Distinguished guests, fellow young people; good morning!

I extend a warm welcome to you all, on behalf of the young people gathered here, for the Youth Conference on Community Based Adaptation to Climate Change.

This conference which runs parallel to the 9th International Conference on Community Based Adaptation (which is underway just across the road at Safari Park hotel), builds on previous youth conferences, in Bangladesh in 2013, and more recently in Nepal in 2014.

We pay special tribute, especially to our colleagues and friends in Nepal who have been affected by the earthquake that hit the country last week.

The significance of this conference being hosted here in Africa, by African youth, cannot be underscored. Demographically, Africa is the world's youngest continent, with about two-thirds of its population below the age of 24. These young people are energetic, innovative and creative. They are the powerhouse of their nations.

This youthful generation is carving out a new future for Africa, finding ways to overcome the climate threats that hang over it, as the one of the most vulnerable continents.

This is aptly captured by the theme adopted for our conference: 'Youth as a catalyst for enhancing effective adaptation to climate change'.

Building youth leaders to become more active and vocal in addressing climate change at various levels is paramount. As Dr. Saleemul Huq noted in an article from the fourth conference on climate change and development, held in Marrakech, Morocco last year, "engaging young people in climate change activities must be a key strategy for the continent".

We young people have and continue to demonstrate leadership and transformative action, and this youth conference offers an ideal space to share these inspirational experiences, to learn from best practice and to generate new thinking and approaches to help take advantage of opportunities for growth.

As young people gathered here, representing our continents all across Africa, we present three main asks:

1. The young people are speaking up, with communities hardest hit by climate change. We ask that governments, the corporate world and other actors, to not just hear, but to listen to our voices.

2. The young people are working and investing themselves wholeheartedly towards building climate resilient societies. We ask that you support us-supplement our efforts by making available much needed resources and an enabling environment for youth action and mobilization.
3. The youth are extending their hands and reaching out to you in partnership. We ask that you link your hands to ours, by continuing to offer the capacity building and mentorship that we need. The Yoruba people of Nigeria have a proverb which says: 'What the elder can see while sitting, the young can never see even from the top of a tree'. Your wisdom and guidance is therefore indispensable.

The challenges posed by climate change are numerous; but there are opportunities as well. We therefore look to the future with hope, as we seek to input the outcomes of this conference into national, regional and international climate change policy processes, especially with the focus now on COP21, and beyond.

As I conclude, let me reiterate the following two points:

Chapter 25 of Agenda 21 established that it is imperative for youth from all parts of the world to actively participate in all relevant levels of decision making processes, because it affects their lives today and has implications for their future. The ability of young people to mobilize support, coupled with our intellectual contribution, brings unique perspectives that need to be taken into account.

Youth of today are taking decisions not tomorrow, but now. Awareness raising and education are key to moving the world into a climate friendly path. Article 6 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) stresses the importance for countries to develop and implement programmes to educate their population on climate change and its effects, and developing adequate responses.

Let us therefore support the young people to help the world achieve a cultural change with new lifestyles, consumption and production patterns, low emissions and climate resilience.

A 14th century Spanish saint, Ignatius of Loyola, once said: Gratitude is the greatest of virtues, ingratitude the worst of vices. I wish therefore to thank, on behalf of my colleagues, all our partners, the young and the young at heart for your support, guidance and dedication to the young people of Africa and to Africa's future.