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ADDRESS
BY

**HIS EXCELLENCY
ARMANDO EMILIO GUEBUZA
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOZAMBIQUE**

**CO-CHAIR OF THE
HIGH LEVEL SEGMENT OF THE
WORLD CLIMATE CONFERENCE 3
(WCC-3)**

***CLIMATE CHANGE AND VARIABILITY:
A Looming Global Multidimensional Disaster***

GENEVA, THE 3RD OF SEPTEMBER, 2009

Your Excellency Moritz Leuenbeger, Federal Counsellor of the Suisse Confederation and Co-Chairperson of the third Conference on Climate;

Your Excellency Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations;

Your Excellency Michel Jarraud, Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization;

Your Excellencies Heads of State and Government;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are greatly honoured to stand before you all to add our voice to the world's growing concern over climate change and variability. We would like to congratulate the Swiss Confederation for hosting this conference and the World Meteorological Organization and its partners for bringing us all together to this debate.

Excellencies,

Climate change and variability are global phenomena which affect us all in different forms. We will first look at Mozambique, extrapolate our readings to Africa and then glance over the developed world to demonstrate this.

Our distinguished audience might recall Rosita, the baby girl born on a tree top, at the height of the 2000 diluvian floods. The story flooded the news rooms across the world but, perhaps, the drama failed to capture the full meaning of what was unfolding in Mozambique. Firstly, the intensity, magnitude and continuous downpour had broken known rain patterns and had turned into a new tragic experience for the Mozambicans on the Limpopo valley. Secondly, the very fact that they had to climb onto a tree top meant that they were not warned early to escape and the ensuing tragedy denounced our lack of rescue capacity. To make matters worse, the floods washed away their crops bringing the painful reality of not knowing where to get the next meal - a hungry person lacks self-esteem and cannot think of anything else but food.

As we were trying to put behind us the 2000 Limpopo great floods, the mighty Zambezi began to burst its banks, from December 2007. Early February 2008, the television pictures of Maria José, a young lady who had given birth to underweight triplets, at a resettlement centre in Tete Province, shocked us all again. Climate change and variability were again to blame.

- ❖ Firstly, the banks of the Zambezi began to cause havoc late December. In normal circumstances the peak period should have been mid January.
- ❖ Secondly, these floods assumed similar characteristics of those of 2000.
- ❖ Thirdly, the very fact that the triplets were born underweight was an indication of the anaemic condition their mother was suffering from.

In March 2008 we visited some of these resettlement centres and could witness the negative impact of these calamities. Clearly the self-esteem and dignity of the victims were dented and were thrown back to abject poverty. Natural disasters, as we all know, are also a step backward in national development as they destroy social and economic infra-structures.

Excellencies,

We predict that in Mozambique and in Africa, due to the potential increase in the frequency and magnitude of natural disasters and sea level rise:

- ❖ sea water intrusion and flooding can become a reality and, in our case, the city of Beira, which is below sea level, runs the risk of being submerged;

We also predict that:

- ❖ Health standards could deteriorate;
- ❖ Our people could work harder for less agrarian results;
- ❖ The ecosystems could be significantly impoverished;
- ❖ Competing for such resources as fertile land could destabilize nations and resources like water could spark inter-state conflicts.

We are addressing some of these risks, trying to turn them into opportunities for development. For example, our peasants have taken up the challenge and are building sturdier and spacious houses with home-made bricks on higher ground. The more fertile river valleys remain the food production areas with major contribution into our Green Revolution meant to increase food security and self-reliance in some crops.

We have also embarked on a nation-wide programme through which all our primary and secondary schools pupils are expected to plant and own a tree per year. In addition, we have launched another programme in which we expect each community to have its own forest for firewood. These programmes, like the environmental education, are expected to contribute to the global drive to mitigate the impact of climate change.

We have also decentralised financial resources to rural areas for food production and job creation. The results are that:

- ❖ more water retention schemes have been developed;
- ❖ new crops and improved seeds introduced; and
- ❖ the nutritional and commercial value of some indigenous species exploited, particularly through agro-processing which, incidentally, covers other products.

At macro policy level, we have moved from *ad hoc* adaptation measures to a National Adaptation Plan of Action on Climate Change. The priorities identified in the Plan include the strengthening of the monitoring and early warning systems and the mainstreaming of climate changes into water resources management.

Excellencies,

The heat waves and the floods developed countries experience demonstrate that no single country is immune to these phenomena. More importantly, the very fact that climate change and vulnerability interfere with the Millennium Development Goals should urge us all to act today because tomorrow may be too late. In this regard, while expressing our full support to the Global Framework for Climate Services, we would like to reiterate the appeal to our development partners to fulfil all their relevant international commitments.

I thank you very much for your kind attention.