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**“The Importance of Investment in Climate Smart Agriculture in
Africa”
COP17 Durban, South Africa**

**Keynote Address by Kofi A. Annan
At the High Level Panel: *Climate Smart Agriculture – Africa: A Call to Action***

**STRICTLY EMBARGOED WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 07 2011 14:00pm (SAST)
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Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for joining us today to mark the launch of this important initiative.

I want to start by congratulating South Africa and the African Union for their leadership in the run-up to the Durban conference, the third in the history of the Conference of the Parties to take place on the continent.

The location has, in itself, helped give a greater prominence to Africa’s role in the challenge of climate change.

But I also want to pay tribute to Christiana Figueres for their clear message that Africa is both particularly affected by, and has a huge potential to help mitigate the negative impact of climate change.

There is no doubt that these climate change discussions are taking place against a difficult backdrop.

Global leaders are struggling with continuing financial turmoil, rising unemployment and increasing social tension.

Grave as they are, these problems must not be used as an excuse to delay progress on climate change. Indeed they should be seen as a warning.

For the financial crisis has shown the gravity of waiting for disaster to strike before taking action.

Ladies and gentlemen, the agenda for Durban offers a chance to rebuild trust between the North and South, between the powerful and the weak, and between citizens and their leaders.

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Our ambition must be to build solid foundations for a legal form of a comprehensive, ambitious and fair approach to combat climate change.

It must be an approach that is based on common but differentiated responsibilities, and the respective capabilities of countries.

Regrettably, we are far from the level of ambition in mitigation pledges needed to meet the target of limiting global warming to 2°C, and even further off track from the 1.5°C limit that many of us believe is needed.

I know that we won't be able to remedy these shortcomings this week.

But we must take every possible opportunity to build on what has already been agreed in Copenhagen and Cancun.

By this, I mean developing the institutions to strengthen the Convention on Climate Change that is our common framework for action.

This will require operationalizing mechanisms for technology transfer to assist developing countries in their adaptation and mitigation efforts. And concrete decisions on the governance, transparency and accountability of institutions.

Crucially, developed countries must deliver on their commitment to mobilise \$100 billion by 2020 for the Green Climate Fund. They must clarify where the money will be sourced and how it will be accessed.

We should also recognize and encourage action taken by corporate or non-governmental actors, despite the lack of adequate inter-governmental ambition.

These initiatives and partnerships are responding to the urgency of the climate challenge, and helping to reshape our global community positively.

We need to find ways to scale up these initiatives, such as "The Momentum For Change" project, that was recently launched by the Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC, with the support of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

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Finally, we must emphasize the importance of climate resilient agricultural policies as part of the climate challenge.

Until now, agriculture has been sidelined from the climate change discussion.

This is despite compelling evidence that climate change poses a real threat to agricultural production and food security, particularly in Africa.

At the same time, the contribution that climate smart agriculture can make to reducing greenhouse gas emissions has been undervalued.

Ladies and gentlemen, today, one in seven people in the world doesn't have enough food to eat.

Climate change and demographic trends are set to increase this number dramatically.

UNEP estimates that land degradation, water and natural resource scarcity due to climate change, could reduce global food production by 25% by the year 2050.

When set against FAO's forecast that global food production needs to increase by 70% by 2050, to meet the demands of a growing and more affluent global population, we begin to see how serious this threat is.

This is of particular concern to Africa – the only continent which does not grow enough food to feed itself.

It is a continent where four out of five of citizens are still dependent on agriculture for their survival.

But Africa has enormous potential if the right agricultural policies are adopted and funded.

Climate-resilient agriculture will help Africa adapt to the effects of climate change; and climate-smart agriculture will enable the continent to contribute towards mitigation efforts.

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Africa holds around 60 per cent of the world's uncultivated arable land and could grow enough food, not only to meet its own needs, but to export surpluses.

Realising this potential, however, won't happen by chance. It requires the engagement and expertise of scientists, governments, multilateral institutions, farmer's organizations and business.

For example, adaptive research could help to raise the productivity of crop and livestock production systems in specific African contexts, and therefore boost food production.

We also need to link this research to practical programmes to improve land and water management, and the sustainable use of grazing lands.

Combined with soil fertility enhancement initiatives and the use of carbon-absorbing seed strains, these programmes will go a long way to help capitalise on the mitigation potential of investments in African agriculture.

Decisive leadership at national and international levels, and partnerships with the private sector throughout the agricultural value chain, can help to provide the extra investment needed, and share best practice across countries.

Ladies and gentlemen, these efforts must have at their heart Africa's army of small-holder farmers, many of whom are women who grow the majority of the continent's food.

Without their active engagement, we will fail to promote the uniquely African Green Revolution we need.

But with their full involvement, we can help achieve global food security, counter the impact of climate change through sustainable agriculture, and provide a platform for wider development throughout the continent.

It is because of this background that the initiative we are launching today is so important.

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It is an example of the progress that can be made, even in difficult economic circumstances.

It shows, too, how leadership by like-minded and dedicated actors can help to support efforts to move towards an inclusive climate framework.

I wish to congratulate the World Bank, the governments of South Africa, Norway, and their partners, for their vision and commitment.

I hope other Governments will follow your lead in supporting climate-smart agriculture in Africa and in other developing countries.

But this is not a matter for Governments alone.

Over the course of my career at the United Nations, I realised that the nature and scale of the global challenges we face demand the concerted action of us all.

This is certainly the case with climate change which is an all-encompassing threat.

We need the leadership, resources, expertise and solidarity of every organization and individual if we are to find solutions to this common challenge.

We all have a part to play, as well, in ensuring our leaders do not shy away from the hard decisions necessary to ensure that the world we pass on to future generations is a stable, secure and healthy one.

Today, I hope we have taken a small but important step towards this goal.

Thank you.