



**Climate Change
Symposium
sur le
Changement
Climatique
2011**

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Keynote Speech

**National and international policy –
Linking policy to practice**

Dr. Youba Sokona, ACPC

Keynote respondent: Gareth Martin,
DFID

The keynote address was preceded
by opening addresses from Dr
Fatima Denton (IDRC) and Dr
Ramadjita Tabo (FARA)

Session summary

Dr. Fatima Denton, in her opening address welcomed participants and thanked the AfricaAdapt partners for organising the Symposium. She emphasized that AfricaAdapt was borne out of CCAA's recognition of the need to mobilize existing scientific knowledge in forms and language that are suitable for the most vulnerable, and was pleased that AfricaAdapt had grown beyond what was envisioned at inception. On the question of linking to policy makers she emphasized that, "We need to understand the decision-making process of farmers and not only that of policy makers; farmers make about thirty decisions in the rainy season alone."

Dr. Ramadjita Tabo, whose welcome remarks were in French, gave a background to the Symposium and overwhelming interest it had generated, with over 400 abstracts submitted. He highlighted FARA's growing recognition of the need to address climate change issues, which was evidenced in its most recent General Assembly held in 2010 where climate change featured as one of the key themes. FARA's top decision making body made strong recommendations for the formation of a platform to share knowledge on climate change and proposed AfricaAdapt as an entry point. On question of mitigation versus adaptation he said, "The two should be used in formulating country strategies to cope with climate change and minimize the effect on agricultural development in Africa."

Dr. Youba Sokona delivered the first keynote of the Symposium on "National and international policy – Linking policy to practice". In his opening, he iterated that adaptation in Africa is a matter of survival; "You either adapt or die". He added that although Africa needs to grow, moving towards a climate resilient and low carbon pathway was paramount. On links between policy and action, he emphasized that any action at local level should give guidance to national policy, national action to regional policy, and regional action to international policy. Likewise International policy must guide actions down to the local levels.

Dr. Gareth Martin, echoed most of the arguments raised by Dr. Sokona. He added that in order for adaptation to happen, Africa needed more regionally specific information, better estimates and models, as well as evidence on practical solutions that need to be undertaken to reduce vulnerability and build climate proof infrastructure. "We need to pilot approaches and bring them to the international level" he emphasized.

Reactions from plenary

There was a lot of interest in the African Climate and Policy Centre as many of the issues raised by the plenary focused on its structure, mandate and operations. In response, Dr. Sokona clarified that the ACPC is a new initiative and does not have much to show yet. The Centre's mandate is to work on actions or priorities that have been identified by African countries, rather than identify these policies by itself, and it is at the disposition of individual countries to appoint an interlocutor.

Anke Weisheit raised the need to address resource conflicts as resources such as water are becoming scarce with increased demand linked to climate change.

Youba Sokona – Keynote Address

National and international policy – Linking policy to practice

Warming of the climate system is unequivocal, as is now evident from various scientific findings as well as from observations. Mitigation measures are slow and sparse. Adaptation is now unavoidable, but without mitigation it may become impossible to achieve any meaningful results where direly needed.

Africa as a whole is lagging behind on each of the eight MDGs and achieving them requires enduring efforts and adequate resources. The challenge is further compounded by adverse impacts and the grave long-term risk that climate change poses. It is widely recognized and accepted that in Africa climate change will hamper adequacy to cope with rapid onset-disaster events, energy and water availability, access and demand, food security, health, migration and livelihoods. In such a context the imperative of adaptation to climate change is a matter of survival for most of the Africans. It requires a new development paradigm which encompasses systematic risk management. Adaptation is about development under uncertainty, where capacity to manage risk determines progress.

Climate change represents both the greatest challenges humanity has ever faced and a tremendous opportunity for nations to move towards a low carbon, resource efficient and sustainable development society. Indeed development pathways influence climate change, and climate change could have significant impacts on development, as they can be mutually reinforcing. Tackling global climate change is an inherently complex problem requiring robust inter-related policies at international, regional, national and local levels. A holistic approach, concerted and differentiated mitigation as well as adaptation actions are absolute prerequisites.

Climate change issues offer an opportunity to Africa for revisiting its development objectives and strategies from a new perspective and renewed urgency with the central notion of sustainability. They necessitate integration of local and global concerns, addressing immediate needs while investing in long term constraints by the imperative of building bridges between development and environment more systematically, as well as widening the decision making process at various levels. However in doing so, a “Development First” approach, in particular in Africa, will certainly stimulate concrete actions, mainstreaming a strong and inclusive required global cooperation. The idea here is to start from development priorities, not from climate change. Objectives of development and poverty eradication must be met, but with strategies that aim for climate safe and climate friendly development. Indeed a wide range of development initiatives in Africa are climate resilient and friendly. Diversity of local actions, and national policies that deliver positive development and climate outcomes are available for exploring promising options for policies at various levels to be scaled-up through international initiatives to enhance their impacts.

The following key lessons have emerged from the AfricaAdapt initiative:

- Benefits of integrating development and climate policies have been demonstrated;
- The local and national policy levels are crucial for implementing integrated development and climate policies;

- There is a need to enhance the impact of national experiences by widely replicating promising approaches;
- Mainstreaming climate change in international policy frameworks and agreements is not done widely enough

Gareth Martin – Keynote response

The threats of climate change to Africa are becoming clearer. For example, an increasing threat of water scarcity in many regions could have a huge impact on the rural communities who depend on rain-fed agriculture. Whatever the full extent of climate change experienced, some degree of adaptation is likely to be required in Africa.

In order for adaptation to happen effectively, Africa needs more regionally specific information on the impacts of climate change. We also need more evidence on practical solutions of how to respond to these impacts, to help determine where to concentrate our efforts and resources.

In responding to climate change, it is right to start from a development perspective, as Dr Sokona said, but it is essential that we add a climate change perspective to development. Key sectors, such as water and agriculture, and reduced vulnerability of local communities are likely to be important. There should also be attention to low carbon development, so that development, adaptation and low carbon development comes together in a process of “climate-compatible development”.

We need to mainstream climate change into national and international policy-making, taking a holistic approach. We also need practical action on the ground, to explore innovation, and learn from results and experiences, feeding into policy-making and to scale up on a larger scale. This will require coherence between local, national and international policy-making.