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*African Ministerial Conference on the Environment*

**African Ministerial Conference on the Environment**

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Item 6 of the provisional agenda\*

**Preparations for the twenty-fourth session of the  
Conference of the Parties to the United Nations  
Framework Convention on Climate Change**

**Analysis for implementing Africa's climate obligations  
catalytically: science, policy and action**

**Note by the secretariat**

**I. Introduction**

1. The science is unequivocal: climate change is worsening. The year 2016 was the hottest year in recorded history, while 2017 took the escalation even further when the world breached another climate-change milestone as CO<sub>2</sub> levels hit 410 parts per million for the first time in recorded history, thus bringing the world dangerously close to hitting the 450 parts per million threshold beyond which progression to 2°C warming will be irreversible. The implications for Africa are potentially catastrophic, especially in view of the continent's precarious socioeconomic situation, which climate change is poised to exacerbate.

**II. Africa's reality check**

2. While over 240 million people across Africa go to bed hungry every night and over 50 per cent of children die before they reach the age of five as a result of malnutrition, climate change is set to compound this scenario with a reduction in agricultural production of up to 40 per cent. The impact of that will be seen not only in declining yields, but also in nutritional quality, given the negative impact of climate change on food quality. For example, studies show that wheat grown in high CO<sub>2</sub> levels has 9 per cent less zinc, while rice, maize and soybeans contain 3 per cent less zinc. These are key staples in Africa, where zinc deficiency is already responsible for some 20 per cent of lower respiratory tract infections, 10 to 22 per cent of malaria and 11 to 13 per cent of diarrhoeal diseases, and where a significant proportion of the population receive 60 per cent of their dietary requirements of iron and zinc from these staples, rather than from commercial food supplements. It is set to compound malnutrition across the continent, with a knock-on effect on economics, given that agriculture is the most inclusive sector, employing up to 64 per cent of the population, and is strategic to the acceleration of Africa's socioeconomic transformation.

3. While the depletion of ecosystems, which are the foundation of food production through goods and services such as water, healthy soil and pollinators, costs the continent \$68 billion annually, climate change is set to compound that scenario. For instance, under the changing climate, sub-Saharan Africa is projected to experience a reduction in surface run-off of between 60 and 80 per cent by 2100 and groundwater recharge rates are projected to decrease by 30 to 70 per cent. Water is a crucial ecosystem good, underpinning economic productivity in multiple sectors, including agriculture, where the total blue and green water available for agriculture is forecast to decline by over 10 per cent.

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4. In energy, a sector crucial to Africa's inclusive growth and industrialization, rising temperatures are projected to have an impact on the cooling systems of thermoelectric power plants, which represent up to 80 per cent of electricity generation on the continent. The impact of water stress is expected to reduce water levels in hydro plants directly, resulting in up to 1.5 per cent shrinkage in gross domestic product, disruptions in energy supply and further constrictions in economic growth. Given that frequent power shortages already cost African economies between 1 and 4 per cent in lost gross domestic product annually, that is of particular concern.

5. Cumulatively, climate change is projected to shrink developing country economies, the majority of which are in Africa, by up to 75 per cent.

6. Africa's response to climate change cannot be developed or taken in isolation; climate action must be premised as a solution to the socioeconomic challenges facing the continent. While the continent is a negligible emitter, contributing a mere 3.6 per cent of global net emissions, it is the most vulnerable globally. With vulnerability driven by low socioeconomic development, poor communities lack the economic means to buffer the escalating impact of climate change. The World Bank has highlighted the fact that the poor are disproportionately vulnerable to climate change, since they lack the resources to recover quickly from its effects. Socioeconomic development therefore stands out as the leading priority for the region.

### **III. Africa's response to climate change: aligning implementation actions with reality**

7. Africa's commitment to taking action on climate change is resounding. With a ratification level of over 80 per cent, the region stands out as a leader in ratifying the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. In the face of the challenges facing the continent, this high ratification rate provides an opportunity for implementation efforts across the continent to provide solutions and enable inclusive wealth creation to tackle the continent's priority socioeconomic challenges. Doing so could incentivize a demand-driven, country-led shift to low-emission development pathways where a market-driven approach would ensure longer term sustainable implementation of the Paris Agreement.

8. For that to happen, the continent's efforts to implement nationally determined contributions need to be guided by the following four central tenets:

(a) First, and at the core, is targeting nationally determined contributory actions towards maximizing the productivity of Africa's catalytic sectors. Put simply, these are sectors capable of creating socioeconomic opportunities for the majority while simultaneously enhancing ecosystem resilience and mitigating carbon in line with climate objectives in nationally determined contributions. Accordingly, two sectors – clean energy and nature-based agriculture – stand out and have been endorsed by the African Union's Agenda 2063. In addition, a majority of nationally determined contributions across the continent – over 60 per cent of nationally determined contributions – prioritize actions in those two sectors: clean energy to enhance mitigation themes, and nature-based, ecosystem-based adaptation-driven agriculture to enhance adaptation and minimize land-based emissions;

(b) Second is prioritizing innovative approaches to bridge both policy and operational gaps towards maximizing productivity of the catalytic sectors set out above;

(c) Third is leveraging Africa's sovereign wealth – its human capital – and especially its 200 million young people, as the primary resource in driving the implementation of nationally-determined contributions through the catalytic sectors. The skills, talents, energy, passion and networks of Africa's people, adequately harnessed and optimally deployed, can bridge any implementation gaps in nationally determined contributions;

(d) Fourth is leveraging inclusive, market-driven, mutually beneficial partnerships amongst complementary stakeholders and building on their strengths and ongoing initiatives to maximize productivity of catalytic sectors towards achieving the aims of nationally determined contributions, rather than setting up new initiatives. Such partnerships draw from section 5 of the Paris Agreement. An added advantage of collaborative actions of that nature is lowering operational risks, as such initiatives build on established successes.

## **IV. Unlocking climate action as an enabler of inclusive wealth creation for Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals**

### **A. Driving climate action from an opportunities perspective by maximizing the productivity of catalytic sectors**

9. At the sixteenth session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment, held in Libreville from 12–14 June 2017, ministers adopted clean-energy and ecosystem-based adaptation-driven agriculture as one of the strategic sectors to accelerate continental development while ensuring achievement of its climate obligations under the Paris Agreement.

10. It has been documented that scaling up ecosystem-based, adaptation-driven agriculture can increase yields by up to 128 per cent under changing climates to enhance food security and farm-level incomes. The World Bank has reported that in Africa, a 10 per cent increase in crop yields translates approximately to a 7 per cent reduction in poverty. Growth in agriculture is between two and four times more effective in reducing poverty than similar growth in other sectors. Through ecosystem-based adaptation, all these socioeconomic benefits are achieved simultaneously with enhanced ecosystem resilience to meet the adaptation aims of a country's nationally determined contributions.

11. However, optimizing farm-level production alone is not enough. To maximize productivity, policymakers have concluded that ecosystem-based, adaptation-driven agriculture needs to be amalgamated with clean energy for complementarity, rather than considering the two as sectorally independent of one another. Doing so will ensure that Africa achieves both its climate and socioeconomic aims simultaneously, creating a more longer-term, market-sustainable model for the implementation of nationally determined contributions.

12. Empirical evidence from Kenya provides evidence of the success of that direction. In Wajir county, known for its dry and sunny conditions, targeting solar mini-grids to power the processing enterprises of the aloe plant, an indigenous, drought-resistant crop, is resulting in viable enterprises, recording both economic and climate benefits. Economically, a current net value of over four million Kenyan shillings – equivalent to \$40,000 – has been recorded. From a climate perspective, these profits are incentivizing increased growth of the aloe plant, which is known to stabilize soils and reverse degradation (soil degradation alone currently costs Africa \$68 billion) to meet Kenya's nationally determined contributions for adaptation. They are incentivizing clean-energy investment for agroapplications, a critical aspect to support Kenya's nationally determined contributions for mitigation, in which scaling up clean energy is prioritized.

13. Another example can be drawn from Nairobi, where the restoration of the degraded Nairobi Dam riparian reserve for resilience has been simultaneously accompanied by the provision of clean-energy based alternative livelihood opportunities to dissuade future encroachment and avert further destruction of the reserve. The project has demarcated recreation areas around the reserve where communities that previously encroached on the reserve now engage in food businesses that are powered by biogas-powered cooking stoves. A total of 120 families from the nearby informal settlement that was the source of encroachment are directly engaged in the project. The social area has been equipped with eco-toilets and sanitary facilities which harvest waste that is converted to free biogas for the cooking enterprises. This all contributes to Kenya's nationally determined contributions from the perspective of market-driven opportunities to ensure longer-term sustainability.

### **B. Innovative approaches to bridge policy and operational gaps to maximize catalytic sectors**

14. Maximizing the productivity of Africa's catalytic sectors requires doing things differently to bridge both policy and operational gaps. Among the leading enablers are the following innovations:

#### **1. Partnership innovations**

15. Section 5 of the Paris Agreement emphasizes the fact that inclusive partnerships are the basis for bridging gaps in implementation. This is a primary strategy that countries can employ to bridge gaps in implementing their nationally determined contributions through the catalytic sectors. With support from the United Nations Environment Programme, countries are bringing together multiple stakeholders to create mutually beneficial partnerships that are bridging gaps in the implementation of nationally determined contributions at both the policy and operational levels.

16. At the policy level, while national ministries of environment are responsible for reporting progress under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the work itself is

carried out by other line ministries, including ministries of agriculture, energy and lands. The implication is therefore that implementation policies for nationally determined contributions cannot be developed by environment ministries alone, but must cut across all leading line ministries. The United Nations Environment Programme is therefore supporting countries to establish inter-agency policy task forces for government-wide policy coherence towards achieving effective implementation through the catalytic sectors.

17. In Kenya, for example, to achieve its aim under the nationally determined contributions of scaling up clean energy and climate-smart agriculture, the Kenya inter-agency policy task force is reconciling the implementation of the country's Finance Act with the Cooperatives Policy, the Climate-Smart Agriculture strategy and the Energy Ministry Feed-in Tariff Regulations. This is creating incentives for cooperatives and microfinance institutions to create dedicated financing packages for enterprises that are based both on clean energy and nature-based, ecosystem-enhancing agriculture. The result is the simultaneous enhancement of incomes and livelihoods, with sustainable finance for mitigation (scaling up clean energy) and adaptation (scaling up ecosystem agriculture).

18. At the operational level, the United Nations Environment Programme is supporting stakeholders in developing their skills and initiatives with a view to forging mutually beneficial partnerships that not only meet the business aims of stakeholders, but also implement action on the ground to achieve the aims of countries' nationally determined contributions.

19. In Cameroon, the United Nations Environment Programme is supporting the country to directly integrate off-grid, small-hydro power in order to power sustainable, ecosystem-based, adaptation-produced cassava and Irish potato processing in varied product lines. These are then linked to markets and supply chains across the country, using mobile applications that are not only efficient, but also have a much smaller carbon footprint than conventional, non-digital paper processes. This integration is offsetting carbon in energy generation and supply chain linkages and building ecosystem resilience by incentivizing the use of ecosystem-based adaptation approaches. Cumulatively it is simultaneously meeting both climate and socioeconomic aims. From a climate perspective, it is meeting Cameroon's mitigation and adaptation nationally determined contribution objectives. Socioeconomically, it is diversifying income opportunities along the entire agro-value chain and ancillary chains of clean energy and information and communications technology (ICT). A total of 10 youth groups engaging in ICT, clean energy and marketing have been engaged, creating "green jobs" for approximately 100 young people. Over 500 women now have access to value-added services and as a result have cut their post-harvest losses, which has enhanced their income stability and community food security. The achievement of such clear socioeconomic and inclusive wealth opportunities creates additional demand for the implementation of nationally determined contributions for longer-term sustainability.

20. In Kenya, some young people have merged their skills in marketing and clean energy to create an enterprise linking clean energy services to a variety of areas of demand, notably farmers through their cooperatives, who need a selection of clean-energy solutions to cut their post-harvest losses and maximize their produce. By bridging this gap in the market, these young people are making a living for themselves while simultaneously contributing to the scaling-up of clean energy to meet Kenya's nationally determined contributions in terms of mitigation.

## **2. Policy innovations**

21. Driving climate action from the trajectory of maximizing catalytic sectors requires coherence in policy processes between ministries, in which policies in each of the ministries concerned are implemented in a harmonized way that creates a Government-wide enabling policy environment. Clean energy and agriculture working together to decentralize clean energy in order to power value-added agro-processes creates a foundation for this, but alone it is not sufficient. Transport policy must be aligned to prioritize investment in roads that link areas of agro-production to markets to minimize transport emissions while enhancing profitability of enterprises, so that they are encouraged to incorporate greater ecosystem-based adaptation and increase their uptake of clean energy.

22. In addition, trade policies will need to establish market opportunities for these industries and finance policy will need to create fiscal incentives for them. As noted above, the United Nations Environment Programme is supporting countries to harmonize their implementation of policies towards maximizing catalytic sectors through the establishment of inter-agency policy task forces.

23. In Nigeria, the Inter Agency Policy Task Force, established under the Federal Ministry of Budgets and National Planning, is creating an enabling policy environment for the establishment of sustainable agro-industrialization as the engine for accelerating the realization of Nigeria's socioeconomic aims as set out in the country's national development vision ("Nigeria Vision

20:2020”) and for implementing the country’s nationally determined contributions. For that, the task force is building on the implementation of the “40 per cent cassava bread policy”, the Nigeria Feed-in Tariffs, to sustainably industrialize the country’s cassava value chain. This is incentivizing the upscaling of clean energy to meet Nigeria’s mitigation nationally determined contributions and expanding the usage of cassava, a climate-resilient, high-value crop, to meet the country’s adaptation nationally determined contributions.

### 3. Financial innovations

24. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa estimates that the total investment required for implementation of the 44 ratified nationally determined contributions (conditional and unconditional) is in the order of \$2.5 trillion. To implement the Sustainable Development Goals in their entirety, which encompass the full intentions of the nationally determined contributions, Africa requires at least \$1.2 trillion annually. Currently, for adaptation alone, Africa needs \$7–15 billion annually, according to the United Nations Environment Programme’s Africa Adaptation Gap report, while more recent estimates from the Sustainable Development Goals Centre quote an even higher figure of \$18 billion annually. Under the current global mitigation regime, this figure may rise to \$50–100 billion annually by 2050. These sizeable figures notwithstanding, Africa cannot rely on traditional public assistance, including official development assistance, which has dropped to just 1 per cent of all capital inflows into the continent. At the gross domestic product level, official development assistance now accounts for only 3 per cent of gross domestic product across the continent. The capitalization of the Green Climate Fund currently stands at \$10.3 billion, to be shared between all 197 countries that are party to the Framework Convention on Climate Change globally. The United States of America, one of the key funders, has signalled its intention to pull out of the Paris Agreement, meaning that its pledge of \$2 billion will not be honoured, which is likely to reduce total pledges to \$8.3 billion. That notwithstanding, even considering an ideal case scenario in which the entire Green Climate Fund portfolio of \$10.3 billion were to be divided out in a year with Africa as a region having the same chance as all other countries in other regions, Africa’s chances would still only stand at 27 per cent to receive \$72 million in total. That is a drop in the ocean compared with what is needed, considering the \$2.5 trillion for all nationally determined contributions or the \$50 billion required annually by 2050 for adaptation alone under the 2°C warming scenario.

25. The implication is that relying on international public finance alone is a risky strategy and that Africa needs to diversify its funding sources. The continent needs to move on from traditional sources of funding and embrace innovative, market-driven financing. The basis for that has already been set out in high-level decisions on financing development in the twenty-first century, most notably the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on sustainable financing, adopted by countries globally, including in Africa, which has been supported by similar high-level studies and provisions, including the final report of the United Nations Environment Programme Inquiry into the Design of a Sustainable Financial System, the second Africa Adaptation Gap Report and article 9 (2) of the Paris Agreement. Implied clearly in each of these is the need to go beyond dependence on traditional public finance towards a more market-driven and blended financing model that combines international public finance, domestic sources and private-sector financing to form a composite, more sustainable financing model. Innovative approaches leveraging both direct and indirect financing are crucial.

26. Africa offers numerous examples that demonstrate the workability of such financial innovations that unlock both direct and indirect financing, leveraging productivity and maximizing the region’s catalytic sectors.

#### (a) Indirect mitigation financing through enhanced energy and agro-value chain efficiencies

27. Elimination of post-harvest losses currently cost the African continent some \$48 billion annually, largely due to a lack of processing. Juxtaposing that with the \$35 billion currently spent annually to import food to cover deficits, it is evident that directly integrating clean energy to power agro-processing will result in an elimination of those post-harvest losses. The implication is that an additional \$83 billion annually would consequently be made available, which could be used to finance nationally determined contributions.

#### (b) Leveraging risk-sharing facilities to convert “social climate finance” into investment finance

28. This strategy is based on going beyond socially driven financing of climate action to investment financing, in which target returns are not only social, but also financial and economic. The premise is that all development finance – both domestic and international – should be channelled through risk-sharing facilities, where mobilized funds are used as cash guarantees in a “de-risking facility” aimed at incentivizing affordable private-sector financing of enterprises based on the catalytic sectors. Targeting for-profit enterprises means that funds only target businesses which are capable of

repayment, thus ensuring that the funds remain sustainable. Such risk-sharing facilities build on the concept behind the Nigeria Incentive-Based Risk-Sharing System for Agricultural Lending, through which an investment of 45 billion naira in public sources unlocked 10 times the value (up to 450 billion naira) in private finance. Drawing on that success, it can be argued that country social development and climate funds, no matter how small, should be invested in such risk-sharing facilities to unlock additional private sources of funding. Africa could start immediately with its current investments in domestic climate finance. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa reported last year that Africa already contributes some 20 per cent of its total current annual adaptation needs, which are estimated at \$15 billion, meaning that \$3 billion is being contributed. Combining that amount with the additional \$3 billion that the second Africa Adaptation Gap Report noted could be raised domestically each year would mean that the region could mobilize a domestic fund of up to \$6 billion that could be invested in risk-sharing facilities. Drawing on the proven success of the system in Nigeria, that could result in a tenfold return: \$60 billion annually for implementing nationally determined contributions targeting the catalytic sectors.

**(c) Leveraging cooperatives to finance the aims of nationally determined contributions at the community level**

29. By leveraging the principle of cooperatives and the risk diversification they provide, on-farm ecosystem-based adaptation enterprises are pooling their resources to acquire clean energy systems that are then used communally to power value-added enterprises. In other cases, those pooled resources are used as security to acquire loans towards purchasing such capital-intensive assets critical to productivity enhancement. The use of ecosystem-based adaptation-agriculture approaches known to lower climate-induced crop failure risk is also applied as a risk averter to lower the interest payable when loans are involved. The result is ecosystem-based adaptation, and clean energy upscaling is financed to meet the aims of nationally determined contributions, but in a market-driven paradigm in which financial, social and economic returns are achieved simultaneously.

30. In Kenya, for example, the United Nations Environment Programme is supporting the establishment of inclusive, market-driven partnerships between complementary stakeholders with a view to bridging the financing gaps in nationally determined contributions, all of which is leveraged on the catalytic sectors. The Environment Programme has mobilized a farmers' cooperative to work with a clean energy firm to develop flexible and affordable clean-energy financing products for cooperative members so that they have access to value-added power. At present, the focus is on solar-powered micro-irrigation and solar driers. Socioeconomically, the energy sector is enhancing its business by expanding the market for clean energy. The farmers have enhanced their revenues and community food security through reduced crop failure and post-harvest losses as a direct result of solar irrigation and the solar drier kits. From a financial perspective, the farmers have improved revenues to enable them to repay their cooperative dues promptly, which in turn enhances the financial stability of the cooperatives, while from a climate perspective, clean energy is sustainably financed and, once scaled up, will contribute to the mitigation aims under Kenya's nationally determined contributions.

**4. Market-driven innovations**

31. The recent signing of the agreement establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, a deal which some commentators have characterized as the largest free trade agreement since the establishment of the World Trade Organization, is set to consolidate a market that covers 1.2 billion people with a combined gross domestic product of over \$3.4 trillion. Understanding the ways in which this can become a pull factor to drive climate action provides an entry point for the implementation of market-driven nationally determined contributions.

32. As an example, market quality standards aimed at regularizing catalytic areas of sustainable ecosystem-based, adaptation-agriculture approaches and clean-energy-powered agro-value addition are progressing to consolidate the African agro-market, which is currently valued at \$150 billion. This is an incentive to scaling up both ecosystem-based adaptation and clean energy to meet the aims of nationally determined contributions. Here, through the support of the United Nations Environment Programme, countries are merging existing standards in clean energy, nature-based and organic agriculture, ICT and quality in order to develop an all-encompassing standard. This standard evaluates agro-products along the entire supply chain, from on-farm production to processing, from processing to distribution and from distribution to marketing. It is based on the following three criteria.

33. The first criterion is climate and environment compliance. This aims to ensure that nature-based approaches that enhance ecosystems are used at the primary production level to ensure that ecosystem goods and services such as water, pollinators and healthy soils are protected and enhanced during production. It also aims to ensure that any processing is powered by clean energy to minimize the risk of escalating emissions. It also aims to ensure that marketing and supply-chain

processes are ICT-enabled to reduce the high carbon footprint associated with conventional paper and physical processes.

34. The second criterion is health compliance. This aims to ensure that nature-based approaches and non-chemicalized inputs are used in production.

35. The third criterion is quality and safety compliance, which governs quality and safety along the entire length of the production process and supply chain. The domestication of this standard for enforcement by national standards regulators is currently ongoing in 40 countries across Africa, creating an open market for healthy, high-quality, environmentally friendly agro-produce across the continent. As the African Continental Free Trade Area agreement takes root, this standard is creating an operational mechanism by which continental trade can create market-driven pull factors to drive forward the scaling-up of nature-based, ecosystem-based adaptation approaches and clean-energy uptake to drive the implementation of nationally determined contributions through a market-driven paradigm.

### **C. Leveraging Africa's sovereign wealth: its people**

36. Human capital is the single most important component of wealth globally. Driving the above tenets for the implementation of nationally determined contributions calls for interdisciplinary collaboration, where State and non-State, individual and institutional stakeholders drawn from complementary sectors create mutually beneficial, market-driven partnerships to drive the above enablers. These partnerships, driven by people and implied in section 5 of the Paris Agreement, are already proving workable. They are showing how experienced professionals can work with young people to drive the implementation of nationally determined contributions and entrench this paradigm across the generations.

37. For example, in Cameroon, development of the policy decision-making models highlighted above builds on existing national capacity, closely involving undergraduate computer science students at the University of Yaoundé. Giving young, aspiring students the opportunity to work closely with experienced professionals and giving those professionals the opportunity to share their knowledge and experience so that the students can match the theory that they are learning on their courses with real-life practice in the critical area of modelling optimal, low-emission development scenarios is a winning scenario for all involved.

### **D. Inclusive partnerships for low risk implementation**

38. In line with section 5 of the Paris Agreement, which calls for inclusive partnerships and collaboration among State and non-State actors to combat climate change, the examples cited above are driven by bringing together complementary actors to build mutually beneficial market partnerships that implement country climate aims while unlocking key socioeconomic benefits. This is a practical demonstration of the ways in which section 5 can be leveraged at various levels: at the policy level, through interagency policy task forces that mobilize collaborative policy implementation actions between ministries, and at the operational level, through market-driven, mutually beneficial partnerships. Such collaborative actions lower operational risks by building on established, ongoing initiatives, rather than launching new initiatives for nationally determined contributions, ensuring that start-up risks and costs are kept to a minimum.

## **V. Conclusion**

39. The science is unequivocal: more action must be targeted at maximizing the productivity of catalytic areas. The present note has sought to inform the debate on the areas that Africa needs to prioritize if it is to successfully plan and deliver for its people on climate action. Central to this are clean-energy technologies that extend beyond domestic use to cover major industrial applications.

40. The current special session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment provides an opportunity to frame the trajectory of this solution by prioritizing the mobilization of as much global support as possible – in terms of finance, capacity-building and technology transfer – towards bridging existing operational gaps to establish clean-energy-powered, ecosystem-based, adaptation-agriculture-led industrialization.

41. It is only by doing this that Africa will have the wherewithal to economically empower its people, so that when floods rage they will have the means to move to safer areas, and so that when droughts hit they will still be able to buy food. It is by doing this that Africa will be able to enhance the resilience of its land to protect against the worst droughts and floods. It is by doing this that Africa can forestall and reverse the impending suffering of its people.