

**WELCOME AND OFFICIAL OPENING BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF ENERGY,  
MS BARABRA THOMPSON AT THE AFRICA-EU ENERGY PARTNERSHIP, 9 MAY  
2012**

**VENUE: CAPE SUN HOTEL, CAPE TOWN**

Programme Director;

Commissioner for Development, European Commission (EC), H.E Andries Piebalgs;

Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy, African Union Commission, H.E Dr Elham  
M.A Ibrahim;

Minister of Energy, Republic of Mozambique, H.E Salvador;

Ministers and Deputy Ministers present

Members of Parliament(s) present;

Ambassadors present;

Business Executives and Community members;

The Leadership of various International agencies and Development institutions  
represented;

Senior government officials from all the countries represented;

Esteemed members of the media;

Honoured guests;

Ladies and gentlemen:

Good Morning

It is indeed a great pleasure to be given this opportunity to be part of this auspicious

occasion of the Africa-EU Energy Partnership. Let me thank and commend all those who worked hard to prepare for this conference and all the participants for dedicating time despite your busy schedules to this important event. It is encouraging to see this commitment by all of you ready to translate the policy frameworks and objectives into tangible outputs. The implementation of the outcomes of this conference will clearly demonstrate the continent's readiness for a transition into a low carbon economy.

Programme Director, - as we are gathered here today to ponder the actions required on the role of renewable energy to reach the AEEP 2020 targets, I strongly believe that we want to change the picture of Africa on energy matters which has a bearing in achieving other key objectives like alleviating energy poverty, job creation, achieving MDGs, improving efficiency in health and education. It is true that Africa is endowed with vast untapped renewable energy sources that can provide electricity for all at an affordable cost. Large and mini-hydropower, solar, onshore wind, biomass and geothermal should be explored to optimize energy access and strengthen energy security. Solar is currently more expensive, but has a huge potential and technology costs are rapidly falling. The Grand Inga is among the projects that stand out as a large resource and I am happy that significant progress has been made in realizing project.

Ensuring access to energy is arguably one of the major challenges that the world faces today. According to IEA, 2011, in 2009, 587 million Africans lacked access to electricity. At the same time, limited and unreliable energy access was a major impediment to economic growth. Energy access is an important issue directly related to income and poverty. I am happy that this partnership is taking an integrated planning approach by involving all the key stakeholders such as the private sector, civil society, research institutions, and public sector because government cannot do this alone.

My esteemed leaders, ladies and gentlemen - in September 2011, the Africa Energy Ministers conference adopted the Johannesburg Declaration which affirmed their support for the decision to take forward the energy issues that continue to plague this continent . The time for exploring potential is over, we must now implement. Africa is

rich in clean energy potential and only a small portion is currently exploited. The challenge for us is how we deploy the continent's sizable pool of this potential for a transformational scale up to significant economic development and climate benefits. No country has managed to reduce poverty and achieve economic development without increasing access to modern forms of energy. This challenge goes beyond any one country or institution, hence I call upon us to forge partnerships whilst strengthening the existing ones. Without a massive scale up in access to clean and safe energy, Africa will remain trapped in poverty. Secure, reliable and affordable energy sources are fundamental to economic stability and development.

Programme Director, - I am raising this teaser mindful of the fact that there are a number of activities that are currently being implemented throughout the continent. I am encouraged that the continent through various leadership has identified a number of interventions and measures that include but, are not limited to – energy supply largely based on Renewable Energy sources in Africa with vast untapped potential; a significant contribution to increasing access to energy both grid-connected and off-grid; regional interconnectivity; private investment; technology innovation; productive use of renewable energy; capacity development and investment in large and mini-hydro power systems etc.

It is our belief that a clear focus on the implementation of these goals will accelerate Africa's efforts to make progress on existing commitments to support the world and in particular the continent's development. I am sure that as you deliberate during the course of this conference, you will also reflect on the achievements made so far in meeting those set objectives in order to strengthen Africa's arm to ameliorate the plight of the poor and in particular that of women. This platform positions the continent to work towards the United Nations Declaration of 2012 as the *International Year of Sustainable Energy Access for All* and presents an opportunity to further enhance and embed the sustainable energy access idea in the broader climate dialogue and sustainable development to be held in Rio+20 in June this year.

Ladies and Gentlemen, - as we invest in energy infrastructure to ensure improvements in energy efficiency, access to modern and clean energy, and thus ensure the security of energy supply, we also need to be mindful of the economic benefits that can be derived by embarking on the local manufacturing of energy technologies. In addition to this, regional trade provides significant opportunities for cost savings, economic benefit and less carbon intensive power generation. It remains a clear case that regional trade will put Africa on a cleaner development path in terms of CO<sub>2</sub> emission reductions as opposed to a scenario without trade.

The regional power pools that have gradually been established in the Continent are playing a crucial role in laying the basis for cost-effective regional electricity supply and successful grid extension programmes in rural areas without excluding other energy sources. We are pleased with the remarkable progress that has been made through various African power pools initiatives. However, the fact that our people still continue to live in darkness dictates that Governments, Regional Institutions and Donors and Financiers need to work together to harness the benefits of regional power trade in advancing key transformational, and cross-border projects.

It goes beyond saying that energy is intrinsically linked with sustainable development at the local, national, and regional levels. It is at the local level that modern energy is required to improve the overall quality of life of the poor through the enhancement of productive activities and enterprise, which will result in increased incomes. 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.

It is our view that this conference will provide us with the opportunity not only to reflect on the challenges that our communities, especially women and rural poor, continue to encounter on a daily basis. Rather the discussion at this conference also provides the opportunity for governments to put in place coherent regulatory and policy frameworks

that support the development of thriving markets for newer and renewable energy technologies and recognise the important role of the private sector. This includes removing barriers; allowing fair competition in energy markets; and taking into account the concept of internalising external costs for all energy sources. We are also aware that as a continent we cannot do this alone. The international community is integral in assisting us to address some of these impediments in Africa, particularly on infrastructure development, finance and technology transfer, to fully achieve the set targets.

Programme Director, as a continent we cannot continue to remain on the periphery and remain victims of this situation, regardless of our contribution to the world's greenhouse emissions. Nor can we continue to sustain the burden of energy poverty that puts enormous constraints on the poor - especially in the remote rural areas. We believe that the time has arrived for the continent to deepen the gains we have made thus far and assert ourselves as effective agents of change. Let us claim our space in mitigation and adaptation processes to climate change, while we strengthen our economic growth and development.

We are well positioned as leaders of our continent to change the plight of our people's livelihood, and to strategically adapt to changing environmental realities by providing sustainable energy solutions that will enable development and economic growth for our people. We owe it to our children, women, the unemployed and disabled, especially in rural areas, to crack our heads for effective and implementable solutions that will ease their hardships in obtaining and using energy.

I hope the deliberations of this conference will arrive at a common solution, which will contribute meaningfully to greener and sustainable development.

I thank you