

**Cllr Obed Mlaba**

**Climate Change Summit Speech**

**24 June 2009: 8:30 am**

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to the Durban Climate-Change Industry's Green Growth Summit.

Climate change is currently the most pressing developmental and environmental problem facing the world. We, on the African continent, face significant challenges as Africa is the continent most at risk from climate change. The impacts of climate change on our continent will pose significant challenges to our development and well-being. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, otherwise known as the IPCC, offer the following projections of our future:

- By 2050 some African countries are projected to face a reduction in agricultural yield of as much as 50 %, and crop net revenue could fall as much as 90 % by 2100.
- This increase of food insecurity combined with the high HIV/Aids prevalence in Africa (2.2 million Africans died of Aids in 2003) will fuel a humanitarian crisis.
- The IPCC notes that there are 200 million African people at present, who are water stressed, and predict that between 75 – 250 million and 350 – 600 million Africans will be at risk of higher water stress in the 2020s and 2050s respectively.
- Between 700 and 2.7 million people currently die from malaria each year in Africa and the malaria distribution area is predicted to expand with climate change.
- Similarly droughts are expected to increase in intensity with climate change, a significant impact given that one third of the Africa population lives in drought-prone areas.

However, the challenges for Africa are not only social and environmental in nature, there are also challenges that have a direct effect on both business and industry. Recent research by KMPG has identified a range of risks and economic impacts related to climate change that business will need to address in the immediate future. These risks include:

- Regulatory risks, with the implementation of new laws and guidelines
- Physical risks, such as reduced water supply or increased energy costs
- And reputation risks, where markets increasingly demand products that are carbon neutral or energy efficient.

We should also remember that the term “Climate Change” is not only about our “climate” it also about “change”. And as Mr Barack Obama has observed, where there is change, there is opportunity.

The ability of business and industry to respond quickly to change, implies that there is potential economic opportunity in Durban that needs to be realized. Opportunities that include increased competitive advantage, the introduction of more efficient production technologies, access to new markets and access to finance and other support mechanisms for climate change activities.

With this in mind, Durban has stepped up to take a leadership role in addressing climate change issues at a local, national and international level. This has been done through the initiation in 2004 of the Municipal Climate Protection Programme, now prominent in Durban’s Integrated Development Plan. This Programme has focused on understanding the local impacts of climate change, promoting climate related research and implementing projects that tackle climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as promoting the mainstreaming of climate change issues into city planning and decision making. We also hosted our Durban Climate Change Partnership Summit in May as a forum for the municipality to engage with the civil and private sector in Durban on climate change issues.

Today’s summit forms part of these initiatives, but has a specific focus on industry and business participation in climate change. The objectives of this summit are to identify ways for industry to play even more active role in addressing climate change and to expand on green investment opportunities within the region.

It is my sincere hope that today is a meaningful and insightful day for all delegates and each one of us leaves this Summit further empowered to address the issues of climate change, because action is what is immediately necessary if climate change is to be successfully tackled.