

الحمد لله، والصلاة والسلام على
مولانا
رسول الله وآله وصحبه.

Your Excellency Mr. Denis SASSOU-NGUESSO, President of the Republic of the Congo,

Your Excellency Mr. Paul KAGAME, Chairperson of the African Union,

Your Excellencies the Heads of State and Government,

Your Excellency the Chairperson of the African Union Commission,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I should like to thank most warmly the many Heads of State who, despite commitments made long in advance, have agreed to change their agendas, at my request, in order to be here with us to take part in this important Summit and give it the continental dimension it deserves.

I should also like to thank our distinguished host, the President of the Republic of the Congo, His Excellency Denis Sassou-Nguesso, for assembling us here at the heart of Central Africa to discuss a major project. It is a rallying project which offers promising prospects for the Congo Basin, for the region and for our Continent.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Africa has irreversibly embarked on a path towards profound change. With each passing day, our Continent is asserting itself more and more, looking to the future with confidence and serenity. And yes, we do realize there are plenty of challenges. To be sure, the most significant of

these, today, is how to reconcile the need to achieve development in our Continent with the awakening of ecological consciousness.

Our meeting today sounds like an urgent wake-up call for us all. It is vitally important for our Continent - indeed for humankind - because it implies a collective awareness of the devastating effects of global warming on the planet.

Ours is a collective responsibility: to safeguard African biodiversity. The depletion of that common heritage has a far-reaching impact on people's daily lives and is detrimental to the socio-economic development of the communities which depend on it.

The Congo Basin is at the heart of this concern. This is the world's second most important region for global carbon storage and the second largest river basin. It is also one of the largest forest areas on the planet – a region which is home to more than half of the Continent's animal species.

This regulator of the planet's climate makes Africa the world's 'second lung'. It is here, and now, that the future of this vital asset is being shaped.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At COP22, which was held in Marrakech in November 2016, we gave pride of place to Africa.

To give substance to the priority granted to Africa, I made a point of convening the first Africa Action Summit on the sidelines of COP22. The watchword of that Summit was the co-emergence of Africa.

As we were keen to put a practical, operational complexion on the Summit's proceedings, we set up three sub-regional Commissions:

- The Sahel Commission, chaired by the Republic of Niger;

- The Island States Commission, chaired by the Republic of Seychelles; and
- The Congo Basin Commission, chaired by the Republic of the Congo.

Thanks to the leadership of President Denis Sassou-Nguesso, the Congo Basin Commission has achieved tangible progress in terms of turning the climate challenges facing the region into opportunities.

Several steps have been taken since the Africa Action Summit. The Blue Fund was created in Oyo in March 2017. Its operational measures were agreed in Brazzaville in November 2017, and the implementation of the project was fast-tracked in Rabat in March 2018, during a meeting on the terms of reference of the Blue Fund's preparatory study.

Throughout the process, the Kingdom of Morocco has rallied behind this ambitious project to ensure its success, building on the expertise my country has gained in tackling climate change.

I decided to support this program because it is based on a new paradigm that fulfils current and future needs. It is centered on integrated, inclusive, solidarity-based programs offered by the new blue and green economies.

This decision is also justified by the human dimension which is a pivotal component of the project. Indeed, an inclusive, participatory approach that involves the region's inhabitants is essential.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Guided by a brotherly spirit and by African solidarity, we have gathered to help unleash a beneficial dynamic. What is at stake is nothing less than the preservation and development of a precious African heritage: the Congo River.

We owe this to the 200 million Africans who live in the Congo River Basin; we owe it to our Continent.

The establishment of the Blue Fund must go hand in hand with the mobilization of economic stakeholders and civil society organizations so that tangible mitigation and adaptation measures may be taken, and climate-resilient development guaranteed.

Financing is the main challenge facing the implementation of the project: we must innovate and come up with mechanisms that will help us identify and raise financial resources. We need to convince bilateral and multilateral donors - public as well as private - of the pertinence of the project.

The Blue Fund will inevitably trigger a positive dynamic which will involve projects that will boost and benefit Member States' economies.

I am thinking, in particular, of measures to improve inland waterways, develop secondary ports, promote sustainable fishing practices, fight river water pollution and upgrade irrigation systems with a view to increasing agricultural productivity.

This new water-centered economy will be the main driver of development.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Aside from the consequences of climate change, food shortages and dwindling water reserves can lead to significant population migration flows, weaken states and create precariousness.

How is it possible that in a continent which has more than 5,000 billion cubic meters of water in its aquifers, 320 million African men and women still have no access to drinking water?

What makes this alarming reality all the more serious is that if we fail to act, in the coming years climate change will lead to land degradation and a scarcity of water resources: the 25,000 sq. km of waterways will then face the risk of silting and pollution.

Collective mobilization is crucial. And this Summit shows that it is possible.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To rise to the challenge of developing the Congo River Basin means we need to set in motion a cooperative dynamic for sustainable development, not just at the level of riparian countries, but throughout the Continent as well.

If we want to protect the two lungs of the planet, this challenge must become a collective ambition nurtured by Africa and the world.

Our Continent's natural and ecological resources make it one of the most important global players; its immense basins and rivers are home to an invaluable wealth: water, or the 'blue gold'.

As it has become a scarce commodity, water is increasingly coveted. Let us be aware of our wealth and of our ability to innovate. Let us pool our energies and summon our courage.

Not only would we meet all the challenges, but we would also show that countries pursuing the same dream together, guided by the same vision, know how to act and to surpass themselves in order to forge a unified Continent - one which is proud of its many identities and its roots; a Continent resolutely on a path towards progress.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the task of building the Africa of the future, environmental preservation is the cornerstone of African co-emergence. It is the bedrock on which the Continent's inclusive economic growth will be built.

We must work together to tackle global warming and its risks, and transform our economies to promote sustainable development.

Our presence here today attests to our resolve to place these issues front and center in our concerns and our action. We are determined to undertake concrete initiatives that are likely to help safeguard the rights of future generations.

The Kingdom of Morocco will work resolutely and unremittingly for the implementation of the Continent's large-scale development projects.

The ecological challenge should no longer be seen as a threat, but as an opportunity. That is the significance of our common commitment today – a commitment rooted in the principles of shared responsibility and pan-African solidarity.

Thank you.

والسلام عليكم ورحمة الله تعالى
وبركاته.