

Africa must up its game in business

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Africa must move beyond the point of being producers of raw materials to build dynamic and competitive manufacturing sectors which process minerals and agricultural products into consumer goods, says Jacob Zuma.



(Image: GCIS)

Zuma invited the private sector at the World Climate Business Summit on Green Business Generation to partner with South Africa and Africa to achieve this goal, and to ultimately create sustainable and greener growth.

The summit, which took place at the Elangeni Hotel on Saturday 3 December, focused on the role business can play in promoting a green economy.

"For the African continent, this opportunity of driving green and inclusive growth requires that we leapfrog from being just a producer of raw materials," said Zuma.

He told the business sector that their interest in these talks indicated their understanding that climate change was more than just an environmental issue.

"New sources of growth and innovation, and new technologies and models for driving investment are urgently needed to deliver long-term prosperity in a stable, sustainable and inclusive way. It is in this context that we promote a green economy and green growth," said Zuma.

Strategies being implemented

He added that his government was already implementing strategies towards cleaner technology and transitioning towards a low carbon future, guided by the recently adopted National Climate Change Response Policy.

"We are very mindful of the fact that South Africa finds itself in a situation in which it is both a high emitter of greenhouse gases, as well as a country extremely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. We are the largest producer of electricity in sub-Saharan Africa, generating 90% of our electricity from coal.

"As a responsible global citizen, we remain fully committed to contribute our fair share to the global effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions."

Given South Africa's developmental challenges, the country would continue to use fossil fuels in the short to medium term, while transitioning to a low carbon economy over the long term, said Zuma.

With a greener economy in mind, South Africa was putting together some policy proposals that would impact on the business sector.

Green growth must include skills development, bridge digital divide

"These may include putting a price on carbon and other pollution or on the over-exploitation of a scarce resource through mechanisms such as taxes, natural resource charges or tradable permit systems," said Zuma.

He said sustainable green growth must also include improved access to quality education and skills, bridge the digital divide so that the children of the poor can also gain access to the information and communication technology skills that are crucial in the modern economy.

"Meaningful economic transformation is therefore an integral part of our quest for a sustainable economy that responds to the impact of climate change... We emphasise this because developing green economies is not just about eco-efficiency but also about equity."

Zuma was optimistic that Africa and many developing countries had exciting opportunities for green growth because of their largely abundant natural resources. This meant many initiatives could be pursued to protect the future, while not destroying industries and jobs.

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