

## Empowering a Climate-Resilient Africa for the 21st Century: Articulating Vision and Opportunity 7 November 2022

Against a backdrop of global economic slowdown and political instability, the African continent is making headway in designing initiatives to overcome the worst impact of climate change. Hosted by Mokgweetsi Masisi, President of the Republic of Botswana, and organized by the United Nations Science-Policy-Business Forum on the Environment (SPBF), this high-level event called for greater leadership and renewed international cooperation to support African-led adaptation efforts.

### Opening

In introductory remarks, Shereen Zorba, Head, SPBF Secretariat, highlighted concrete examples of such initiatives, including the Egypt-led “Decent Life for a Climate-resilient Africa,” the “Greening National Investment Plans in Africa,” and Botswana’s Technology Hub.

In keynote remarks, President Masisi stressed that Africa is one of the regions most impacted by climate change due to low adaptive capacity. He underlined the continent must be central to global resilience-building efforts because, *inter alia*: without sustainable infrastructure, Africa’s rapid population growth could significantly contribute to greenhouse gas emissions; the



Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa, President of Zimbabwe, and Mokgweetsi Masisi, President of the Republic of Botswana

continent’s development represents an opportunity for returns on investment; and its rich biodiversity must be protected.

### Setting the Scene: A New Vision for Africa & International Cooperation

In a panel discussion, Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa, President of Zimbabwe, pointed out that little has been achieved in improving Africa’s adaptation capacity despite the many commitments made at COP 26. He called for countries to commit to promises made and emphasized that Africa should also learn how to mitigate the impact of climate change. On the role of the international private sector, Presidents Masisi and Dambudzo Mnangagwa underscored the need for a shift in the perception of Africa, highlighting that the continent is “ready” and “wants to participate” in finding solutions.

Alar Karis, President of Estonia, described the benefits Estonia reaped from engaging in a “digital transition” that includes e-governance and cyber security. He then underlined that climate resilience relies on accessible data of quality, pointing to UNEP’s DEAL initiative through which over 30 countries are collaborating to create and share environmental data.

In answer to a question on the direction the multilateral system needs to take to support the aspirations of African countries, Inger Andersen, Executive Director, UNEP, emphasized that there are opportunities in Africa because its market is “ready and able,” and encouraged the private sector to think about long-



Mokgweetsi Masisi, President of the Republic of Botswana



Alar Karis, President of Estonia

term sustainable investments that are based on partnership and sustainable development.

### **Technology Empowerment**

Panelists then heard from industry leaders. Niklas Gustafsson, Volvo Group, shared that the company is committed to finding sustainable transport solutions around the world, particularly in Africa. He emphasized that Africa needs policies that promote the development of green energy and partnerships that support green measures. Sheri Hinish, IBM, indicated that “now is the time for action” since partnerships between technology companies and Africa are ready and capable. In response, Andersen announced the launch of a UNEP project on data and information sharing those environmental ministries around Africa can use as a tool.

On the question on the copper industry’s role in realizing Africa’s ambition for decarbonization, Anthony Lea, President, International Copper Association (ICA), discussed ICA’s decarbonization roadmap. He also shared that ICA will be launching the Grid Efficiency and Resiliency Partnership Initiative as part of their commitment to minimize grid losses in Africa.



Inger Andersen, Executive Director, UNEP

Sébastien Riez, Schneider Electric, said access to renewable energy is crucial to the growth of multiple sectors, including business, healthcare, and others. Among key factors enabling the expansion of Signify’s work in Africa, Mohamed Saad, Signify Northeast Africa, noted: sound government regulations on the deployment of technology; partnerships with multilateral organizations on financing and capacity-building; and collaboration between multinational corporations and regional hubs.

Kate Brandt, Google, highlighted Google’s US 1 billion commitment to support Africa’s digital transformation. This investment, she noted, would include, *inter alia*, artificial intelligence tools to improve responses to flooding as well as humanitarian and climate efforts.

### **Financing the Future We Want**

Kevin Urama, African Development Bank, said that, to attract important financing in the form of green bonds and debt for climate swaps, African countries needed to tackle both their regulatory and political shortcomings. He noted the solution to accelerate the green transition is “financing, financing, and financing.”

Eric Usher, UNEP Finance Initiative, said there was a big momentum on mitigation with 40% of the banking industry now committed to the Net-Zero Banking Alliance, but there is still not enough emphasis on adaptation. He called for a new compact for public-private financing, concluding that “Africa is where it can be done.”

### **Civil Society: Perspective and insights**

Djatougbe Aziaka, UNEP NGOs Major Group, said three words stood out from the various interventions: collaboration, co-creation, and partnerships. She highlighted the role of civil society organizations in contributing local knowledge to relevant partnerships.



A family photo with “thumbs up” for climate action.