

Conference

« International solidarity on climate change Strategies for African and the Mediterranean Regions »

(Tunis, November 18-20, 2007)

I - Context

The fourth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) established, unambiguously, the facts of global warming and showcased the perceptible signs of the changing climate in various locations around the world. In line with the conclusions of the report, scientific studies, experts' reports and practitioners' observations are all pointing in the same direction: it is the world's poorest countries, especially those in Africa, which will suffer the most the consequences of climate change. This is partly due to the fact that tropical ecosystems adapt to climate variability-particularly temperature variability- less easily than do temperate ecosystems. Poor countries will suffer most also because they do not have the capability to face the impacts of climate change and to protect their populations. In these countries, the predominance of short-term concerns, in particular those related to the alleviation of poverty, overshadows the issue of climate change.

Africa is the continent where poverty levels are, in relative terms, among the highest in the world. The bulk of Africa's population lives under the poverty line (\$1/day). The continent is also the least industrialised in the world. Despite the adverse effects they have on the socio-economic and technological development of Africa, low industrialisation and development levels make the continent the region of the world that contributes the least to emissions of Green House Gas (GHG) emissions with only 4% of the total volume released in the world's atmosphere. The conclusions of the Stern Review Report on the economics of climate change indicate that the likely rise of 5 to 6 degrees Celsius in temperatures will result, between now and 2100, in losses estimated at 5 to 10% in the global GDP, and three to four times that figure in the poor countries which remain extremely vulnerable. At this pace, there is a risk that Africa gets stuck in the vicious cycle of recession and crises.

According to the United Nations, Sub-Saharan Africa is not going to achieve any of the Millennium Development Goals in 2015 despite considerable advancements observed in several domains. All specialists agree that the impacts of climate change will even reverse the few recorded patterns of improvement in the achievement of the MDGs.

Gravely concerned by the vulnerability of Africa's socio-economic and production systems to climate change, and by the continent's weak riposte capabilities, the 8th Ordinary Session of the Conference of the African Union, held in January 2007 in Addis Ababa, singled out climate change as a high priority issue and urged cooperation partners to support African countries and regional economic communities so that they can mainstream the climate change issue into their development plans in an effective way.

Current negotiations on climate change are seeking to generate a new momentum for Post-2012; a process which would take into account lessons learned from the Kyoto Protocol and the need for convergence between the priorities of the various parties. In this vein, four key areas have been identified for high-level dialogue, cooperation and long-term action on climate change. These key areas are: sustainable development, technology, adaptation and market opportunities. It is essential that Africa puts its specificity and priorities high on the agenda and that it seizes the opportunities offered by this process for its own development.

At their latest G8 summit, held in June 2007, in Heilidendamm, Germany, the members agreed on the objective of halving greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050, in order to stabilize greenhouse gas levels and mitigate the consequences of climate change. In order to achieve that objective, the biggest emitters will use market mechanisms— also known as flexibility mechanisms— which were set up in the framework of the Kyoto Protocol. The economic prosperity of developing countries will inevitably, come with a low-emission growth that has to be defined and supported.

In this context, the international community is increasingly being urged to give a concrete meaning to international solidarity, particularly through implementing adequate measures, mechanisms and adaptation programmes to tackle climate change, but also through financing the Sustainable Development Programme with a view to bringing the world as close as possible to the targets defined by the UN Millennium Project (2005) and the decision of the Gleneagles G8 Summit (2005).

II- Justification of the Tunis Conference

In response to the major environmental and socio-economic challenges- which are currently high on the international agenda- and with a view to contributing to international efforts aimed at raising awareness of the impacts of climate change, Tunisia is pleased to host, on November 18-20, 2007, an **international conference on climate change strategies for African and Mediterranean regions**. This conference, to which high-ranking officials and distinguished experts will be invited, will be crowned by the **“Tunis declaration for an international solidarity aimed at protecting Africa and the Mediterranean region against the adverse effects of climate change”**. On the other hand, a concrete plan of action will be proposed for the setting of priority adaptation projects for governments, enterprises and civil society.

Both the Tunis Declaration and the Plan of Action will be proposed to be presented at the Meeting of the Parties to the Conventions on Climatic Change COP-123 in Bali.

This will help make up for the delay of the countries of Africa and the Mediterranean Basin in the field of climatic change.

In fact, despite the increasing interest accorded to climate change at the world level, international mobilization and action for vulnerable developing countries are still insufficient and are not up to the challenges posed by this global phenomenon. The financial mechanisms, and the other funds created through international agreements to sustain programs of adaptation to climatic change, are not yet operational, and their effective implementation may be further delayed.

The organization of this Conference, which will be placed under **the High Patronage of His Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, President of the Republic of Tunisia**, has received active support from many international and regional organizations, such as the World Forum for Sustainable Development, the Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS), the African Development Bank, the Mediterranean Action Plan, the Dutch Government, the French Development Agency, the deutch Technical Coopertaion Agency (GTZ), the World Bank and several African sub-regional organisations and countries.

The current initiative comes to supplement many actions, already undertaken by Tunisia in the field of consultation and exchange of information and experiences, notably:

- The organization of the ministerial conference on sustainable development in the Mediterranean, in 1994, which led to the adoption of the « Agenda 21 for the Mediterranean »,
- The organization of the international conference of the French-speaking countries, in 2001, in preparation for the World Summit on Sustainable Development "Rio+10", held in 2001 in Johannesburg,
- The organization of the International Conference on « Tourism and climate change », in 2003, which was crowned by the Djerba Declaration,
- The organization of the international scientific conference on the « Future of Dry Lands », held in June 2006, as part of the celebration of the world desertification day proclaimed by the UN.

III- Conference objectives

- To identify strategies of adaptation and response to climate change for Africa and the Mediterranean Region;
- To mainstream the new “stress factor” related to potential climate change impacts into the sustainable development strategies of the developing African as well as Mediterranean countries;
- To instigate international mobilization and action for the developing African and Mediterranean countries so that they can meet the challenges posed by climate change;
- To strengthen the co-operation between the African countries and the countries of the Mediterranean Region on the questions pertaining to climate change;
- To start a joint venture between the African countries and those of the Mediterranean Region to reinforce their capacities of negotiation, defend their common interests and benefit as much as possible from the opportunities offered by the financial mechanisms specified in the Convention on the Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol, in particular the Adaptation Fund and the Clean Development Mechanism.
- To contribute to raising the awareness of African and Mediterranean decision-makers and populations of the potential impacts of climate change, and of the need for effective action in order to implement medium and long term adaptation and response strategies.

- ☑ Contribute to the preparation of Post-2012 negotiations which will take place at the 14th Conference of Parties.

IV- Conference program

The Tunis Conference will be held over three days from 18 to 20 November 2007.

- November 18th will be devoted to the inaugural session. A dinner will be offered in honor of the invited personalities.
- On November 19th, 2007, a plenary session on « Climate change: challenges to sustainable development and reduction of poverty » will be held.

During the same day, workshops will be held to address important issues such as the adaptation of agriculture, water resources, and ecosystems to climate change, the role of energy and renewable energies in the strategies of adaptation to climatic change, and the viability of enterprises depending on the use of natural resources, and food security. Particular attention will be paid to financing aspects, as well as to the active participation of women as part of major groups.

The reports of these sessions will be presented and synthesized during a high-level meeting to be held in the afternoon of November 19th, 2007.

- On November 20th, 2007, three parallel sessions (workshops) will be held on the integration of adaptation to climate change in sustainable development strategies, the adaptation financing means, and the role of stakeholders in taking up the challenge of adaptation.

The outputs of these sessions will be presented during the November 20th afternoon in a plenary session. They will be used to formulate strategies of adaptation for Africa and the Mediterranean region, as well as to draft the Tunis Declaration on International Solidarity to protect Africa and the Mediterranean region against the negative impact of climate change.

It would be useful if the results of the conference will be presented during forthcoming international events, particularly the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Bali in December 2007.