

**AN OPENING SPEECH BY H.E. DR. MOHAMMED GHARIB BILAL
AT THE CONFERENCE OF AFRICA CLIMATE TALKS:
A REGIONAL DIALOGUE ON COP21 AND THE NEGOTIATION OF A NEW
GLOBAL CLIMATE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK HELD AT THE MWALIMU
JULIUS NYERERE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTRE,
DAR ES SALAAM FROM 3RD SEPTEMBER, 2015**

Excellencies;

President of SADC Parliamentary Forum

EU representative;

Honourable

Ministers;

Executive Secretaries;

Secretary Generals;

Vice Chancellors;

Invited Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Let me start by expressing my heartfelt appreciation for inviting me to be the guest of honour at this important conference on Africa Climate Talks. This conference is a clear signal that Africa is ready to shift from being just a mere spectator at COP meetings to a key player. This comes after the realization that the Kyoto Protocol has not benefited Africa as the other regions because of poor preparation before the negotiations. But also, the African ministers who attend COP meetings face challenges arising from lack of a common stand on African issues. Africa's stakes are high; it bears the greatest proportion of risks and impacts posed by climate change, which incidentally is disproportionate to its share of responsibility for global warming. Africa has demonstrated a strong commitment to the global process.

Observations show the international negotiations to tackle this problem have been embraced by Africa, even where there should be reservations. Africa is the only global region with the greatest proportion of people living below USD \$2 a day that imposes a cap to consumption opportunities. If economic strategies have to be built around low carbon intensive pathways, how will this affect and restrict growth in terms of per capita GHG emissions in Africa? Low carbon growth is definitely a positive thing, if invested in and provided with adequate support to ensure implementation in terms of finance, capacity and technology transfer. Unfortunately, all the previous pledges in relation to support for implementation have fallen short and in some cases remained illusive promises.

Honourable Delegates;

The president of the United States of America recently stated that climate change is the hardest challenge to solve politically and is fast becoming the weapon of mass destruction. This is an incontrovertible truth. Climate science is clearer than many leaders would like to believe. For humanity to have a chance of staying below the 2°C threshold, a small reduction in CO₂ emissions will not be enough.

The unpalatable truth is that emissions will have to fall to zero later this century in order to stop any further rise in the atmospheric concentration of CO₂. Climate science has been compelling us to act. 97% of scientific findings show that climate change is real and humans are responsible. These findings are evidence-supported; peer-reviewed; and fact-based. Signs of climate change are evident everywhere. There is sea level rise; extreme weather events; prolonged droughts; food insecurity and climate change related conflicts, among others. For the developing countries, these challenges are interacting with existing vulnerabilities to worsen the already bad situation. Climate science is telling us that there is still a window of opportunity; however, this window is closing very fast.

Distinguished Delegates;

In spite of what may be achieved in Paris, we are all fully aware that the post-Kyoto agreement that will be negotiated will not remove all climate challenges facing the world today. However, it will be a step in the right direction. If we fail to act now, it will be a moral and policy failure. How can our children and grandchildren understand our failure to act in the face of such compelling evidence of impending disaster? Science defines the law of gravity and also defines the freezing, melting and the boiling points. How do we fail to understand when the same science tells us that any temperature increase beyond 2°C is catastrophic? Definitely, something is wrong here.

Honourable Delegates;

As we fast approach COP 21, it is encouraging to learn that industrialized nations are finally realizing the impact and magnitude of climate change. The United States and China- the world's greatest emitters- have realized the importance of the issue of clean energy and have announced their emission targets. At the G-7 summit held from 7th – 8th June 2015, the G-seven governments declared that the 2°C limit requires "de-carbonization of the global economy over the course of this century." They stated clearly that humanity must not merely reduce, but must *end*, carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuels this century. This is an important announcement, which must be taken note of. At the Vatican gathering in April this year, which included world-leading climate scientists and Nobel laureates, Pope Francis and the religious leaders of all the world's major religions urged the world to take wisdom from faith and climate science in order to fulfil moral responsibilities to humanity and to the future of Earth. In the same vein, the United Nations Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, clearly stated that climate change action now is both a practical need and a moral imperative. We should heed their call.

Distinguished Delegates;

The convergence of thinking on the need to take action implies that urgent and concrete steps are needed to address climate change, as set out in the Intergovernmental Panel in Climate Change (IPCC's) Fifth Assessment Report. In this regard, the 2015 UN Climate Conference in Paris (COP 21) is a crucial conference, because it needs to achieve a new international agreement on climate, applicable to all countries with the aim of keeping global warming below 2°C. It also implies that the required reduction in emissions of 40 to 70% by 2050 as set by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is a challenge that can only be met by a global response.

Although the recent efforts are still substantially short of achieving the universally-agreed goal of keeping the warming increase below 2° C, the developments represent an important first step in increasing momentum for ambition raising and open the way for further improvements in the run-up towards the global agreement to be adopted at COP 21 in Paris.

Honourable Delegates;

We are gathered here today to explore how Africa can take up its position and play an active role at the COP 21 Conference in Paris at the end of this year. I understand that this conference is one of the interconnected sub-regional events that will be part of the preparatory process for Africa's contribution to COP 21. It will seek to define an African climate change narrative and further build confidence and consensus around key issues. Fortunately, a lot of our African negotiators understand the intricacies and the complexities of climate change negotiations. However, it is clear that although they understand these intricacies and complexities, they have- in the past- faced major challenges in their attempt to change any aspect of climate change negotiations.

Africa has many African scholars who are well grounded in the science and politics of climate change. Therefore, the problem of Africa doesn't seem to be capacity as such. The main problem- if one may say- is that they do not have real political backing from visionary leaders in Africa. It is to expect too much for the developed countries to do this for us. We need to change and the change has to start from within. The preparation has to begin from within. The vision has to be crafted from within and we have to go to Paris to champion a narrative and cause that is consistent with our own development aspirations.

Distinguished Delegates;

Finally, let me point out the crucial issue of the Intended Nationally Determined Commitments (INDC) that was a cornerstone of the Lima Call for Action during COP 20 and has emerged as a key expectation of the Paris climate negotiations. Regrettably, it should be noted that the framing of the INDC is still heavily skewed towards mitigation, as opposed to the equal weighting repeatedly requested by parties from developing countries for mitigation and adaptation. Although the Parties have been invited to consider the topic of adaptation in their INDCs, countries are not explicitly expected to put forward "finance commitments" as part of their INDCs.

On the contrary, the document does request developed countries to provide finance for ambitious mitigation actions in developing countries. Africa should ensure that the new agreement reflects the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in light of different national circumstances as reiterated in Lima. It is therefore imperative that Africa should have a clear understanding of the negotiation process so as to better contribute to it and participate in its implementation in a meaningful way.

Honourable Delegates;

May I conclude by observing that success at COP 21 is critical to the post-2015 global climate regime that could keep climate change under control. It is my hope that this conference will contribute to Africa's preparedness in forging a strategy that

ultimately will result in a monitoring and evaluation framework for Africa's climate negotiations.

It is my belief that this conference will definitely put Africa's main players on climate change on a better footing as we strive to get the best for the continent from the new agreement on climate change, scheduled to replace the Kyoto Protocol. Since we are negotiating a new agreement, nobody in Africa will benefit if we make the same mistakes that we made in the Kyoto Protocol negotiations. It is therefore important that COP 21 succeeds. If a new climate agreement is not reached, the world's sustainable development path will be jeopardized.

With these remarks, I declare the conference open and I wish you successful deliberations.