



Welcome Address by Her Worship, Cllr Zandile Gumede at Climate Reality Project Africa: Inconvenient Sequel

13 September 2017

Sterkenikor – Durban, Gateway

- Programme Director,
- Chumisa Thengwa – Climate Change Department
- Mr Musa Mbhele – Head of Development, Planning and Environmental Management,
- Honoured Guests,
- Ladies and Gentlemen

It has been thirteen years' since Mr Al Gore released his pivotal movie "An Inconvenient Truth" in 2006. The world is a different place now. Not only are we recording substantially more evidence of climate change happening now, but the political and economic global space is vastly different.

Since Mr Gore's documentary, the global negotiating process, known as the Conference of the Parties, has resulted in the achievement of the Paris Agreement. Durban played its own small part when the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change visited our city in 2011. At COP17 the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action laid the foundation for the Paris Agreement. Durban also used its hosting of COP17 as the catalyst for the establishment of a global advocacy platform for climate change adaptation at the city level. The resulting Durban Adaptation Charter today focuses on implementing climate change action in its partner cities and developing practitioner capacity.

In November 2013, the DAC Secretariat met with Mr Gore in Washington, and this meeting paved the way for the Climate Reality Project to collaborate with Durban, and ICLEI Local Governments for Sustainability Africa, to co-host the First DAC Southern African Regional Workshop. I would like to express my gratitude to Mr Gore and the Climate Reality Project for the climate change communication training they provided. Since 2006, the Climate Reality Project have done a massive amount of global work to stimulate climate change action in cities, and for this, we are thankful.

It is extremely important that the political momentum that was achieved during COP21 is not lost. This is notwithstanding the recent political decision of the United States of America to withdraw from the Paris Agreement. As Vice-Chair of the C40, I added my voice, and Durban's commitment, to playing our part in fulfilling South Africa's Nationally Determined Contributions in the Paris Agreement. With the recent run of record global average annual temperatures, and a clear message from scientists about the human cause of climate change, as well as the urgent need for action, it is clear that we have a narrow window of opportunity to act. It is imperative that we provide political support for urgent and effective global climate change action.

Economically, the world is a very different space today than it was in 2006. Since then, we've had the great recession which has impacted emerging economies who rely on commodity prices for their economic development. South Africa has been no different and with an economy that is projected to grow by just 1% this annum, it is clear that funding climate change initiatives will be a challenge. For this reason, it is important to engage with international organisations, like the C40 Climate Leadership Group, and to tie our development needs as a city of the Global South to the Paris Agreement. Cities of the Global South will need to transform their development towards low carbon emissions pathways whilst adapting to the projected impacts of climate change.

In Durban we place our most vulnerable communities and our natural infrastructure at the centre of our adaptation efforts. We call this approach Community Ecosystem-Based Adaptation, or CEBA. We have a

number of innovative projects where vulnerable community members are provided with employment opportunities to manage Durban's ecosystems. These ecosystems, within the Durban Metropolitan Open Space System, provide protection from extreme weather events, whilst the employment opportunities provide relief from poverty. It is one of the ways Durban is engaging with the green economy.

Cities are at the forefront of addressing global action on climate change. To this end, and in response to the national load shedding crisis in 2009, cities were tasked with achieving the nationally-determined 10% target to reduce electricity consumption. The implementation of this energy efficiency intervention and the subsequent hosting of COP 17 by the city provided eThekweni with the opportunity to institutionalise the climate change mitigation function which has since grown to also include the renewable energy sector.

The impacts of climate change will fall disproportionately on the cities in the global south including Durban. Poor communities are invariably the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Cities are expected lead the efforts to reduce their contribution to greenhouse gases in order to limit global temperatures to acceptable levels. These and other targets can be achieved through partnerships with external stakeholders. It is important that communities are engaged and empowered with relevant knowledge in order to respond properly to the effects of climate change and engage with inclusive public participation processes.

The city is striving to have a thriving sustainable energy sector where all citizens have access to safe and affordable energy sources. The efforts to tackle climate change must also address socio-economic developmental challenges. There are several programmes developed by the city to stimulate a sustainable green economy in order to leverage the opportunities provided by climate change.

The mitigation and adaptation-focussed work of the City is coordinated through the Durban Climate Change Strategy. I'm sure Mr Mbhele, Head of the Development, Planning, Environment and Management Unit will

tell you a little more about the strategy next. I would like to emphasise the importance of using platforms like the Strategy to engage with international organisations, like C40, to leverage the opportunities associated with climate change. Never before have we faced such a severe global threat to our continued existence. Equally true, however, is the unique opportunity afforded by this crisis, and the momentum that has been created by the global climate negotiating process.

While Mr Gore's movie in 2006 may have focussed on convincing a very sceptical majority about the reality of climate change, we now see a shift in focus. Now we are compelled to urgently act, and never before has the economic climate been so ready for action. With renewable energy costs outcompeting fossil fuel options and with our abundant renewable energy resources in South Africa, it is hard to imagine a future economy that is not based on renewable energy. Here, in Durban, we will certainly be working towards securing our low carbon emissions development pathway and adapting to climate change, and using this action as a means to reduce poverty, inequality and vulnerability.

Thank you!