

Contents

South Africa at the Paris talks	<i>Rehana Dada</i>
Regional discussions ahead of Paris	<i>Felix Kwabena Donkor</i>
2012 South Africa Environment Outlook released	<i>Gerard van Weele</i>
Civil society red lines for Paris	
Events and actions focused on COP21	<i>Courtesy of Project 90x2030 and WWF South Africa</i>

South Africa at the Paris talks

By Rehana Dada

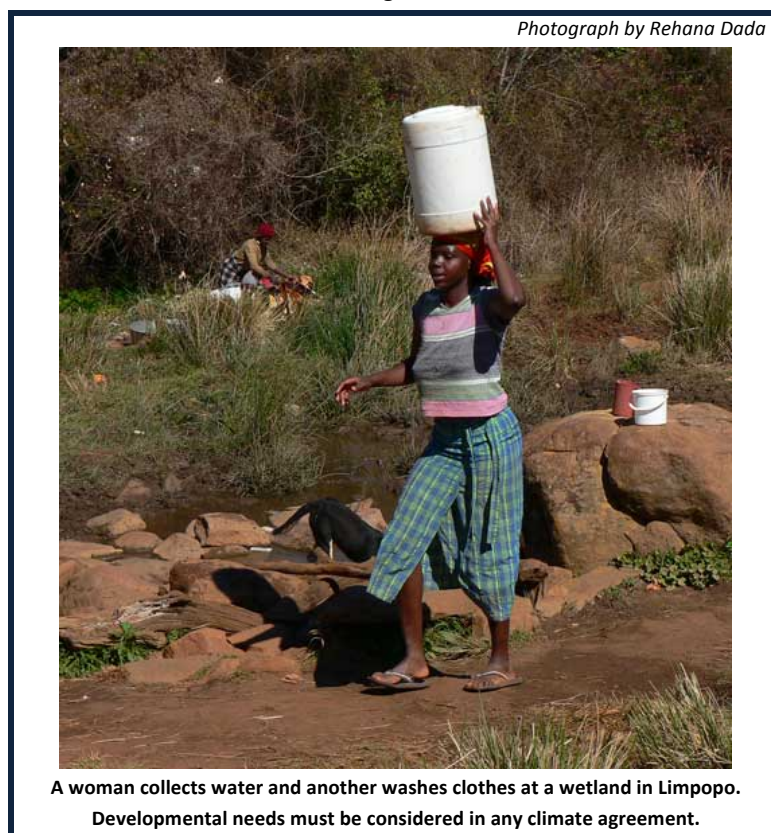
Scant weeks ahead of the last stage of the global effort to reach a new climate agreement, negotiators and observers are variously jogging, vitamin-boosting, or banking sleep to build up their personal resources for what promises to be a “tough COP”, as Department of Environmental Affairs’ (DEA) Judy Beaumont projected. The past two years have been among the busiest ever for those involved in the negotiations, with different approaches and strategies put into play to try to bridge the very many divides. Despite the hard work and innovative concepts proposed, however, the text, as last discussed in the October Bonn sessions, sits at 51 pages, and does not look likely to include binding commitments on any of the key elements. Yet there is hope – as always - that the negotiations in Paris will result in an agreement with a spine.



“This COP is a chance for all of us to roll up our collective sleeves to ensure a successful conclusion to what began in Durban”, remarked DEA Minister Edna Molewa said at a climate change stakeholder meeting in Centurion in early November. She said that South Africa has submitted its INDC ahead of the deadline, demonstrating high political will to meet climate deadlines: “We as South Africans are sending a strong signal that we are committed as to the global effort”.

Sandia de Wet of Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO), and South Africa’s lead negotiator on the new agreement said: “We are optimistic about this COP because we know we are going to be heard this time around, and we know that we will be heard because if we are not heard there will not be a credible agreement”. She explained that South Africa is playing a particularly critical role in the negotiations this year; the country negotiates under the Africa Group, but also chairs the largest developing country grouping, the G77C, which is made up of about 130 developing countries including China. A number of subgroupings exist within the G77C, such as the Africa Group of Negotiators and the Alliance of Small Island States, which come together to negotiate on specific issues that are common to those groups. It is fairly difficult to find common ground in the G77C, but De Wet says: “In its leadership, South Africa has steadied this group to come to the table under one voice.... And we are safeguarding that space.”

Molewa said that it is critical to protect and maintain core principles of the convention, not least that of *common but differentiated responsibility and respective capabilities (CBDR-RC)*, explaining that: “differentiation lies at the heart of this battle”. She said that there must be a balance between environmental and developmental parameters, and that adaptation must be at the core of the new agreement.



De Wet explained that adaptation is a particularly critical issue for the developing world, and that not only does there need to be acknowledgement that adaptation and mitigation are linked, but also that efforts in the developing world are supported by provision of financial resources, technology transfer and capacity building.

Finance is the second critical factor, and she says that although the greatest potential for mitigation is in the larger developing countries, there is a drive to exclude those countries from eligibility to receive climate funding. Brian Mantlana of DEA elaborated: “When it comes to finance we lack clarity on the scale and source in the post 2020 period, and that lack of clarity has a cascading effect on the entire negotiating process.... We [South Africa] are committed to working on climate change but in the absence of finance, its difficult for us to commit further”.

Shoni Munzhezzi pointed out that loss and damage (L&D) remains on the agenda, and is now separated from adaptation in the text, saying: “There is due recognition that there are limits to adaptation. G77C is advocating that L&D must be reflected in the agreement, but some of our partners don’t agree”.

Some of the key asks from South Africa are:

- That the gap in mitigation ambition is addressed pre and post 2020
- That a clear pathway is set for the Cancun commitment to mobilise USD100 billion/year by 2020
- There is ratification of the Second Commitment Period of the Kyoto Protocol
- Developed countries make commitments on finance, technology transfer, capacity building and transparency – and comply with those commitments

Happy Khambule of Project 90 by 2030 says that the role of the South African government in the negotiations is recognised as progressive, and that civil society engagement with the negotiating team has been more fruitful this year than in previous years. However, he urged government to take a stronger stance on the temperature limit of 1,5 degrees Celsius. The UNFCCC uses 2 degrees Celsius as the upper limit for global average temperature rise. Project 90 by 2030 also facilitated a civil society process to develop a set of red lines (non-negotiables) for government, which were submitted this week (see further in this newsletter).

Dorah Nteu of the South African Local Government Association pointed out that about 50 per cent of the actions articulated in the INDC submitted so far are climate actions that need to be implemented at city level. She said: “We are now encouraged by the text that is on the table... We [cities and local government] are ready to take up ambitious commitments”. Business is also taking on the challenge, according to Joanne Yawitch of the National Business Initiative. She said that business is asking itself how it can arrest and reverse the de-industrialisation phase that South Africa seems to find itself in, and do so in a way that is about building a low carbon economy. She is part of an initiative to mobilise South African business to support government’s climate change commitments.

De Wet emphasises: “Climate change is no longer about the environment – don’t be fooled – it’s about economics, but this time it’s really about survival. Some of our partners are already evacuating their lands and that makes it about survival”. Molewa concludes: “We will do everything within our power to reach an agreement. We shall endeavour to find solutions and help the world find solutions.”

Regional discussions ahead of Paris

By Felix Kwabena Donkor

The landscape of international cooperation in environment and development is beset with broken promises as donor nations frequently fail to honor their financial and related commitments. This pattern is equally evident in the climate negotiations and has affected its success over the years. Predictably, donor commitment is vital for the success of the up-coming climate talks in Paris. Finance was high on the agenda for a number of regional fora held in the run-up to the Paris talks, such as the 5th Conference on Climate Change and Development in Africa (CCDA-V), and the Australian Climate Leadership Summit.

CCDA-V was held in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, in late October, titled: *“Africa, climate change and sustainable development: What is at stake at Paris and beyond?”*. The conference gathered over 400 delegates from a number of stakeholder groups, including the Climate for Development in Africa Programme (ClimDev-Africa), UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), African Union Commission (AUC), African Development Bank (AfDB), and civil society organisations. Delegates deliberated over several issues including governance, climate change, sustainable development, climate finance, energy, agriculture, forests, gender, youth, and disaster risk reduction. Furthermore a Solutions Forum was convened to discuss local practical measures for climate related challenges.

Director of the ECA Special Initiatives Division, Fatima Denton, declared to the developed world: “You no longer have the license to emit on our behalf and we are prepared to invest in smart development by using our current atmospheric space to green our economies and build climate-resilient infrastructure”. The event was regarded as “Africa’s dress rehearsal” for the Paris talks, with the idea of helping delegates consolidate and refine their perspectives.

Photograph by Rehana Dada



**UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon
has facilitated a number of
processes to secure climate
finance pledges**

At the G20 Leaders' Summit in Brisbane in November last year and again at this years summit in Antalya, United Nations Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon, encouraged those present to take the lead on climate finance, saying: “I urge G20 leaders to make ambitious pledges toward the capitalisation of the Green Climate Fund”. On the heels of the G20 Turkey meeting, the Australian Climate Leadership Summit was held in Sydney, bringing together twelve companies, including household brands such as National Australia Bank, Westpac, AGL and Origin, to address climate change. Participants at the summit pledged to redouble efforts to address climate change to ensure that Australia achieves net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 whilst pursuing sustainable development.

These regional deliberations provide an indication of how world leaders are tackling the climate problem and provide some insight into the regional perspectives that will present at the climate negotiations.

Finance is always a thorny issue. It is estimated that even if emissions are reduced to levels necessary to keep average global temperature within 2 degrees Celsius this century, the cost of adaptation in developing countries could be USD150-300 billion per year by 2050, according to the Adaptation Gap Report of 2014. Costs would be considerably higher with greater warming, reaching as high as USD250-500 billion per year in a 4 degrees Celsius world. Developing nations contend that industrialised nations have a moral obligation to provide financial assistance for adaptation and mitigation because they are the major greenhouse gas emitters, and there is a call for them to provide funding according to their share of the global economy. However, in lieu of making binding commitments, many industrialised nations are opting for voluntary donations.

In addition to finance, still on the table are adequate mitigation commitment pre- and post-2020, and commitments to adaptation, technology transfer, capacity building, and a robust and transparent mechanism for reporting on climate emissions.



The 2009 climate talks in Copenhagen, when the top emitters rejected binding targets for cutting emissions, demonstrated that achieving legally binding agreements is virtually impossible in the climate change negotiations process. Instead, these nations opted for nationally determined targets, hence ushering in the era of voluntary political commitments which have evolved over the years into what are now known as Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDC).

Some projections are that the Paris talks will therefore aim to develop a new hybrid approach. This would represent a trade-off between a legally binding treaty with only few members, and a weak agreement that embraces more members. This latter option is seen as a way of achieving greater participation and keeping all top emitting countries engaged in a universal climate agreement. It will only hold, however, if successors of the current political leaders honour these commitments.

There is already widespread discontent and disillusionment with the pace and state of the climate negotiations, and should Paris fail to deliver a robust agreement, there is a high risk that future debates will become more polarised and therefore even more counter-productive.

2012 South Africa Environment Outlook released

by Gerard van Weele

If adaptation is all about human wellbeing based on a sustainable exploitation of natural resources, then the 2012 South Africa Environment Outlook paints a grim picture of overall progress towards our goal. This is the update of the 2006 report, and yes, you did read correctly: 2012. It took three years for the latest State of Environment report to be released, but it is finally available, and it does not report many positives.

Brief overview	
Land resources	deteriorating
Biodiversity and ecosystems	deteriorating
Inland water	deteriorating
Oceans and coasts	mixed results
Air Quality	deteriorating (except domestic fuel burning)
Climate change	deteriorating
Energy	mixed results (some positive trends)
Waste	mixed results (noxious chemical waste remains problematic)
Human Settlements	generally positive

Some highlights of the report

18 per cent of South Africa's natural areas are completely transformed, mostly as a result of the cultivation of crops (such as maize, wheat and sugar cane), but also as a result of mining, tree plantations and urban development

192 plant taxa (out of more than 20,000) are threatened by direct use or unsustainable harvesting, with 1 in 4 plants now rare or threatened

The proportion of land based area protected in South Africa increased from nearly 6 per cent in 2004 to 6,5 per cent in 2011

58 per cent of river ecosystem types and 65 per cent of wetland ecosystem types are threatened

29 per cent of coastal and inshore ecosystems and 41 per cent of offshore ecosystems are threatened

Most catchments are already over-extracted and likely to enter into a negative water balance

There is no real potential to expand fish catches due to over-exploitation; 52 per cent of subsistence fisher communities are classed as 'food insecure' with a deteriorating trend due to declining fish stocks

Approximately 30 per cent of the South African population lives within 60km of the coast

Indoor and outdoor pollution continues to be a problem, especially due to domestic fuel burning and vehicular emissions in cities

Although the water requirements and emissions released per unit of energy is decreasing, the rise in consumption counteracts any gains

Renewable energy installations are increasing rapidly, at micro and macro scale

Most household services indicators are improving, but informal settlements and rural areas lag behind

Recycling and reuse of waste must improve, as over 90 per cent of South Africa's waste is disposed of in landfill sites

Life expectancy at birth is now increasing

Urban densities are generally too low for sustainable urban transportation systems (e.g. Johannesburg has a density of 21 people per hectare, but the 'sustainability threshold' is 50 people per ha)

Poverty levels improved from 2000 to 2006, but increased between 2006 and 2009

The reality is that we are eating into the natural capital that we need as security against the tough times ahead. The Global Footprint Network calculates that South Africa is operating at a deficit of -1.18 global hectares per person (about the same as China).

Thankfully, the social sphere offers respite from the growing picture of environmental deterioration. Substantial gains have been made in rolling out basic services, social grants and health services to previously un-served households, thereby reducing the impact on their direct environment. Our concern remains, however, that long term sustained social well-being can only be achieved if the ecological foundation represented by the biophysical environment remains intact.



The Outlook report identifies four tipping points that could make the difference between significant environmental deterioration and a more sustainability driven path for South Africa. These are Water Resources, Land Degradation, Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Non-renewable Resources. Key areas of action related to these tipping points may require making some uncomfortable trade-offs in the future if we are to avoid crossing certain environmental thresholds. In most cases, fundamental shifts in how we source, manage and use renewable and non-renewable resources will be required.

Civil society red lines for Paris

In early November, Project 90 by 2030 facilitated a meeting of civil society representatives focused on UNFCCC COP21. At this meeting, participants developed a set of non-negotiables regarding the South African position on COP21, and this was subsequently submitted to the Department of Environmental Affairs. This position is not representative of all civil society views, and is only indicative of the views of participating organisations.

Red lines as articulated by participating civil society organisations

There should be adequate ambition for national commitments to cutting emissions and helping communities respond to climate change.

South Africa's position to COP21 must preserve the principle of national sovereignty. The determination of whether INDC's nature is conditional or un-conditional is primarily a national function, but should it be a condition of the international community to provide support for Means of Implementation (MOI) on unconditional contributions then the international community will have to clarify the type, source and scale of support of the MOI for the said unconditional contributions for the post 2020 regime.

Should this be the case, South Africa's INDC would not be completely conditional on climate finance. The country would commit to a baseline (bare minimum effort) of unconditional contributions versus contributions that require further conditional support.

Based on historical emissions and capability to adapt there should be an equitable distribution of climate finance (between adaptation and mitigation) and remaining carbon budget (between developed countries with a high historical responsibility and developing countries with a high emissions reduction capability, including vulnerable parties' ability to respond to climate change and contribute to the long term mitigation goal).

There should be clarity on the integration and progress of the International Loss and Damage mechanism without prejudice to developments of Adaptation-Mitigation parity discourse in order to foreground climate justice and people suffering the impacts of climate change on water, food and energy.

Participating civil society organisations mandate government to press for an integrated adaptation and mitigation plan (support for adaptation).

An external expert structure/mechanism (which includes civil society input and integration) should be established that is enabled to review and hold governments to account regarding their commitments to UNFCCC

South Africa should ensure that the highest political and executive member of South Africa (President Jacob Zuma) attends the COP21 negotiations and commits to contributing the achievement of a fair, ambitious and binding agreement.

Nuclear power is to be rejected as part of the trajectory to low carbon development and South Africa should not use the UNFCCC process to seek further funding support for mitigation measures that involve the use and preparation of nuclear energy.

At UNFCCC COP21

There should be no backsliding allowed internationally

Equity underlies the climate negotiations and is operationalised through MOI and the support thereof. Developed countries should assume responsibility for historical emissions and provide the necessary remedies such as ambitious emission reductions and support for developing country adaptation interventions.

There must be commitment to deliver adequate finance for adaptation pre 2020. It should be established how and when industrialised countries will meet their commitment to deliver USD 100 billion by 2020.

Agreement should be reached on a specific goal for adaptation finance that is substantially higher than current commitments and based on needs articulated by developing countries. The agreement should also encompass provisions that stipulate that at least 50 per cent of public climate finance must be dedicated to adaptation from 2020 onwards. There should be no agreement without specific information about post 2020 finance particularly with regards to the type, scale and time frames.

Governments must agree to strong provisions in the new agreement on climate finance post 2020, including:

- commitment to scale up financial support from developed to developing countries from a baseline of USD100bn/year from 2020;
- establishing a system for providing climate finance that includes global targets for adaptation and mitigation every five years starting in 2025 or at the soonest after 2020.

Dedicated collective adaptation finance target that will see at least 50% of public climate finance dedicated to adaptation from 2020 onwards, and quantified targets for 2025 and 2030 in line with the mitigation ambition of the agreement;

Any agreement on climate finance recipients must not exclude South Africa as a recipient of such finance. The language of considering South Africa as an emerging nation is currently not part of the UNFCCC agreement and hence should not be used as the basis for exclusion.

Events and actions focused on COP21

Courtesy Project 90 by 2030 and WWF South Africa

WWF South Africa has offered its communications capacity to publicise labour, civil society and social movements events focused on COP21. The organisation will list local events on: www.wwf.org.za/climate and also share through other communications channels.

We have Faith cycle tour

Until mid November

Maputo, Mozambique, Nairobi, Kenya

Contact Louisa Feiter at Louisa@safcei.org.za

Organised by South African Faith Communities Environmental Initiative

Long March Botshabelo

27 November 2015

Contact Khokhoma Motsi at 073 490 7623

Organised by Botshabelo Unemployed Movement

Actions targeting fossil fuels

28 November 2015

Johannesburg

Contact Makoma Legalagala at makoma@earthlife.org.za

Organised by Earthlife Africa Johannesburg

People's march for climate change action and COP21

29 November 2015

Contact Patrick Dowling at patrick@wessa.org.za

Organised by Cape Town Civil Society Coalition

Climate Solidarity March

29 November 2015

Johannesburg

Contact Ansie Vicente at comms@trees.org.za

Organised by Africa Climate Reality Project

AfricCities Summit

29 November to 3 December

Johannesburg

For more information: www.africities2015.org

One Million Climate Jobs Campaign actions

A number of actions targeting climate change and unemployment over the next few weeks, including marches and training.

Contact Thembeke Majali at thembeke@aidc.org.za

Organised by the Alternative Information and Development Centre

Long March Emalaheni

12 December 2015

Contact Matthews Hlabane at 082 707 9860

Organised by One Million Climate Jobs Campaign

Vigils against nuclear energy

Every Wednesday 07h00-08h00, Ongoing

Cape Town, outside Parliament

Pretoria, outside Department of Energy

Contact Louisa Feiter at louisa@safcei.org.za

Organised by South African Faith Communities Environmental Initiative

WWF South Africa offers to publicise local COP21 related events

If you would like to take up WWF South Africa's offer to publicise your labour, civil society or social movement event, please email Eitan Prince at eprince@wwf.org.za.

Credits

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Articles do not necessarily represent the views of all Adaptation Network members.

Our deadline for the next newsletter is 18 November 2015.

To contribute please email: info@adaptationnetwork.org.za.

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