



**Intervention at the 14th Session of the African Ministerial
Conference on the Environment (AMCEN)**

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The Global Environment Facility

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Honorable Ministers,

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to address this important 14th Session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment. I would like to extend my gratitude to Hon. Dr. Terezya Huvisa for inviting me to speak today. I value this honor and appreciate your warm welcome. I also commend the Government of Tanzania for hosting this meeting.

I want to thank AMCEN for its continuous engagement with the GEF. It is indeed nice to be back to AMCEN, as I attended the session last year in Bamako. I recall robust exchanges on the challenges Africa is facing, such as security for energy, food and water, the plight of the poorest and the most vulnerable who are heavily affected by the loss of natural resources and ecosystems. It was impressive how you rightfully emphasized the importance of embedding natural resource constraints at the core of national development plans. This inspired me so much that the vision statement that I have developed as the CEO of the GEF is very much built on what I have learned from AMCEN last year. And this is because I decided to make Arusha as one of my very first official missions since I took office on this August 1.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The coming decade presents global environmental challenges unprecedented in the history of mankind. We have already reached or exceeded the carrying capacity of several of the earth's ecosystems. The next ten years will likely see another 700 million people added to the world population, more than 1 billion additional middle-class consumers, and 50 percent growth in economic output. And yet there

are at this very moment, more than 900 million people without access to electricity and 1.2 billion without safe water.

The challenge for Africa is further pressing. African landscape is a rich and dynamic mosaic of natural resources; 9 of 35 the world's most important biodiversity hotspots lie in Africa. Meanwhile, a significant part of its livelihoods rely on agriculture, say 70%, and extraction of mineral and biological resources. However, the natural resource base in the region is sharply deteriorating; only 20% of land in Africa is arable and much of it is under pressure, soil degradation has affected 65% of cropland, over 20 million hectares of forest has been lost since 1980. Frequent and increasing floods and draughts are showing the health of the ecosystem in the region is losing its carrying capacity, and yet, there are few alternatives once it is lost. I heard you loud and clear at the AMCEN last year that, energy poverty, food and water security, human health are pressing challenges, that development and environment is absolutely inseparable, and that natural resource management needs to be placed at the core of the development decision making.

Under such pressures, incremental environmental improvement alone will simply not suffice. We need a transformational change to the way global environment is managed, and such change will be most needed in Africa.

What do I mean by transformational change? We must strive for the world where, first of all, everybody understands the vital linkage between environment and sustainable development. These are not competing but co-dependent. Second, the value of natural capital needs to be fully incorporated in the way decisions are made and progress is measured; third, all governments need to embed natural resource constraints into their national development plans; and fourth, all key

actors – from local communities to national governments, the private sector, civil society organizations and indigenous peoples -- need to recognize the part they must play in finding and implementing solutions.

Ladies and gentlemen,

My vision for the GEF is to make the GEF play a key part of collective leadership to bring this transformational change. Specifically, in my vision, the GEF should play the following four key roles. The GEF should be an innovator of new ideas and way of doing business. Second, the GEF should be a champion of global commons. Third, I want the GEF to be a partner of your choice. Lastly the GEF should be a financial catalyst.

But what exactly this vision means to Africa? I believe strongly that Africa has a central role in helping the GEF shape and implement this vision, so you must be at the forefront of making it happen. I want to work with you to achieve this goal, with one objective in mind: to serve you better, for now and for the future of your children and the children of your children.

When I say the GEF must be an innovator, I think of what we have achieved here together. For example, right here in Africa, we have successfully promoted new clean technologies in the energy sector such as concentrated solar power and geothermal power generation. We have initiated groundbreaking approaches in protected areas management. As we move ahead, we must continue to reinvigorate our approach to innovation.

What the GEF should do more to be a champion of the Global Commons? Again, Africa is leading the way. Here I can refer to initiatives such as the Great Green

Wall Initiative, Congo Basin, Lake Chad, TerrAfrica, energy and biodiversity in West Africa, and the Africa Stockpiles Programme. These are examples that should serve as models. We should enhance and disseminate them.

In this region, we must explore the value of regional approach with specific country-based action. Examples just mentioned demonstrate the value of regional coordination the GEF supported. These programs brought about significant synergy and multiple benefits among preserving biodiversity and health of the ecosystem, limiting climate change impacts, and increasing the income of the local populations. We must however, developed these initiatives with you, spell out concrete answers that will address your needs, taking in consideration the specificities of your respective countries.

Another important partner is the private sector. Africa has made remarkable growth in the past decade. It is not only fossil fuel boom. It is private sector driven growth. We need to find a way to harness the partnership with them. This is where upcoming country consultations take a particular importance, especially prior to GEF 6 replenishment negotiation.

When I say the GEF must be a partner of choice, it is first and foremost because of the importance of addressing the specific needs of regions such as Africa. I will ensure the GEF helps you embed natural resource constraints at the core of your development plans, and government decision making reflects the value of natural capital, which tend to be ignored. I recognize the importance of capacity development in your region, so that you are well equipped to exert ownership on the design of the GEF supported program. It is high time for countries to demand

partner agencies to fully utilize their comparative advantage to the benefit of countries.

Finally, I want the GEF to be a powerful catalyst in the evolving architecture of environmental finance, with Africa as one of its key driving forces. As you know, we have made progress synergizing with other funds and environment initiatives. For instance, in addition to managing the GEF Trust Fund, we service the Least Developed Country Fund (LDCF) and the Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF). We also provide support to the Secretariat of the Adaptation Fund and are working very closely with the UNFCCC secretariat to service, on an interim basis, the Board of the Green Climate Fund. I see it crucial to continue to build a strong and robust complementary role between the GEF, the GCF and other funds that are out there to support financing of the environment. I am committed to work with the GCF in particular to provide a full range and seamless set of menu that will benefit the countries in general, and Africa in particular.

Let me conclude by saying that in the months ahead, I will be working with my team on the specific suggestions you made towards a leaner, more effective and efficient GEF that is closer to the needs of your respective countries. I am committed to live up to your expectations in grappling effectively these challenges, help implement the outcome of Rio + 20, and look forward to meeting each one of you individually. Please never hesitate to liaise with the GEF, your GEF.

I thank you for your attention.