



Allocution du Président
Zine El Abidine Ben Ali
Président de la République Tunisienne
au Sommet Afrique-Europe
sur le thème
"L'énergie et les changements climatiques"

Lisbonne, le 8 décembre 2007

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Address by President
Zine El Abidine Ben Ali
President of the Republic of Tunisia
to the Africa-Europe Summit on
"Energy and Climate Change"

Lisbon, December 8, 2007

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate

Mr. Chairman,
Your Majesties,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my distinct pleasure to express to the leadership, government and people of friendly Republic of Portugal my sincere thanks and deep consideration for the excellent organization of this second Africa-Europe Summit, as well as for the warm welcome and generous hospitality we have been offered since we arrived in this magnificent country.

Mr. Chairman,

We are convinced that your chairmanship of this Summit, the propitious conditions you have provided to ensure its success, and our common determination to promote cooperation and partnership between the African and European Groups, will certainly help achieve the hoped-for solidarity and complementarity between our two continents which are united by deep-rooted historical, civilizational and economic relations.

Placing the issues of energy and climate change on our Summit agenda reflects our deep awareness of the importance of these issues and our determination to address them and alleviate their impacts. They are also among our concerns in Tunisia, and we have given them all due attention, and placed them among our major national choices, based on our conviction that the right to a sound environment is an integral part of human rights in their broad sense and comprehensive dimension.

We have adopted a multi-dimensional development approach that aims at alleviating climate change impacts, ensuring a sound environmental management of solid and liquid waste, fighting pollution, developing the use of clean technologies, enhancing energy control, developing the use of alternative and renewable energies, in addition to promoting collective transport and expanding, developing and diversifying the country's vegetal cover.

Tunisia signed and ratified the United Nations Convention on Climate Change during the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. It also joined the Kyoto Protocol in 2002, and established a national body concerned with the Clean Development Mechanism, before the enforcement of the Protocol in February 2005.

In our view, the mechanism set up under the Kyoto Protocol can help African and European countries to establish joint development programs to alleviate the impacts of environmental pollution and global warming, and achieve the objectives set by the Millennium Summit.

In this regard, we appreciate the attention accorded by the international community to the African continent and the Mediterranean region which are exposed to climatic fluctuations and natural challenges growing increasingly intense over the years.

The International Solidarity Conference on Climate Change Strategies for African and Mediterranean Countries, held in Tunis last November, reflects the growing common international awareness of the need to protect the two regions and to ensure sustainable development and stability therein.

This Conference was the crowning step of the initiatives, consultations and exchange of information and expertise we have undertaken concerning climate change. Particular mention can be made, in this regard, of the Ministerial

Conference on "Sustainable Development in the Mediterranean" held in Tunis in 1994, which adopted the "Agenda 21 for the Mediterranean", the International Conference on "Climate Change and Tourism" held in 2003, which adopted the "Djerba Declaration", and the International Conference on the "Future of Arid Lands" hosted by our country in 2006.

We exhort all the countries participating in this Summit to consider the recommendations and orientations that will be adopted an indispensable reference document in the fight against climate change.

We also call on all our European partners to materialize the principles of international solidarity in this field, which will help alleviate the impact of climate fluctuations and support development projects in African countries.

In this context, we stress the need for offering African countries with developing economies the urgent assistance required by the present situation, in order to protect them against the negative effects of the rise of energy prices and the intensifying impacts of climate change, and to encourage them to use renewable and clean energies.

Climate change is, in fact, a major source of concern for African countries whose ecosystem is vulnerable, and which lack the necessary means and mechanisms to face the impacts of climate change on their economies and on their peoples' social conditions.

We are convinced that climate change has the deepest impact on African economies whose exports are essentially based on agricultural products that are exposed to devastating natural phenomena such as drought, floods, sand encroachment, and irregular rain seasons, with the resulting decrease of water reserves and extinction of numerous animal and plant species, and the intense social scourges they usually

generate, like the propagation of diseases and epidemics, and their harmful effects on employment, exodus and immigration.

Aware of the serious impact of these natural and social phenomena, and of the obstacles they pose for our Continent's development processes, we have accorded this issue all due attention within our African Union. We are sparing no effort to promote scientific research in our countries, and to benefit from this research for climate observation and for the promotion of early warning systems on natural disasters. This will help alleviate the damage caused by these disasters and reduce their impacts.

Given the geographic, historical and civilizational ties linking the African and European continents, and the mutual interests that can be geared toward fighting climate change, our European partners are called on to step up efforts in order to offer technological and financial support to African countries, and thus enable them to promote their sustainable development.

In this context, it is to be pointed out that success in protecting the environment and resistance in the face of climate change and its serious impact require that efficient and audacious policies be adopted to rationalize the production and use of energy and to reduce the emission of gases harmful to the environment.

Our countries are sparing no effort to make optimum use of the renewable and clean energies available in our Continent, particularly the water, solar and wind energies. This requires enormous funds and advanced technologies that are currently beyond the capacities of our Continent. Hence the need to establish a long-term African-European partnership that helps our countries rationalize the use of energies extracted from oil products, and promote the use environment-preserving alternative energies.

Mr. Chairman,
Your Majesties,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

To conclude, I would like to reiterate my sincere thanks and consideration to the Portuguese Presidency for the adequate conditions provided to our Summit. I hope the African and European Groups will have the necessary courage to face climate change and natural disasters with the necessary speed, efficiency and comprehensiveness. I also hope our Summit will endeavor to implement the recommendations and decisions that will be adopted, and to promote the fields of cooperation and solidarity between the two Continents; thus serving our African and European peoples' interests, and meeting their aspirations for security, stability, well-being and prosperity.

Thank you for your attention.