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OPENING STATEMENT FOR

H.E. Moses Vilakati,

**Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and
Sustainable Environment**

On the occasion of the

**Fourteenth Conference on Climate Change and Development in Africa (CCDA-
XIV)**

Theme: “From Pledges to Implementation: The Belem–Antalya–Addis Roadmap”

AT

United Nations Conference Centre

7 September 2026/ 9:30 – 10.00 am

UNECA, Addis Ababa

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- ***Your Excellency Claver Gatete, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary, ECA;***
 - ***Distinguished, Representatives of the African Group of Negotiators, Development Partners, Private Sector Leaders, Civil Society Representatives, Youth and Women Leaders, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, all protocol observed***
1. I am honoured to welcome you to the Fourteenth Conference on Climate Change and Development in Africa (CCDA-XIV), convened under the timely and compelling theme, “From Pledges to Implementation: The Belem–Antalya–Addis Roadmap.”
 2. On behalf of the African Union Commission, I extend my sincere appreciation to all participants, partners and our co-organizers – the ClimDev-Africa programme partners - the Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), African Development Bank (AfDB) and Afreximbank – whose commitment has made this important gathering possible and in convening this platform at a critical moment as we prepare for COP 31 and look ahead to CoP32

Excellencies, Distinguished delegates

3. Our climate ambitions are inseparable from the aspirations of **Agenda 2063**, which calls for environmentally sustainable and climate-resilient economies and communities. This conference therefore presents an opportunity to accelerate implementation of this vision by ensuring that climate investments drive broader socioeconomic transformation.
4. Africa contributes less than four percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, yet bears a disproportionate burden of climate impacts. At the same time, Africa possesses some of the world's greatest opportunities for sustainable development, renewable energy expansion, climate-smart agriculture, ecosystem restoration, critical minerals development, and green industrialization.
5. The African Union's 2026 Theme of the Year, "**Assuring Sustainable Water Availability and Safe Sanitation Systems to Achieve the Goals of Agenda 2063,**" reminds us that water lies at the heart of climate resilience, food systems, public health, economic productivity, and social stability.

Excellencies, Distinguished delegates

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6. No discussion on climate implementation can be complete without addressing food systems. The **Kampala CAADP Declaration on Building Resilient and Sustainable Agrifood Systems in Africa**, adopted by African Heads of State and Government in January 2025, recognizes the urgent need to transform African agriculture and strengthen resilience to climate and environmental shocks.
7. Climate change remains one of the greatest threats to agricultural productivity, rural livelihoods, and food security. The Kampala Declaration rightly underscores the importance of resilient, inclusive, and sustainable agrifood systems capable of supporting economic transformation while ensuring food and nutrition security.

Excellencies, Distinguished delegates,

8. The success of ClimDev-Africa itself demonstrates what is possible when institutions work together around a common vision. As we approach COP31 and prepare for an African-led COP32, we must broaden and deepen these partnerships.
9. This Conference is especially important because it asks us to move beyond the question of what Africa should seek from COP31. It challenges us also to consider what Africa should propose to the world, and how those proposals can contribute to strengthening global climate governance.
10. We must therefore use this platform to develop credible African propositions in areas such as international climate finance, adaptation accountability, climate-risk management, just transitions, critical minerals, climate-compatible trade, circular economy approaches, science, technology and innovation. These are not separate issues. They are interconnected dimensions of Africa's development and of the global transition towards resilient and low-emission economies.
11. Climate finance remains central. Africa requires finance that is adequate, predictable, accessible, affordable and aligned with national development priorities. We must continue to advance reforms that address the scale and quality of support, concessionality, debt sustainability, adaptation finance, loss and damage, and the responsibilities of those with greater historical contributions to climate change.
12. Adaptation must also be treated as a core measure of climate success. For African countries, resilience is key. It is reflected in whether farmers can sustain

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production, whether cities can withstand floods and heat, whether communities can access early warnings, whether health systems can manage climate risks, and whether vulnerable people can recover from shocks without falling deeper into poverty.

Excellencies, Distinguished Participants,

13. Last week, Addis Ababa hosted the **Africa Early Warnings Forum 2026** under the Early Warnings for All initiative. The Forum highlighted the substantial progress Africa has made in expanding multi-hazard early warning systems while emphasizing the need to close remaining gaps in forecasting capacity, last-mile communication, infrastructure, and financing. The Addis Ababa Call to Action emerging from the Forum reinforces the importance of investing in observation systems, climate services, disaster risk reduction, and anticipatory action.
14. The timing of this conference is also particularly important as climate experts continue to monitor the emerging **2026-2027 El Niño conditions**, which are expected to influence rainfall patterns and climate extremes across different parts of the continent. The African Union Commission in July convened a Special Session of Ministers on 2026-2027 El Niño underscoring the urgency of anticipatory action.
15. At the session, we agreed that the cost of preparedness is significantly lower than the cost of recovery and the need to embrace a proactive rather than reactive approach to climate risk management and increase investments in inter alia, Early warning systems; Water resource management; Climate-resilient agriculture; Social protection systems; and Emergency.
16. We must also approach the transition to low-emission development in a manner that reflects Africa's realities. Our countries differ in their levels of energy access, industrialization, technological capability, emissions responsibility and development needs. A just transition must therefore support Africa's industrialization, value addition, job creation and energy access, including through responsible and sustainable management of our critical minerals.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

17. The African Union is committed to strengthening a coordinated continental approach. Our formal negotiating positions remain the responsibility of an established coordination mechanism where African Group of Negotiators provide

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technical backstopping, African Ministers of Environment provide political guidance under the overall leadership of the Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSCC).

18. Platforms such as this conference, play a vital role in generating ideas, building partnerships, strengthening evidence and supporting the development of coherent and politically resilient African positions.
19. The outcomes of this Conference should therefore be practical and action-oriented. The Addis Ababa Climate Action Messages should help consolidate Africa's priorities for COP31, identify implementation recommendations, strengthen partnerships and investments, and establish a shared roadmap towards COP32.

Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

20. I thank you for your kind attention and now **declare the meeting officially open**