Africa takes centre stage at Marrakesh, urges speedy climate change action

By Chinedum Uwaegbulam | 14 November 2016 | 1:15 am

Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Hoesung Lee (left); UNFCC Executive Secretary Patricia Espinosa, COP 22 President Salaheddine Mezouar and COP 21 President Ségolène Royal at the opening of COP22 in Marrakesh, Morocco. PHOTO: UNFCCC

The Morocco’s Foreign Minister and newly-elected 22nd session of the Conference of the Parties (COP22) President Salaheddine Mezouar has underscored Africa’s commitment to contribute to global efforts to tackle climate change.

Speaking at the opening of the and the 20th session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP12), he said: “It emphasizes Africa’s desire to take its destiny in hand, to reduce its vulnerability and strengthen its resilience.”

President Mezouar pointed to the groundswell of momentum building around the world. At the same time, he acknowledged the fact that the Paris Agreement does not yet put the world on track towards the goal of a maximum global average temperature of 1.5 to 2 degrees, as agreed by the international community in Paris last year.

Addressing government delegates he said: “I would like to invite you over the coming eleven days to be more ambitious than ever in your commitments. All over the world, public opinion must perceive change. It has to be a change at all levels, from local projects through to those that cross international borders and it must create genuine win-win partnerships.”
The Executive Secretary United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Patricia Espinosa said that whilst early entry into force of the Paris Agreement is a clear cause for celebration, it is also a timely reminder of the high expectations that are now placed on governments:

“Achieving the aims and ambitions of the Paris Agreement is not a given. We have embarked on an effort to change the course of two centuries of carbon-intensive development. The peaking of global emissions is urgent, as is attaining far more climate-resilient societies.”

Ms. Espinosa underlined five key areas in which work needs to be taken forward, notably, ONE: Finance to allow developing countries to green their economies and build resilience. Finance is flowing. It has to reach the level and have the predictability needed to catalyse low-emission and climate-resilient development.

TWO: Nationally determined contributions – national climate action plans – which now need to be integrated into national policies and investment plans.

THREE: Support for adaptation, which needs to be given higher priority, and progress on the loss and damage mechanism to safeguard development gains in the most vulnerable communities.

FOUR: Capacity building needs of developing countries in a manner that is both tailored and specific to their needs.

FIVE: Fully engaging Non-Party stakeholders, from the North and from the South, as they are central to the global action agenda for transformational change.

“Our work here in Marrakech must reflect our new reality. No politician or citizen, no business manager or investor can doubt that the transformation to a low-emission, resilient society and economy is the singular determination of the community of nations,” she said.

Meanwhile, an international faith-based humanitarian and development network ACT Alliance said the historic speed with which countries approved the Paris climate agreement must continue into equally speedy action at the UN climate talks in Morocco,

The group said the meeting should be an “action COP” in which the targets set out in the Paris Agreement must now be fleshed out to ensure that the headlines are followed by ambitious rules.

The progress towards addressing the impacts of climate change truly took a step forward last year with the Paris agreement,” said ACT Alliance’s climate change working group lead Dinesh Vyas.