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# **South Africa and the Durban Climate Change Negotiations:** Challenges and Opportunities as Hosts of COP 17

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## ■ Acronyms and abbreviations

AMCEN	African Ministerial Conference on the Environment
AWG-KP	Ad Hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex I Parties under the Kyoto Protocol
AWG-LCA	Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Co-operative Action
AU	African Union
BASIC	Brazil, South Africa, India and China
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
COP 17	17 <sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties
DEA	Department of Environmental Affairs
DIRCO	Department of International Relations and Co-operation
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
G77	Group of 77
GHG	greenhouse gas
IBSA	India, Brazil, South Africa Dialogue Forum
IGLC	Intergovernmental Logistics Committee
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	non-governmental organisation
REDD	Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation
SADC	Southern African Development Community
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
US	United States of America

## ■ Introduction

South Africa has, for the last six years, played a prominent role in the international climate change negotiations, *inter alia* supporting and promoting the interests of the African continent and, periodically, of the wider group of developing countries. The country's position and potentially influential role is highly regarded and South Africa has, at times, operated as a diplomatic interface between developed and developing countries in climate change negotiations.<sup>1</sup> One commentator has labelled the country as "...a bridge between the developing and developed worlds... set to play an increasingly important role as global economic and strategic power shifts from the industrialised countries of the G8 to the new economic powers of the south".<sup>2</sup> This research paper aims to provide a high-level analysis of South Africa's relationship with and influence on the climate change agenda, with particular reference to COP 17.

## ■ Dual role of South Africa for COP 17: President (host) and negotiating party

"Moving forward is not merely an option in Durban, but essential. What is needed now is political guidance to steer the negotiators. We need to think creatively to accommodate each other and create the space to decide how to address problems for which possible solutions at present are perhaps not matured enough." – *President Jacob Zuma, October 2011*

In order to facilitate this dual function of host and negotiating party, the South African government designated two national departments to be in charge of each function:

- The Minister of International Relations and Co-operation, the Honourable Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, has made the COP 17 President, and her department (the Department of International Relations and Co-operation, DIRCO) will take primary responsibility for the logistics of COP 17, as well as facilitating a successful outcome. The Minister of International Relations and Co-operation, with DIRCO, needed to ensure that the COP runs smoothly and in accordance with the requirements of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). They were also responsible for encouraging steady progress on the substance of the negotiations

- The Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs led the South African delegation to the COP and the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) will ensure that South Africa's interests are properly represented during the negotiations, as it has done at previous COPs and iterations of the negotiations.

This approach is regarded as strategic and diplomatic, avoiding any conflict of interest in the dual function of the South African government for COP 17. It was noted that the appointment of the Minister of International Relations and Co-operation as the COP President, with the Minister for Water and Environmental Affairs leading the South African delegation, has signposted the emphasis that has been given to managing the international diplomacy of climate change. As the incoming COP President, the Minister of International Relations and Co-operation has indicated that her role is to lead the world in forging a common consensus on reversing the adverse effects of climate change. By hosting COP 17, South Africa hopes to uphold rules-based multilateralism as one of the fundamental interests. Accordingly, South Africa will endeavour to uphold the consensus nature of decision-making that has characterised the UNFCCC and its COPs since 1995.

DIRCO also chairs an Intergovernmental Logistics Committee (IGLC) that includes the Ministers of Energy, Finance, Home Affairs, Economic Development, Trade and Industry, National Planning Commission, Mineral Resources, Public Enterprises, Tourism, Science and Technology, the Premier of KwaZulu-Natal and the Mayor of eThekweni Municipality. The DEA, working with DIRCO, the eThekweni municipality, the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Authority, business and civil society, will also attempt to reduce the environmental impacts of the COP itself through various greening, carbon mitigation and carbon offsetting projects. The successful delivery of COP 17 was a key deliverable of the government's for the period 2011/2012. South Africa's COP presidency will continue until this role is handed over to the next COP host country. Through this dual function, the South African government had to protect its national interests in the negotiations while facilitating a successful global outcome of COP 17.

## ■ South Africa's international role

South Africa is faced divergent expectations/needs from various groupings, including from official negotiating groups (i.e. the African Group or the G77), non-

official negotiating groups (i.e. BASIC), economic partners (i.e. BRIC) and from bilateral relationships (i.e. China, the European Union [EU] and the United States of America [US]).

## □ A natural diplomatic leader

South Africa was one of the original 51 founding members of the United Nations and has been a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council since October 2006. The country is a member of the Group of 77+China, the G20<sup>3</sup> and the G8+5.

South Africa has also been a participant in the Gleneagles Dialogue/G20, officially referred to as "The Ministerial Meeting of G8 Gleneagles Dialogue on Climate Change, Clean Energy and Sustainable Development", which was established in the aftermath of the G8 Summit held at Gleneagles, in the United Kingdom, in 2005. The Dialogue was aimed at facilitating the discussion of climate change by environment and energy ministers of the world's twenty major greenhouse gas (GHG) emitting nations, and representatives from relevant international organisations, industries and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). South Africa was also the only African participant in the Major Economies Meeting on Energy Security and Climate Change and is one of the leading members of the Non-Aligned Movement. South Africa, the European Commission (EC) and the EU Member States have drawn up a joint country strategy paper for development co-operation over the period 2007 to 2013. It is also important to note the existence of the South African/EC Environment and Sustainable Development Forum, which provides the opportunity to exchange views on a variety of global environmental challenges such as climate change, biodiversity and international environment governance. South Africa is also a member of the India, Brazil, South Africa Dialogue Forum (IBSA). At COP 15. (Copenhagen, Denmark, December 2009), South Africa joined with China, India and Brazil to form the BASIC group of countries, which has become a distinct voice in the climate change negotiations. In April 2011, South Africa also became a member of BRIC, a powerful bloc of emerging economies which, according to the International Monetary Fund, will account for as much as 61% of global growth in three years' time. BRIC is now known as BRICS, since South Africa has become a member.

South Africa is categorised as falling in the group of 'advanced developing countries'. Note that there is no definition for 'developed' and 'developing'

countries within the UN system, notwithstanding the ubiquitous use of these terms in international diplomacy and their increasing prevalence in climate change negotiations. The UNFCCC does not use these terms, but rather the divisions imposed by that Convention's inclusion/exclusion of countries on Annex I, hence the terms 'Annex I' and 'Non Annex I' country Parties. The Bali Action Plan saw a deliberate use of the 'developed'/'developing' nomenclature. However their use has become more fluid in the years since the appearance of the Plan.

Since 1994, South African foreign policy has been outwardly focused on re-forging links with the international community, including Africa, which were eroded in the pre-1994 era. South Africa's prominent roles in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the African Union<sup>4</sup> (AU) are prime examples of interventions seeking to achieve these foreign policy objectives. South Africa is one of the five so-called 'initiating members' of the New Partnership for Africa's Development<sup>5</sup> (NEPAD), along with Nigeria, Algeria, Senegal and Egypt. South Africa is regarded as the strongest NEPAD member in sub-Saharan Africa, both in economic terms and political influence. However, South Africa's interventions in the continent, which some commentators regard as highly 'interventionist', have not gone unchallenged. In the NEPAD context, the five initiating members have been accused of "ditching the Pan-Africanist model of universal solidarity... in favour of acceptance of Western economic and political ideas in the globalized political economy". In addition, South Africa's role is increasingly being questioned elsewhere in Africa, with critics regarding South Africa's leadership in NEPAD as 'self-serving'. The alternative view is that South Africa's role in NEPAD is the necessary action of a pivotal state acting in the regional interest.

Considering the above, South Africa is perceived, certainly by the international community and probably by some of the other African states, as enjoying a pre-eminent strategic position on the continent from both the diplomatic and economic perspectives. These perceptions have led to the situation where the country has taken on (at least notionally and/or according to observers located outside of the African continent) the role of 'diplomatic interface' for, or 'voice' of, Africa and/or the developing world. The social and political history of South Africa has also positioned the country as a representative and champion of democracy in Africa.



## □ South African/African climate co-operation and co-ordination

### ■ From the G77 to the African Group

In the context of international climate change negotiations, South Africa, like most African countries, belongs to two separate negotiating blocs, namely the G77<sup>6</sup> and the African Group. The G77, mainly in collaboration with China – hence the term G77+China – has played a strong role in climate change negotiations. However, the emergence of a stronger and more unified African Group, representing the African countries party to the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol, has been observed since COP 13 (Bali, Indonesia, December 2007). This Group has indicated that it will seek to address and protect the specific needs and interests of the African continent in the negotiations. South Africa has played a leading role in the African Group and has been careful to align itself with an emerging African climate change position – even if this could ultimately result in a division between itself and the G77+China.

The potential for such a division has arisen for a number of reasons, including:

- The difficulty the G77 finds in articulating a common climate change position due to great variation, and sometimes contradiction, in the profiles and interests of its members.
- Africa's unique vulnerability to climate change and the need for a tailor-made solution to address the risks, constraints and opportunities presented by climate change adaptation in Africa.
- The emerging political will of African countries to speak as a unified African *bloc* in the climate change negotiations.
- South Africa's abovementioned strategic position in the international arena which offers an opportunity to effectively promote African interests.
- The innovative and proactive approach adopted by South Africa in terms of climate change, which – some observers have commented – has positioned the country as a 'leader' or 'model' for the developing countries. The most recent example is the release of South Africa's National Climate Change Response White Paper, which is the clearest articulation, to date, of the country's climate change policy trajectory.

Concerns have also been expressed by some African countries, particularly the Least Developed Countries and the Small Island States in Africa, regarding statements made by South Africa. These countries argue that South Africa does not always

adequately take into consideration the challenges and constraints of less developed African states. Their perception is that South Africa is siding too closely with developed countries, and that certain decisions and actions adopted by South Africa put too great a burden on other, so-called 'real', developing countries in Africa. It is worth commenting, however, that the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) process has facilitated the development of a more cohesive and official African position on climate change.

### ■ Institutional structures

The AU, SADC, NEPAD and the AMCEN are the chief discussion platforms used to ventilate African climate change issues. A formal African climate change position, informed by the discussions and positions adopted in the abovementioned co-operation and co-ordination platforms, is ultimately expounded by the African Group.

### ■ South Africa's supporting role for Africa in regard to COP 17

Recent statements by DIRCO and the DEA have characterised COP 17 as 'an African COP', saying that South Africa is simply a venue for a meeting that belongs to Africa. The DEA has also indicated that the country will be "negotiating for outcomes that benefit Africa's poor and marginalised communities, especially the rural poor, and has reiterated that climate change is not only a sustainable development challenge but also a poverty issue and a challenge to achieving the MDGs [Millennium Development Goals]".<sup>7</sup>

### ■ South Africa's aims and objectives in the COP 17 negotiations

#### South Africa's position regarding the post-2012 regime<sup>8</sup>

This section strives to provide an overview of the South African climate change negotiating position expressed over the last four years and which will most probably frame its position for COP 17.

The following are the components of South Africa's position regarding further commitments are:

- Climate change needs to be dealt with within the ambit of sustainable development.
- Any future climate regime must be based on the established principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, and must be fair, effective, flexible and inclusive.
- Such a regime must balance developing countries' stabilisation and sustainable development objectives and their mitigation and adaptation responses and must allow developing countries to reach economic and human development goals quicker and cleaner than did developed countries. Developing countries will make meaningful contributions within their 'respective capabilities'.
- Developed countries must do more. All Annex I parties must take on absolute and binding emission reduction targets.
- Broader participation is required, including the world's largest historical emitter, the US.
- Developing countries are willing to pledge themselves to measurable, reportable and verifiable mitigation actions, supported by technology and enabled by finance, that are consistent with their sustainable development objectives. These would be measurable mitigation actions, but of a different kind than quantified targets for developed countries.
- A second commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol must be agreed upon.

The components of South Africa's position on adaptation are:

- The need for adaptation is inevitable, as is an eventual equivalence of adaptation and mitigation.
- The post-2012 climate regime needs to provide a strategy to assess vulnerability to climate change and to prioritise finance and implement adaptation measures.
- Adaptation is critical for Africa in terms of poverty alleviation and food security.
- Adaptation actions require streamlining of financing mechanisms and a reconsideration of the institutional framework for adaptation.

The components of South Africa's position on technology transfer, development and financing are:

- There must be a focus on a suite of technologies, funding mechanisms, investment structures and policy tools.

- The challenge is to accelerate technology development, commercialisation and wider deployment of technologies and to upscale existing investment and financing by orders of magnitude.
- Mitigation and technological interventions should be aimed at energy efficiency, diversifying energy sources away from coal, promoting energy security and also the research and development of new technologies that will lead to a cleaner, more sustainable, low carbon energy future.
- The costs of deploying more expensive, advanced and cleaner technologies need to be addressed.
- There must be a call for adequacy and accessibility of financing and developing a mechanism to mobilise resources.
- The issue of intellectual property protection, especially regarding technology development, must be addressed.

The components of South Africa's position on financial instruments are:

- The need for multilateral funding to support higher levels of research, development and deployment.
- The need to ensure the sustainability of the carbon market post-2012.
- The need to assist the mobilisation of financing and investment beyond carbon markets.
- The need to consider implications of new approaches on the carbon price.
- The need to create the demand required to fuel the carbon market and to create meaningful financial flows to stimulate investment in low carbon economic growth in developing countries.

On reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD), South Africa recognises the importance of enhancing action to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, balance removals of forests with sustainable forestry management practices, on the basis of scaled-up international financing and technology transfer.

## **South African objectives for COP 17 and related negotiations**

"I believe that the ultimate goal of the negotiations would be to reach global consensus on a new global framework that is fair and equitable,

with all nations taking into account their common but differentiated responsibility, as well as their national circumstances towards an overall reduction of GHGs from the atmosphere and, of course, to build on the work that was achieved in Mexico through the Cancún Agreements, especially with respect to operationalising the Climate Green Fund and a new focus on reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+).

Africa will be hardest hit by the impacts of climate change, so we need to ramp up funding for disaster relief and adaptation. Technology transfer will be important to meet our mitigation undertaking. Funding for countries which are already taking action in terms of Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions is also important. Many countries in Africa and around the world are already experiencing these harmful impacts and are already spending billions on adaptation and disaster relief.

A new Durban agreement must be able to achieve consensus and a balanced outcome for both developed and developing countries. There could, however, be some new innovative and creative options as well, so it is important that we work well together over the coming months to build this consensus and trust, all nations. Climate change affects us all. It is our common enemy. We have to reach a joint, holistic approach in order to win the war against climate change. Cities and local governments have a major role to play in this regard. I commend you for your hard work thus far and encourage you to keep up the fight!" - *Speech delivered by the Deputy Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs.*<sup>9</sup>

The South African government stated beforehand that the negotiations in Durban was going to be a Party-driven process, i.e., the country Parties to the UNFCCC and Kyoto Protocol, with South Africa playing an enabling role for Parties to find agreement on the salient issues of climate change. South Africa will not seek to impose a solution of its own, as the UNFCCC is governed by its own processes and Rules of Procedure, confirming the strengths of multilateralism and the legitimacy of the whole process. The South African government also emphasised the importance of achieving a comprehensive, balanced and ambitious result in Durban in the context of sustainable development and in accordance with the provisions and principles of the Convention, in particular the principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, and

the Bali Road Map. The result must fully cover negotiations under the two tracks of the UNFCCC: the Ad Hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex I Parties under the Kyoto Protocol (AWG-KP) and the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Co-operative Action (AWG-LCA).

The South African government's expectation for COP 17 was to reach a deal that will set all parties to a predictable, time-bound resources mechanism to address the impacts of climate change in an equitable manner.

In summary, the key objectives of South Africa as, President of COP 17, were to:<sup>10</sup>

- Make a particular effort to engage countries that hold minority positions and other groups seeking solutions for climate change, especially African countries.
- Deal with the outstanding political issues remaining from the Bali Road Map.
- Find a resolution to the issue of the second commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol.
- Operationalise the Cancún Agreements, including the establishment of the key mechanisms and institutional arrangements agreed to in Cancún: the registry for nationally appropriate mitigation actions and international support; the Adaptation Committee; the Technology Executive Committee, Centre and Network; and the Green Climate Fund, which must provide significant means of implementation for immediate action to tackle climate change. South Africa will also have to facilitate an outcome that ensures that accounting of finance by all developed countries be consistent, complete, comparable, transparent and accurate, as well as detailed and comprehensive information on fast-start financial flows provided by developed countries, which should be made available officially.
- Achieve a balance between the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol negotiating tracks.
- Address the current fragmented approach to adaptation in a more coherent manner and give equal priority to adaptation and mitigation.
- Address and clarify the legal format and institutionalisation of the outcomes of the AWG-LCA.
- Ensure a democratic approach to multilateralism.

In this context, South Africa took part in and/or organised various inter-sessional meetings in between formal negotiating sessions, informal ministerial meetings, economic and other diplomatic meetings, to facilitate

the negotiation process. The view has also been expressed that "South Africa has mediation and consensus built into its national genetic make-up. It is very well qualified to play the role of the COP Chair, and to guide the process forward, building on its unique position as part of most of the major groupings (the G77, BASIC group, Africa, G20, the Major Economies Forum etc). South Africa has been in listening mode for most of this year, trying to understand where the various countries and regional groupings are coming from."<sup>11</sup>

## ■ Opportunities and challenges related to COP 17 for South Africa

The DEA and DIRCO indicated that they would strive to exploit the opportunities presented by South Africa's hosting of COP 17 to raise both local and international awareness around climate change and to showcase South Africa's response through various events and media campaigns. The South African government also expressed the ambition to build an understanding of current international geo-political divisions, drawing Africa and other vulnerable states into the centre of the discussions.

The hosting of COP 17 could also have been an opportunity to demonstrate South Africa's constructive engagement in the international negotiations, and it could provide an opportunity to showcase the country's climate change response initiatives, awareness raising and outreach on climate change and leave a green legacy for the conference.

The South African government is also aware that climate change generally, and COP 17 specifically, provide business opportunities related to the need to build international competitiveness and new economic infrastructure in response to environmental sustainability imperative.

The South African government would also like to harness the knowledge garnered in the hosting of COP 17/CMP 7 and share it with the country's various communities.

As the President and host of COP 17, South Africa had to manage the following key challenges:

- To manage its dual role and respective interests as the host of COP 17 and as a negotiating party.
- To manage the US-China relationship and their positions in respect of COP 17.
- To manage pressures and expectations of the various groups.

- To manage realistic expectations of the possible outcomes of COP 17.
- To manage the risk of a potential gap between the first and second commitment periods in terms of the Kyoto Protocol.
- To manage the current ambition gap in proposed emission reductions and identify options to increase the level of ambition, as current pledges are not achieving the required below 2°C global temperature increase, as recommended by science.
- To manage the future of the Kyoto Protocol.
- To manage the legal form of the next agreement.
- To manage the need for future and practical implementation. In particular, across the various mechanisms – such as the Adaptation Framework, Technology Mechanism, Green Climate Fund, and mitigation actions – capacity development activities are needed to help developing countries develop the necessary policies, mechanisms, and institutional strengthening to drive development that is pro-poor and pro-MDGs.
- To manage the funding and financial requirements to host COP 17. In 2010, DEA officials estimated that South Africa would require at least R320 million to host a 'lean and meaningful' COP. The National Treasury has allocated R200 million towards the cost of hosting the conference. The balance would likely be made up through donor funding.

## ■ National policy considerations

President Jacob Zuma made an official statement of the country's GHG emissions mitigation ambition just prior to COP 15 in Copenhagen, Denmark, in December 2009. The South African ambition is to achieve a 34% reduction of GHG emissions below a business-as-usual emissions growth trajectory by 2020, and a 42% reduction by 2025, dependant on finance, technology and capacity building support from developed countries. This ambition was formalised into a 'pledge' under the Copenhagen Accord by way of a formal letter to the UNFCCC secretariat dated 29 January 2010.

The National Climate Change Response Green Paper (DEA, 2010) was released prior to COP 16 and the National Climate Change Response White Paper appeared strategically close to COP 17 (Notice 757 of Government Gazette 34695, dated 19 October 2011), marking the official adoption of a national policy for climate change. The White Paper is a strategic policy intervention by the government, especially from



an international perspective, demonstrating South Africa's willingness to address climate change at a national level from a mitigation and adaptation perspective.

The White Paper accepts the conclusions of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in its Fourth Assessment Report, i.e. that warming of the climate system is unequivocal and that the increase in GHG concentrations as a result of human activity is primarily responsible for this warming trend. The White Paper reiterates that climate change is one of the greatest threats to sustainable development and, if unmitigated, has the potential to undo or undermine many of the positive advances made in meeting South Africa's own development goals and the Millennium Development Goals. The South African government also emphasises that having ratified both the UNFCCC and its Kyoto Protocol, it will continue meaningful engagement in the current multilateral negotiations to further strengthen and enhance the international response to the climate change crisis.

Government specifically aims to continue its efforts to strengthen and ensure the full implementation of the UNFCCC and its Kyoto Protocol through additional multilateral rules-based and legally binding international agreements that will come into force after 2012, to effectively limit the average global temperature increase to below a maximum of 2°C above pre-industrial levels. In so doing, South Africa will strive to ensure that such agreements are inclusive, fair and effective; reflect a balance between adaptation and mitigation responses; and recognise that solving the climate problem is only possible if developing countries' priorities of eradicating poverty and promoting sustainable development are taken into consideration.

The White Paper also reaffirms that, notwithstanding these ongoing international negotiations, in terms of the provisions of Articles 4, 5, 6 and 12 of the UNFCCC as well as Article 10 of the Kyoto Protocol, South Africa already has existing international legally binding obligations:

- To formulate, implement, publish and regularly update policies, measures and programmes to mitigate its emission of GHGs and adapt to the adverse effects of inevitable climate change.
- To monitor and periodically report to the international community the country's GHG inventory; steps taken and envisaged to implement the UNFCCC; and any other information relevant to the National Climate Change Response White Paper achievement of the objectives of the UNFCCC, including information relevant for the calculation of global emission trends.
- To sustainably manage, conserve and enhance GHG sinks and reservoirs, including terrestrial, coastal and marine ecosystems, biomass, forests and oceans.

- To develop climate change response plans to address integrated coastal zone, water resources, agriculture, and land protection and rehabilitation.
- To mainstream climate change considerations into social, economic and environmental policy.
- To promote and co-operate in the development, application, diffusion and transfer of GHG emission mitigation technologies, practices and processes.
- To further develop and support research and systematic observation organisations, networks and programmes as well as efforts to strengthen systematic observation, research and technical capacities, including promoting research and systematic observation in areas beyond national jurisdiction.
- To develop and implement education, training and public awareness programmes on climate change and its effects to promote and facilitate scientific, technical and managerial skills as well as public access to information, public awareness of and participation in addressing climate change.

Government also acknowledges in the White Paper that:

Notwithstanding the effectiveness of any strengthened international response to the climate change crisis, a certain amount of climate change is already observed and further climate change will be inevitable due to the slow response (or inertia) of the climate system to changes in the concentration of GHGs in the atmosphere. Therefore South Africa will have to adapt to these impacts by managing its climate and weather-related risks, reducing its vulnerability and increasing the resilience of its society and economy to the adverse effects of climate change and variability.

The stabilisation of GHG concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that prevents dangerous interference with the climate system requires the implementation of a sufficiently ambitious and effective global agreement on GHG emission reductions. In this context, as a responsible global citizen, and in keeping with its developing country status, its capability and its share of responsibility for the problem, South Africa is committed to making a fair contribution to the global effort to reduce GHG emissions. At the same time, the country must ensure that the necessary climate change-related investments contribute to building South Africa's future economic competitiveness and economic growth and contribute to its overriding national priorities for sustainable development, job creation, improving public and environmental health and poverty eradication.

Although there will be costs associated with South Africa's adaptation and GHG emission reduction efforts, there will also be significant short- and long-term social

and economic benefits, including improved international competitiveness that will result from a transition to a lower carbon economy and society. Furthermore, various economic studies have shown that the costs of early action will be far less than the costs of delay and inaction.

Given the cross-cutting nature of climate change impacts and responses, government further recognises that an effective response to climate change requires national policy to ensure a co-ordinated, coherent, efficient and effective response to the global challenge of climate change. The policy outlined in this White Paper presents the vision for an effective national climate change response and the long-term transition to a climate resilient, equitable and internationally competitive lower carbon economy and society – a vision premised on government’s commitment to sustainable development and a better life for all.

The Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs, the Honourable Edna Molewa indicated in April 2011 that co-operation was necessary between government and all stakeholders in support of COP 17. Although business has been critical of the lack of an international framework for climate change to encourage action and investment in low carbon industry, South African companies have taken up a number of initiatives concerned with the green economy, including the Carbon Disclosure Project. She indicated that the focus by the government on job creation has also lent urgency to the focus on green jobs. In this context, she highlighted that the national objectives of the government are to:

- Map a socio-economic transition to a climate resilient and low carbon economy and society.
- Transit to a climate resilient and low carbon economy and society will involve a balance between the efforts to reduce GHGs (mitigation) and the efforts to build the country’s resilience to the impacts of climate change (adaptation).
- In the long term, redefine the country’s competitive advantage and structurally transform the economy by shifting from an energy intensive to a climate friendly path as part of a pro-growth, pro-development and pro-jobs strategy.
- The South African climate response policy will be informed by what scientists believe is necessary to limit global temperature increase to below 2°C above pre-industrial levels.
- South Africa’s GHG emissions must peak, plateau, decline and stop growing at the latest by 2020-2025, stabilise for up to ten years, and then decline in absolute terms.

She finally stated that the national efforts would constitute a fair and meaningful contribution to the global efforts, demonstrating leadership in the multilateral system by committing to a substantial deviation from baseline, enabled by international funding and technology.

## ■ Conclusion

The South African government is faced a very challenging process in managing its dual function for COP 17. It was not going to be an easy task from a negotiating and diplomatic perspective. The stakes at play were high and complex, and South Africa had to take on a very strategic role in facilitating a successful outcome for COP 17 without bruising its strategic relationships with developed and developing countries. As the host of COP 17, South Africa needed to conduct a balancing act in order to manage the various expectations and interests while striving to find a successful consensus amongst the parties on the legal framework and substance of the envisaged binding legal outcomes of COP 17.

In this context, it was essential for South Africa to manage realistic expectations about COP 17 and its possible outcomes, ensuring that all stakeholders understand what was achievable and what was not. At a national level, South Africa had to ensure the effective implementation of the White Paper post-COP 17 and other climate change related policy developments, ensuring that the latest national policy developments were not only a 'parade' for the international world in preparation for COP 17.


## Endnotes and references


1. One commentator has credited South Africa with providing the clarification of the developing countries' proposal at COP 13, in Bali, which convinced the United States to add its voice to the consensus that was reached by the end of COP 13. See: Muller, B., "Bali 2007: On the Road Again – Impressions from the Thirteenth UN Climate Change Conference", <http://www.oxfordclimatepolicy.org/publications/mueller.html>
2. Battersby, J., *SA's Role in the New World Order*, SouthAfrica.info, 8 August 2007, <http://www.southafrica.info/features/new-order.htm>
3. The G20 is an important forum to promote dialogue between advanced and emerging countries on key issues regarding economic growth and stability of the financial system. The members of the G20 are the finance ministers and central bank governors of 19 countries: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. The European Union is also a member, represented by the rotating Council presidency and the European Central Bank. To ensure global economic fora and institutions work together, the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the President of the World Bank and the chairs of the International Monetary and Financial Committee and Development Committee of the IMF and World Bank also participate in G20 meetings on an ex-officio basis. <http://www.g20.org/G20/>
4. [www.african-union.org](http://www.african-union.org)
5. [www.nepad.org](http://www.nepad.org)
6. The Group of 77 (G77) was established on 15 June 1964 by 77 developing countries signatories of the "Joint Declaration of the Seventy-Seven Countries" issued at the end of the first session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in Geneva. "The Group of 77 is the largest intergovernmental organization of developing states in the United Nations, which provides the means for the countries of the South (developing countries) to articulate and promote their collective economic interests and enhance their joint negotiating capacity on all major international economic issues within the United Nations system, and promote South-South co-operation for development." (Source: [www.g77.org](http://www.g77.org).)
7. R. Mabudafhasi. 2011. Speech delivered by Deputy Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs during the Local Climate Solutions for Africa 2011 International Conference, ICC, Cape Town. <http://www.dwaf.gov.za/Communications/MinisterSpeeches/2011/localclimateconferenceDM.pdf> [accessed 19/12/2012]
8. Main sources: [http://www.polity.org.za/article.php?a\\_id=117924](http://www.polity.org.za/article.php?a_id=117924), <http://www.ccap.org/international/January%202007%20FAD/Roadmap%20and%20Key%20Principles~Schmidt%20&%20Helme~Jan%2007.pdf>
9. Speech delivered by Deputy Minister of Water And Environmental Affairs, Ms Rejoice Mabudafhasi, during the Local Climate Solutions For Africa 2011 International Conference, ICC Cape Town, <http://www.dwaf.gov.za/Communications/MinisterSpeeches/2011/localclimateconferenceDM.pdf>
10. Based on various speeches given by representatives of DIRCO, <http://www.dirco.gov.za/docs/2011/braz0830.html> and <http://www.dirco.gov.za/docs/speeches/2011/mash1010.html>
11. [http://blogs.fco.gov.uk/roller/cts/entry/cop\\_17\\_and\\_durban\\_a](http://blogs.fco.gov.uk/roller/cts/entry/cop_17_and_durban_a)



The IGD is a foreign policy think tank dedicated to the analysis of and dialogue on the evolving international political and economic environment, and the role of Africa and South Africa. It advances a balanced, relevant and policy-oriented analysis, debate and documentation of South Africa's role in international relations and diplomacy.

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