. Of course, access to modern services and technologies will reduce time our children and women spend gathering fuel-wood, fetching water, and cooking instead of attending school, studying and other much needed services. It is therefore imperative that we assist the African continent in achieving the objectives set out by MDG 2 of “Achieving universal primary education”. Access to finance remains critical for us to achieve all these MDGs.

Ladies and gentlemen, we would have failed as the leadership and in particular women leadership if our efforts to improve the physical burden associated with household chores for women do not strengthen the MDG 3: “Promote gender equality and empower women”. We should not forget that we all have the responsibility to empower our women and communities in dealing with issues of gender and climate change. To achieve this, we should widen the scope of skilling opportunities for women and youth.

The MDGs 4, 5, and 6: “Reduce child mortality; improve maternal health; and combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases”, enjoins all of us to face the reality that without adequate clean energy technologies, our efforts to ensure access to basic services such as water and sanitation, efficient operation of clinics and hospitals, will adversely affect our nation’s health and future. Lack of basic services exacerbates poverty and contributes to its perpetuation, as it precludes most of industrial activities and the jobs they create.

In response to the MDG 7: “Ensure environmental sustainability”, I would like to urge all and sundry in all sectors, to intensify awareness to improve use of energy through various energy saving interventions. Modern cooking fuels and more efficient cook stoves can relieve pressures on the environment caused by the unsustainable use of biomass.

The promotion of low-carbon technologies is congruent with local and global environmental plans, whereas the unsustainable exploitation of fuel-wood causes local deforestation, soil degradation, and erosion. Using cleaner technologies also reduces greenhouse-gas emissions and global warming.

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is our believe that part of the solution will require a clear focus on implementation of these goals, which will accelerate our efforts to make progress on existing commitments to support the world’s and in particular the

continent's development. We need to scale up energy access initiatives; Productive use of rural/renewable Energy; Capacity development and investment in mini-hydro power systems; and Development of an African regional rural electrification programme in quest to address the issues of energy and climate change.

You will agree with me that the inability of the international community's contribution to the developing countries and the African continent; to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) will inhibit further advancement of our achievements thus far. We will require more than ever before that as a continent we work better together to coordinate efforts in support of the Millennium Development Goals across the world.

Programme Director

I must reemphasize, as research pointed out, that unless these collective focus on building capacity for regional and continental planning and harmonization of regulatory framework, education and research as well as building centers of excellence throughout the continent to address high levels of poverty and low access to energy, the continent's development -- social, economic, and environmental -- including livelihoods, access to water, agricultural productivity, health, and education will remain a pipe dream.

Failure on our part to address this situation will continue to put enormous responsibilities on our meager resources and hamper the ideals of uplifting the rural poor, especially women and youth.

Ladies and Gentlemen

This calls for countries and regions to invest heavily in energy infrastructure to ensure improvements in energy efficiency, access to modern and clean energy, and thus ensure the security of energy supply.

Whereas sufficient modern energy is essential at national and regional levels to ensure a stable economic development, promotion of trade, and enhancement of participation in global markets will provide the added benefits of better social and economic linkages.

We are also aware that as a continent we cannot do this alone. It is imperative that the international community should play an integral part to address the impediments especially in developing countries and Africa in particular such as infrastructure, finance and technology, to fully achieve energy access in Africa.

We should put more emphasis on priority projects to fast track energy access on the continent. We need to leverage on the available technologies such as lighting solutions, abundance of solar, and energy efficiency measures that could contribute significantly in scaling up access to energy for Africa's people and businesses while putting the continent on a green and low-carbon development path.

It is our view that this session should provide us with the opportunity not only to reflect on the challenges our women and rural poor, but how governments should put in place coherent regulatory and policy frameworks that support the development of thriving markets for newer and renewable energy technologies and recognize the important role of the private sector. This includes removing barriers; allowing fair competition in energy markets; and taking into account the concept of internalizing external costs for all energy sources.

Government will continue to intensify its efforts to better understand how private finance markets operate, so that we can design effective policy measures to attract that funding. A key consideration is that funding approaches need to be tailored to the different stages of technology development. This will create synergy in making sure that government funding is most relevant for early stage technology development, while private finance

tends to assume a larger share of later-stage technology deployment and commercialization. Forward planning in our technology development will assist us in addressing these millennium development goals.

I thank you