

# Greening the AU economy – adapting to climate change along a low carbon development pathway

Michelle van der Walt





Climate change is the defining human development challenge of the 21st century

United Nations Human Development Report 2007/2008 '*Fighting climate change: human solidarity in a divided world*

# Background

- Detrimental impact on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – especially those MDGs related to eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, health, nutrition and education
- In the absence of immediate action climate change will stall and then reverse progress made in achieving the MDGs related to eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, health, nutrition and education
- These developmental impacts will be borne by the world's poor and the world's future generations

# Climate change in the African context

- Africa is labelled as being highly vulnerable to climate change.
- The concept of vulnerability is important for understanding climate change in the context of social and human development.
- Africans are likely to suffer a wide range of impacts, such as:
  - reduced agricultural production;
  - reduced fresh water availability;
  - loss of biodiversity;
  - increased food insecurity,
  - increased health problems; and
  - increased migration
- For Africa's development process to be considered as contributing towards the achievement of the MDGs and promoting sustainable development, its response to the challenges related to climate change must show climate resilience.

# Climate change response in contemporary international law

"Climate change now provides a unique opportunity for the international community to question the modes of development currently in practice and to choose a new mode of development for the future"

*AU-NEPAD Action Plan of the Environment Initiative 2008*

"This 'new mode of development' will entail an approach that would see material wealth balanced with protection of the natural environment thereby ensuring social equity and justice"

United Nations World Economic and Social Survey 2010

# United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

## Objective

Stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations "at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system"

## Commitment

Formulate, implement, publish and regularly update national and, where appropriate, regional programmes containing measures to mitigate climate change by addressing anthropogenic emissions by sources

## Achieving stated objective:

Mitigation should take the form of reducing GHG emissions in terms of cooperative action – especially amongst so-called Annex I countries

# Kyoto Protocol

## Objective

Sets binding targets for 37 industrialised countries and the European Union for reducing GHG emissions by five percent between 1998 and 2012

- Kyoto Protocol “operationalises” the UNFCCC

## Measures of implementation

- Focus primarily on national measures for meeting mitigation targets
- Establishes three market-based mechanisms for reaching mitigation targets, namely:
  - emissions trading;
  - clean development mechanism; and
  - joint implementation

## Adaptation

"any actions taken to adjust or respond to the adverse effects of climate change"

Yamin F 1998

## Adaptation in Africa

- Adaptive measures in the form of integrating climate concerns into regional development planning in order to ensure the long-term achievement of the MDGs and the promotion of sustainable development
- The African climate change strategy revolves around the issues of vulnerability assessment and the development of adaptation strategies promoting climate resilient development of the continent
- A proposed method of ensuring climate resilient approaches to development in Africa relates to the international environmental law concept of a green economy with a low carbon development pathway



# The Green Economy

UNEP describes the green economy as an economic system that is dominated by investing in, producing, trading, distributing, and consuming not only environmentally-friendly but environmentally enhancing products and services

UNEP Towards a Green Economy: Pathways to Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication – A Synthesis for Policy Makers 2011

# Principles of a Green Economy

- Reaching consensus on a green economy necessitates international agreement on a common ethical framework of shared values and principles
- Green economy principles and existing sustainable development law principles are not mutually exclusive concepts
- Green economy principles relate broadly to the following sustainable development law themes:
  - Sustainable use of natural resources
  - Equity and the eradication of poverty
  - Precautionary approach to human health, natural resources and the ecosystems
  - Public participation and access to justice and information
  - Good governance
  - Integration and interrelationship of human rights and social, economic and environmental objectives

# Principles of a Green Economy

Greening African development along a low-carbon development pathway will depend largely upon the formulation of well informed regional policy and the implementation of coherent strategies based upon the principles underlying the green economy

Joint initiative of the African Union Commission (AUC), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the African Development Bank (AfDB)

## Objective

Enhance economic growth and progress toward the MDGs through climate change mitigation as well as ensure the long term climate resilience of existing development achievements

## Expected results

- improved climate policies focused on development and climate change adaptation,
- much improved CRM practices related to food security, water, health, energy and environment;
- adequate information services; and
- improved data and infrastructure characterised by strengthened observation networks and service centres

# Operationalising ClimDev-Africa

In order to ensure the proper, secure, transparent and timely implementation of the first phase of strengthening regional climate institutions and the development of Climate Risk Knowledge Management in Africa, financial infrastructure is needed

ClimDev-Africa Special Fund (CDSF) established by the AfDB in 2012

## Immediate results of the CDSF

- institutional capacities of regional climate centres are built to match their mandates;
- climate data is produced and communicated in order to meet the needs of intended users; and
- all stakeholders having access to climate information

# Comprehensive Framework of African Climate Change Programmes

AU common position on how existing and future climate change programmes should take into consideration the specific climate needs of different regions as well as how to consolidate and improve the implementation of future climate change projects and programmes within the continent

Highlights the opportunity of having adaptive strategies such as the ClimDev Programme, resulting in an African Green Economy

# Conclusion

The AU has the opportunity to achieve a transformation towards a greener economy that delivers sustainable economic growth and development; promotes employment opportunities and poverty reduction, while enhancing the continent's natural capital and reducing ecological scarcities and environmental risks