

SPEECH BY HON. SHERRY AYITTEY, MINISTER FOR FISHERIES AND
AQUACULTURE DEVELOPMENT AS SPECIAL GUEST AT THE
INTERNATIONAL CONERENCE ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND NATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT ON WEDNESDAY, JUNE 24, 2015 AT CENTER FOR AFRICAN
WETLANDS, UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON AT 8.30A.M.

Mr. Chairman

Distinguished invited Heads of Institutions and Government Agencies

Representatives of Development partners

Participants

Our Friends from the Media

Ladies and gentlemen

It is great to be here, surrounded by people who are concerned about issues that I have been passionate about for a long time now.

Permit me to express my gratitude to Prof. Yaa Ntiamoah-Baidu for her commitment and dedication to ensuring that environmental and climate change issues receive the necessary national and global attention either through her scientific research or contribution to national capacity building.

In February this year, the global authority on Climate Change, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) presented its fifth Assessment report. The highlight of this report reads:

“Human influence on the climate is clear, the more we disrupt our climate, the more we risk severe, pervasive and irreversible impacts. We have the means to limit climate change and build a more prosperous, sustainable future”

Mr. Chairman, If we look at the sources of green house gas emissions, it should be understandable why we should all be involved in our quest to limiting climate change and building a more prosperous and sustainable future. From the global perspective, Energy production accounts for about 35%, Agriculture, Forestry and other land uses 24%, Industry 21%, Transport 14%, Building sector 6%.

Mr. Chairman, it is therefore obvious that there is something that we can all do either at the individual level or at the level of our institutions so that collectively we can make the necessary impacts that we desire.

In Ghana, many of the development challenges confronting us can be traced to Climate Change or at least have their intensities magnified by climate change and these include:

- Food and water shortages
- Increased displacement of people
- Coastal flooding
- Poor and erratic rainfall patterns

Why Climate Change Matters to Ghana

Ghana has moved from a Low Income to a Lower Middle Income country (as defined by the World Bank) and is both high-growth and energy-hungry. It has been recognized, however, that climate change and the cost of the climate change response is a serious threat to this progress. There is already evidence of the impact of climate change on the national economy, with clear signs that the coastal zone, responds to flooding disasters every year. The June 2010 floods demonstrated how climate change can reverse development investments, with a total of 24 deaths, more than 1,000 homes destroyed, millions of dollars in property losses, 5,000 people evacuated in Tema, and the collapse of a bridge linking Ghana and neighbouring Togo, cutting off travel between the two West African countries. Recent rains in June, 2015, did not spare us, many deaths, over 1000 people displaced and many lost properties. Severe damage to road network. These are in millions of cedis not budgeted for.

The shortening of the growing season also has a severe impact on food security in areas which practice rain-fed agriculture. Lower agricultural productivity from extended dry seasons and flooding from storm events are also increasing the pressure on the young and mobile in the north to migrate to the south. Migrants arriving in the cities, many of them young women who make a precarious living as porters (kayayei), are exposed to new vulnerabilities on the streets add to the pressure on existing, over-stretched, urban services.

As a net emitter of greenhouse gases, Ghana is now at a transition point. Economic growth still necessitates modernization, particularly in the agricultural sector. This requires a huge investment in infrastructure and will further increase demands for energy which will result in higher emissions.

Mr. Chairman, we are aware of a number of national policy measures developed with the objective of addressing green house gas emission and also put in place measure to enhance resilience, especially of local communities and key sectors to Climate Change and variability.

The National Climate Change Policy which was developed by the Ministry of Environment Science and Technology for example identified five priority policy arrears namely:

- i) Agriculture and Food Security
- ii) Disaster Preparedness and Response
- iii) Natural Resource Management
- iv) Equitable Social Development

v) Energy, Industrial and Infrastructural Development

A number of program areas have also been identified within the priority areas which require preparation of strategies and action plans in order for to operationalize the policy and develop the necessary structures, processes and modalities that will enhance our resilience to climate change.

Mr. Chairman, the oceans absorbs substantial amount of the excess energy in the atmosphere and subsequently become warmer and as a result, increasing green house gas emission is expected to result in warming of our oceans with variable impacts on fisheries resources.

Ocean issues are a critical part of any attempt to address climate change. The role of oceans and marine issues are very important in any climate change developments.

The oceans covers about 75%-80% of the Earth's surface and various challenges facing the oceans, from climate change such as:-acidification to over exploitation of fisheries cannot be overlooked. It is very important that this sector is given the needed stewardship due to the environmental concern, and other critical impact areas such as health, economic food security. The sea resources provides 50% of man's protein intake, therefore sustainable fisheries are imperative in ensuring resources for future generation. This we consider a moral issue.

In consonance with the national climate change policy, the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development has initiated the process to assess the impacts of climate change on the fisheries resources of Ghana and outlined strategies of addressing the impacts.

Mr. Chairman, Major opportunities are emerging within the private-sector and it is important to consider ways to promote stronger involvement of the private sector, civil society and NGOs in climate change response.

One issue about this conference which is worth commendation, and further action is the creation of this common platform for policy makers and researchers to exchange ideas and experiences. Since each weather events results in a setback to national development.

Flooding is an obvious and immediate threat to economic growth, energy supply, roads, transport, food and social protection.

We support this relationship where research outputs can easily be taken up by policy makers because the research topics are of national relevance and will address national socio-economic development challenges.

On that note, I wish you a successful conference and deliberations and fervently hope that this platform will generate ideas and inputs towards addressing socioeconomic, developmental and climate change challenges confronting Ghana and the global community at large.