

**Speech to closing session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment – 25 June 2010**

***Enhancing the interrelationship between climate change, biodiversity and desertification for sustainable development***

Chair,  
Honourable Ministers,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you to Mali for hosting this event. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment. It is a great privilege for me as European Commissioner for Climate Action to take part in your deliberations. Africa and the European Union have every reason to maintain and strengthen our close cooperation on environmental affairs.

This is the right moment to be taking a holistic approach to the challenges addressed by the three Rio Conventions on climate change, biodiversity and desertification.

On a previous visit to Mali in 2008, I had the strongest personal experience in witnessing climate change and desertification. Mali is living evidence of how interdependent the causes of climate change are, and of the fact that the climate is changing.

It is absolutely clear to me that we have to address these three challenges, biodiversity, desertification and climate change, in a holistic way that maximises synergies and minimises conflicts between policies. They are closely interlinked and we must look for actions that benefit all. That would be the intelligent way of coping with some of the most urgent challenges for the world, and not least for Africa.

When it comes to tackling climate change, we of course cannot be satisfied with what was achieved in Copenhagen – but we should not overlook the progress there either.

Firstly, industrialised and developing countries accepted for the first time in history that they share a joint responsibility for keeping global warming below 2°C in order to avert the worst impacts of climate change. This was a great achievement in Copenhagen. This will only be possible through a coordinated international effort.

Secondly, the industrialised world made concrete financial pledges to help developing countries combat climate change: nearly 10 billion dollars per annum in 'fast start' finance for the next three years, and for the longer term 100 billion dollars a year by 2020.

Fast start means now. The financing is focused on the most vulnerable developing countries, such as the least developed countries, small island developing States and Africa.

Thirdly, the Copenhagen Accord crystallises high-level agreement on some critical elements of the negotiations – in particular how to measure, report and verify emissions from both developed and developing countries.

But perhaps most importantly of all, the run up to Copenhagen put climate change at the top of the political agenda – even in a time of economic crisis. It brought an unprecedented

momentum to the willingness of the vast majority of countries to act, even before a global agreement is reached. We have seen domestic actions plans from many developed countries as well as emerging economies among developing countries.

As many of you will be aware, the European Union has adopted legislation that will cut our greenhouse gas emissions to 20% below 1990 levels by 2020. We are willing to scale up this reduction to 30% if other major economies agree to do their fair share as part of a truly global mitigation effort.

And we accept that if global emissions are to be at least halved from 1990 levels by 2050 - as they need to stay below 2°C - we and other developed countries will have to cut our own emissions by 80-95% over that period.

Like the African Union, our ultimate goal is to reach a legally binding global climate agreement. With only two weeks of meeting time left before the Cancun conference at the end of November, it is vital to accelerate progress. The August session needs to move from talks to proper negotiations, otherwise there is a strong risk that Cancun will be unable to deliver significant results. And that would do nothing to bolster confidence in the UN process.

The Cancun outcome we are seeking is a set of ambitious decisions that clears the way for immediate action in a number of areas and provides a solid basis for reaching a global agreement in South Africa at the end of 2011. This package of decisions has to strike a balance between the priorities and interests of all Parties.

As regards the Kyoto Protocol, let me say that the EU signed, pledged and delivered under Kyoto. EU has no problem with Kyoto. But Kyoto does not in itself solve the problem of climate change. Only 30% of global emissions are accounted for among the Kyoto countries.

A second commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol as it currently stands would not in itself give any guarantee of staying within the 2°C ceiling. The Protocol has serious weaknesses we will have to address – in particular its handling of surplus allowances, and the accounting rules for forestry emissions.

Furthermore, we must see a target from the US and we must see serious actions from the major emerging economies. Otherwise we will not meet the challenge of climate change. This is why progress is needed in the Convention track.

We act on climate change exactly because it is in our common interest and it concerns our common future. Our common destiny. Africa has felt the consequences of climate change earlier and stronger than any other continent.

No one can escape their responsibility to help meet this challenge. Africa is not alone in its struggle. We are interdependent on each other. We need a global approach.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The European Commission has been supporting and strengthening the structures of the African Union to deal with global issues such as climate change. Climate change was chosen as one of the strategic partnerships under the 2007 Joint EU-Africa Strategy, and the focus of

our current work under the partnership is on building capacity to deal with climate change in Africa.

I know that one of Africa's major concerns is about the delivery of financing to support your efforts in addressing climate change. I want to reassure you about the EU's contribution.

We will deliver on the fast start funding pledge we made in Copenhagen of €2.4 billion per annum over the period 2010-2012. In fact, for the three year period to 2012 slightly more than the €7.2 billion pledged in Copenhagen has been confirmed.

Now that we implement concretely our commitments, we need to engage in a more active dialogue with Countries to implement projects corresponding to their needs, notably on adaptation.

We know it is essential to be transparent about our progress in delivering on fast start finance. That is why we will submit a coordinated report on the EU's implementation of its pledges at Cancun and then each year after that.

Let me add that our fast start finance will not reduce the considerable amount of assistance that the EU, as the world's biggest donor, already provides to reduce poverty in developing countries and to promote achievement of the millennium development goals.

In conclusion, I hope we can work, through the EU / African Union Partnership, towards setting out common goals for Cancun. Europe looks forward to cooperating with Africa to make Cancun a success.

This will not only strengthen Africa's voice but will also, I am convinced, contribute to achieving the strong and comprehensive global deal we all need.

Thank you.