

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA AT THE VIRTUAL LEADERS SUMMIT ON CLIMATE

22 APRIL 2021

Your Excellency, President Joe Biden,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to start off by thanking President Biden for convening this Leaders Summit on Climate.

We are also all delighted to have the United States back working with all of us to tackle the global challenges of climate change.

Climate change is the most pressing issue of our time.

It is a global phenomenon from which developing economies are particularly vulnerable.

Without effective adaptation, climate change has the potential to reverse the developmental gains in our countries, and push millions of people further into poverty.

In doing so we have to adhere to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities.

Poor countries have historically contributed least to emissions.

Developing countries often suffer the most from the devastating effects of climate change in the form of drought, extreme storms and rising sea levels.

Consequently, developed economies have a responsibility to support developing economies to enable them to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Significant progress can be made when we all honour our mutual commitments.

We therefore need to emphasise the primacy of multilateralism in ensuring the full implementation of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

South Africa is fully committed to enhancing its ambition and accelerating its climate actions.

Last year we finalised our National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy, coordinating adaptation actions at all levels of government.

We have also adopted a Low Emissions Development Strategy in pursuit of a just transition to a low-carbon, sustainable and climate resilient development pathway.

We are currently in the process of updating South Africa's Nationally Determined Contribution. Our new NDC target ranges have been released for public consultation.

The new target ranges we are proposing are much more ambitious in two respects.

First, the top of the 2030 range has been reduced by 28%, or 174 million metric tons, a very significant reduction.

Second, according to our previous Nationally Determined Contribution, South Africa's emissions would peak and plateau in 2025, and decline only from 2035.

South Africa's emissions will begin to decline from 2025, effectively shifting our emissions decline 10 years earlier.

With regard to our energy resources, we plan to build capacity to generate over 17 gigawatts of renewable energy by 2030.

We remain committed to contributing our fair share to reduce global emissions, and to do so in the context of overcoming poverty, inequality and underdevelopment.

The move towards a low-carbon, climate resilient society cannot happen overnight.

We need to work together to create a climate resilient society and amongst other things we should, firstly, ensure that as we transit to a more climate resilient future it must be based on a just transition that ensures that those who are most vulnerable in society do not get left behind.

Secondly, it is therefore critical that all three of the goals of the Paris Agreement – mitigation, adaptation and finance – be advanced with equal determination and ambition.

Thirdly, we must massively scale up support in the form of financing, technology and capacity building, so that developing economies, including those in Africa, are able to enhance ambition on adaptation and mitigation.

Fourthly, it is important that aid on climate change should be provided separately, and should not be part of conventional development assistance. When it is given in the form of loan financing the debt burden of developing countries is worsened.

We call on developed economies, which historically bear the greatest responsibility for emissions, to meet their responsibilities to developing economies.

This will be vital to restoring the bonds of trust between developed and developing economies.

As we have done since the time of Nelson Mandela, South Africa stands ready to work with other nations to build bridges to find solutions that secure humanity's future.

I thank you.