



GLOBAL
CENTER ON
ADAPTATION

GCA CEO'S SPEECH AT THE LEADERS' DIALOGUE ON ADAPTATION ACTION IN AFRICA

INAUGURATION OF THE GLOBAL CHAMPION FOR THE AFRICA ADAPTATION ACCELERATION PROGRAM

7TH JUNE 2022, NAIROBI, KENYA

Your excellency, President Uhuru Kenyatta.

Habari Zenu Wakenya.

This is a very special day for me, for the Global Center on Adaptation (GCA), and for the Africa Adaptation Acceleration Programme (AAP), the most ambitious climate adaptation plan made for Africa, designed in Africa, owned by Africa – and from today with a Global Champion worthy of its ambition and stature.

I am certain that I am not the only one in this hall to want to thank you, Mr. President, wholeheartedly for being here today. So, on behalf of everyone here, let me begin with a show of appreciation for you, Mr. President, as we celebrate this defining moment in the battle that lies ahead of us – the battle of our lives to contain climate change, to adapt to it and by doing so to tame it.

And in President Kenyatta we have a champion lion tamer indeed!

Mr. President, your strong record on standing up for Africans on climate change is well known and globally unmatched. President Kenyatta, you pioneered Kenya's commitment to land degradation neutrality, ratified the Paris Agreement and made Kenya one of the first countries globally to announce and submit very ambitious Nationally Determined Contribution targets.

And there is much more in fact.

President Kenyatta has passed a raft of policies, from the Climate Change Act to the National Climate Change Action Plans, as well as adaptation and green economy plans, to name a few. President Kenyatta's leadership on climate resilient agriculture and green infrastructure projects have delivered green jobs, increased access to markets, and strengthened the resilience of Kenya's people.

This is why I am optimistic - and more determined than ever - about the path ahead of us – because I know that with the AAP we have a roadmap that delivers, and with President Kenyatta, we have a Global Champion to drive this agenda for Africa and the world.

I am optimistic but that doesn't mean that I am complacent or naive about the challenges that lie before us.

The war in Ukraine has created a global food, fuel, and fiscal crisis that will have deep and far reaching consequences for Africa's people and economies for many years to come. The storm clouds are gathering. Africa will continue to suffer disproportionately in the world because of the climate crisis – a crisis you did not cause!

And let us not forget - Africa is still recovering from the economic consequences of Covid-19. If Covid taught us anything it is that nobody is safe until we are all safe. And this truth applies with the same certainty to our changing climate and the need to adapt to it now.

And as President Kenyatta has taught us – in fact, taught the world – investing in climate adaptation is not only the right thing to do, it is the economic smart thing to do!

Because every dollar, pound, euro or Kenyan shilling invested in climate adaptation has a much higher return on investment. So this is not the time to neglect the climate emergency. Truly there IS a mountain to climb.

Now that brings me to a journey I made to Makueni County this week and to a song that was sung to me. It was in Akamba and I will not torture you by trying to speak that beautiful language but here is the translation: "You climb a mountain and you find good things on top of it." I also learned that Makueni means "big, bold, mighty".

Big, bold, and mighty is exactly the spirit and the ambition that Africa needs, and that AAAP delivers.

I also visited Samburu this week, where the community is investing in its resilience with support from the African Development Bank by building waterpans and boreholes that not only reduce the need to seek pasture far from home but also create economic opportunities to grow crops, diversify incomes, and build resilience for forage during the lean times caused by failing rains.

So I asked myself, what do these two communities in Makueni and Samburu have in common?

First, of course, is their spirit and their willingness to innovate, to ensure they will continue to thrive. They are the living proof of what we can achieve. So thank you people of Makueni and Samburu for being such a source of inspiration for the world. But secondly, with the right support these solutions can and will be scaled up across Africa. And this is where the AAAP comes in.

In Kenya and the broader Horn of Africa, GCA is working with the African Development Bank, led by my big brother and close friend President Akinwumi Adesina, and other development partners to scale up adaptation solutions for food security by bringing innovative digital solutions as well as drought-resistant grass varieties and crops to build on the success of the work in communities like Makueni and Samburu.

And excellencies, AAAP delivers rapidly and at scale.

Over the last year, GCA has already mainstreamed adaptation solutions into US\$3 billion worth of investments on the ground. With our partners, AAAP will mobilize \$25 billion for adaptation in Africa over the next five years.

President Kenyatta – I am delighted to announce today that AAAP is expanding its focus in Kenya. Today, GCA is launching a strategic AAAP partnership with the University of Nairobi that will be supported with a grant of 140 million Kenyan Shillings. Through this partnership GCA and the University will shape investments to climate proof Kenya's infrastructure, unlock climate finance, and create green jobs for Kenya's youth.

Vice Chancellor – thank you for the leadership you and your faculty have already demonstrated in building this African center of excellence and in supporting Kenya's and Africa's climate ambitions.

Dear students – I invite you to lean forward and take advantage of this opportunity to engage in the adaptation agenda for Africa.

You are the future of the adaptation challenge and we look to you to develop innovative solutions for a resilient continent.

I will be back on this stage later this year with the Vice Chancellor to announce the winners of the Disruptive Technologies Entrepreneurship Challenge where GCA and the University will award 15 million Shillings to scale up the most innovative solutions for climate resilient infrastructure here in Kenya.

Your excellency, President Kenyatta, I believe we are on the cusp of a very exciting journey to a more resilient continent.

I want to thank you, Mr. President. By accepting the challenge to be our global champion, you are giving a voice to the voiceless – not just here in Kenya but across Africa and around the world – who are crying out for action.

Let us move forward in the spirit of Makueni.

Let our ambitions be big,

Let our actions be bold,

And let our impact, under the leadership of President Kenyatta, be mighty so we can all prosper and thrive.

I thank you.