



**Swedish embassy/Commission on Climate Change and
Development/Institute for Security Studies Climate Change event**

Cape Town, South Africa, 11 Sept 2009

Welcome notes

Dr Jakkie Cilliers

Welcome to the ministers of Sweden & SA, Minister Buyelwa Sonjica and Gunilla Carlsson, CDD members, Swedish Embassy in Pretoria, our co-hosts, & audience. Thanks for joining to this seminar titled *Climate change & Development: Are we closing the gaps?* Hosted by the Swedish Embassy in Pretoria & the ISS Corruption & Governance Programme.

- **Are we closing the gaps?** The Commission for Climate Change & Development, whose work we are here in part to discuss, asks the question 'Are we closing the gaps' in the title of its report. We don't have to look far to examine this. Just on the other side of these doors lies the magnificent waterfront, the gateway to vast Atlantic Ocean. With expected sea level rises predicted by scientists this venue and all other coastal areas globally are under threat of flooding. In a sense, climate change is at our door. But if seas should rise at this end of town chances for us coping with this change, whether we relocate to a high-lying area or perhaps building different weather-proof houses to withstand this impact, are quite high. However, on the far side of town, in the township of Khayalitsha (I see children from theatre group in the audience) the impact will be very different. As we know already from yearly Cape winter floods fragile homes, all personal belongings are entirely lost and people suffer the strain of recurring illness brought on by cold, damp conditions. The loss is devastating and the impacts which are both deep & insidious, outlast the disaster for years to come. In other words, resilience to cope with these impacts are weak because their development needs have not been met. You need a good education, good health, housing, basic services to withstand losses or have recourse in times of tragedy. If we take this metaphor as a microcosm of the world as we know it today, then we may only begin to understand some of the challenges we are facing.

- **Defining issue of our time** – The issue of climate change comes into sharpest focus at the same time as we see many indications of green shoots

across the Africa. These are the very real positive attempts by Africans in government, business and civil society to realise our future potential. The real danger is that such efforts stand to be overwhelmed by the impact of climate change. It is no wonder then that climate change has become the defining issue for Africa and indeed for our time. When we start measuring the increase in temperature, rise in sea levels, drying up of rivers, soil degradation and erosion, loss of biodiversity and forests, we get a sense of the potential impact on human security of Africans, in particular the poor. Furthermore, climate change has the ability to subsume all development efforts currently under way. In a continent facing a legacy of concerns around poverty, development and poor governance climate change presents with the ultimate challenge.

- **Adapting to climate change** – As alluded to above, increasing the adaptive capacity of people by focusing on development and by implementing adaptive measures is integral to the process of addressing this crisis. Yet we also know that the earth cannot sustain the kind of development path that we set ourselves on from the industrial revolution. So, as the Commission Report argues it is not just climate proofing development that needs to happen (because we know the current model is destructive to the planet) – we need to imagine a different future for ourselves and the generations to come. This different way of being on this planet must bring back harmony between humans and nature and forms the basis for a radical new approach to low-carbon economy.
- **What is needed?** – So what do we need to do? International efforts are already underway as we all know from the UN climate talks and agreements that have and will be signed, although there is still a reluctance to galvanise into ‘real’ urgent action. There also needs to be a more clear recognition of historical responsibility for causing climate change effects (in terms of plunder of resources on the continent for centuries which has resulted in climate change and overconsumption patters) must be of utmost priority. The UNFCCC principles on the polluter pays and common but differentiated responsibility are also clear on this but need to translate to real action. Financial support to support adaptation efforts, whether this is conceived of in terms of ecological debt or cancellation of debt, meeting and surpassing ODA commitments, must be made a priority. Institutional reconfiguration to adapt to climate change is also a priority. Harmonisation of regional approaches must also happen. But ultimately we must foster deep co-operation between rich and poor nations to address this common challenge. In essence, we all in this together.
- **Climate justice** – Underpinning actions must be a human rights based approach that recognises and fosters community sovereignty over lands, water, forests and air. Human security must be at the core of the approaches and climate justice in implementing real solutions must be heeded. Local participation in these processes is key and people must be

empowered to highlight their own needs and concerns and be afforded opportunities to be at the centre of dealing with their own struggles.

- **Supporting efforts** – We recognise the need to support bodies like the Commission on Climate Change & Development, & those of governments that are making bold & strident efforts to tackle the root causes of climate change. We must also promote and give direction and knowledge to civil society. The ISS is attempting to do this through climate change projects based at our office in Cape Town as well as Nairobi. Our contribution, where possible, is to provide independent, innovative research policy and advice which we hope will promote the working together of governments and civil society to make decisive, bold progress on combating impacts of climate change.

It is therefore also an honour to welcome you all here this evening as discussants in an ongoing debate. We extend a special word of appreciation to the commission members and the authors of this report and Ministers Sonjica and Carlsson. The governments of SA and Sweden have been leading players in setting the agenda on action around climate change in both the North & the South. We are therefore grateful that you have joined us this evening to share in part your vision of how we can tackle these issues as Africa turns its attention to the Copenhagen Climate Change negotiations.

ENDS