



**REMARKS BY THE MINISTER OF MINERAL RESOURCES AND ENERGY, MR  
SAMSON GWEDE MANTASHE ON THE OCCASION OF THE VIRTUAL AFRICA  
MINISTERIAL ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION**

**“Covid-19 Impact on Africa’s Energy Sector: Challenges and Opportunities”**

**30 June 2020**

Co-Chair of this session, Senegal Minister of Petroleum and Energy, HE Mouhamadou Makhtar Cisse,

IEA Executive Director, Dr. Fatih Birol,

Your Excellencies, Ministers,

Heads of Delegation,

High Representatives,

Our Partners from the Private Sector,

Delegates and Participants

We wish to congratulate the International Energy Agency (IEA) and the Republic of Senegal for co-hosting this important Round Table Discussion, drawing together a wide range of very strategic role players in the energy sector.

We must also express our gratitude to the IEA ongoing expanding focus and cooperation with the African Continent. It is our honour and pleasure to participate in this Africa Ministerial Roundtable virtual Discussion.

This is in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic which has disrupted the world. The economic decline is projected to be too high throughout the World, with our region Sub-Saharan Africa expected to register a recession for the first time in Twenty years. This reality forced us to appreciate that, as we are hard at work trying to save lives, we must also adapt and adjust our programme to also save livelihoods.

The decline in economic activities translated into the collapse of energy demand. In our case, when we insisted on allowing the energy sector to continue operating at full capacity during the nationwide lockdown, demand collapsed to a point where refineries were forced to close. When we relaxed the lockdown, demand grew faster leading to shortage of energy products when the economic sectors were ramping up production.

The tensions between the US and China are not helpful as they impact heavily on developing economies. One advantage that Covid-19 created, was for the developing economies to reimagine their future. There is more talk of developing domestic manufacturing capacity. These are positive signs.

The starting point is the manufacturing of the much-needed healthcare Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) - masks and sanitizers - and the development of the production capacity on the continent. African countries can cooperate in these projects and work together.

There is general agreement that energy can be the flywheel of the economic recovery. This is not a gift. It will depend on the energy sector positioning itself for such a role. We should assume that role.

The polemic fight among energy technologies is weakening the sector. Energy must start working as an important sector of the economy rather than a competition of energy technologies. The transition to low-carbon emissions must be handled with the necessary care to avoid hurting each other in the process. Opportunities for this sector are huge and wait to be exploited.

As we transition to low-carbon emission economy as developing economies, we are expecting that developed economies will acknowledge our effort and support us. The biggest challenge is for our people accessing low cost energy. If we fail to resolve the challenge of access to energy, clean energy will look more like A luxury.

The commitments made in the Paris agreement must be honoured. This requires a lot of support from developed economies. As individual countries, our levels of development must be appreciated for the world to give meaning to a “Just transition”. Otherwise, some economies and employment prospects will be destroyed, mainly in the developing world.

We are looking forward to the next African Union IEA Roundtable, possibly physically. We must all participate on these critical engagements, be it virtual or physical, so that we can share our experiences and work together.

Thank you.