It is a great honour and privilege to speak at this forum and to be associated with the very distinguished list of visitors who have addressed you before.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts on why the link between Natural Resources Management and Poverty Reduction should be strengthened. My comments are largely based on my experience and observations. South of the Sahara but the lessons learnt apply universally.
Four decades ago, I joined the faculty of Veterinary Medicine of the University of Nairobi as a young scientist to assist undergraduates acquire knowledge from books, observations and experience. With that tool, we all believed, they would be empowered, find employment, create wealth and propel development and prosperity. I was committed, enthusiastic and proud of our country and I worked very hard. I eventually became the head of the department. This was the dream for which my parents had fought for independence from the colonial powers.

The dream then was not to reduce poverty. I was not taught that we were poor and needed to get rich. Today, in the same institution, poverty is experienced in the dining rooms, classrooms, libraries, laboratories, dormitories and in the streets. In 2006 the UN listed 50 least developed nations, 34 are in Africa and most of their citizens live on less than 2$ a day.

In many African countries, thousands of graduates are unemployed and rather than join the middle class, they join the ranks of about 50% of the world’s population, which live on less than 2.50$ a day. Many of them eventually drift into crime and other self-destructive activities, which governments spend billions to address.

In 1975 the Kenyan women, responding to the decision by the United Nations to have a first ever Conference on Women in Mexico City, met under the auspices of the National Council of Women of Kenya and deliberated on what they would like to see discussed at the Conference. The discussion of the women from the rural areas, where more than 70% of people in Africa live, revolved around their basic felt needs: firewood, nutritious and adequate food, clean drinking water and an income. Among the many initiatives that came out of Mexico, was the women fund (UNFEM) and the Women Bank. In Kenya, the women triggered me to initiate the Green Belt Movement in 1977.

The basic felt needs of those Kenyan women were not being met because the environment had become degraded and was unable to provide life-supporting essentials. That is the message I want to share with you: when the environment or
habitats are destroyed, species disappear. When civilizations destroy their environment, they vanish.

My initial response to the Kenyan women was, 'why not plant trees? Fortunately, the women responded positively and they continue to be the driving force and beneficiaries of the tree planting campaign at grassroots level. Men and youth tend to take up the jobs created to ensure that there is environmental awareness and trees survival. From the very beginning the Green Belt Movement took a holistic approach to development, believed in empowering communities and allowing the local people drive that development agenda.

Back in mid 1970s, the close link between the basic felt needs and the natural resources was not so clear to me either. Although my background is biological sciences and I could easily connect and appreciate the need to stop deforestation, soil erosion and destruction of biodiversity, it was only when I did hands-on experience with communities that developed a deep understanding and a passion for the environment.

We have been particularly keen to share our experience with Governments, development agencies and civil society organizations, all of which continue to spend millions of dollars on development in this region and especially south of the Sahara, yet 34 of the least 50 developing countries are in Africa and poverty. If we do not recognize this link between poverty and sustainable management of natural resources, poverty will only increase.

The second link is between sustainable management of the natural resources and good governance. Without political will and commitment to manage the national resources responsibly and accountably, share them more equitably and consider intergenerational moral responsibility, poverty will only increase and the MDGs will not be realized. Indeed MDG No. 7 (environmental sustainability) is to me the mother of all MDGs. I we can achieve No. 7, we can achieve most of others.
The third link are the citizens. Our people must be willing and able to take up
restorative and conservation initiatives to restore their environment. Governments cannot
do it alone. Neither can development agencies.

I am reminded of countries that have built their countries from ruins of wars such as
Germany, Japan and the so-called Asia Tigers. The Marshall Plan made money available
for the reconstruction. But it was the Germans and the Japanese, not the Americans or the
Europeans, who did the work.

Our citizens must work with a common vision, discipline, commitment, values such
love for their country, respect for hard work that spares no energy, honesty, fairness,
commitment and selflessness for the common good. If tolerate and even idolize vices like
corruption, selfishness and dishonesty, if we neglect and even disrespect achievements
and selfless service, poverty can only continue. We shall continue to move towards
crime, insecurity, disrespect for the rule of law, violation of human rights, injustice and
inequalities. In such countries poverty can only increase.

Part of the mission of the African Development Bank is to reduce poverty. I want to
suggest that for you and your partners to realize that goal you need to do three things:

• Restore and conserve the environment,
• Insist that the environment and the natural resources must be managed sustainably
  responsibly, accountably and must be shared more accountably
• Involve citizens.

For you and other development agencies to reduce poverty MDG No. 7 should be a
priority. This is because for firewood, rainfall, fodder, building materials and clean
drinking water people need forests and trees; for food they needed soils and rain water;
and for the financial income they needed fair trade.
The degradation of the environment deprived them of livelihood and they were quickly moving towards poverty. The only way they could reverse that process was to be given information and have a peaceful atmosphere in which they could restore and conserve their environment. But they also needed to embrace values and a character that would make them work hard, long and honestly.

In my recent book, *The Challenge for Africa*, I reflect on the fact that Africa South of the Sahara, where I have done most my work, faces many complex issues as it endeavors to move towards development and prosperity. Poverty is a symptom of failure. But if there is one thing that still tops the list of things that must be done to remedy the situation, it is to convince Africa that good governance pays. The fact that the Mo Foundation was unable to find a single African leader to give its prize to in 2009, is an important pointer. Good governance is an important ingredient for poverty reduction.

It took me time to realize that without good governance, resources and aid count for nothing. This is the paradox of a resource-rich Africa with citizens who live in dehumanizing poverty. With good governance and a responsible and accountable leadership countries perform miracles. As I mentioned before Germany, Japan, the Asian Tigers including China, India and even those that were at war recently like Vietnam, have been able to move forward while the African region continues to stagnate. We can see how President Kagame is quickly turning around what was a hopeless situation in Rwanda. The difference is the vision and commitment of the leadership and the commitment, hard work and values of citizens. Leaders must lead from the front and practice what they preach.

In *UNBOWED*, I tell the story of how I realized that meeting most basic needs of citizens required that the environment be managed responsibly and accountably and resources be shared more equitably. I also realized that this in turn, can only happen if there is good governance that respects the rule of law, human rights, fairness and justice. Poverty is man-made. Indeed countries with huge inequalities are also poorly managed.
through political and economic systems that are largely corrupt and create and sustain gross inequalities.

It was partly to fight these vices that the Green belt Movement combined also joined the pro-democracy movement re-introduce greater democratic space and better governance. Institutions of good governance have to be established under a negotiated constitution that guarantees freedom, justice and fairness. In Kenya, the ongoing campaign for a constitution acceptable to the majority started in the 1950s and only this week, Kenyans were once again promised a new constitution by 2010. The clamour for new constitutions in Africa is basically a struggle for equitable distribution of resources especially land, water and food. People believe that they are poor because institutions and political leaders deny them access to the national wealth.

Unfortunately in many countries the competing ruling elites and politicians make citizens belief that the only way they can access those resources is if one of their tribesmen is the President. Hence the struggle for an imperial Presidency, the desire to stay there until death and hopefully, be replaced by the son, ally or fellow tribesmen. Instead of politicians blaming each other for mismanagement of resources and unequal distribution among some of them, they incite their tribesmen against each other and Africa end up with large numbers of internal conflicts, refugees, gross violations of human rights and migrations – all of which hinder development and exacerbate poverty. In 2007, Kenya had a serious conflict after an election because the politicians incited their tribesmen against each other, rather than accept defeat. Now we have a huge coalition government with close to half of Parliament being in government because everybody wants to be a Minister. So, we would rather keep our people in slums, without basic needs so that we can have 40 Ministers in a country that should have 10. When we come to the AfDB to ask for grants and loans, why do you bother? Why can’t you demand that we first make ourselves more creditworthy?

As the Green Belt Movement unfolded therefore, we discovered that there is a close linkage between governance, management of natural resources, community
involvement, development, and therefore poverty reduction. When countries manage their resources in a responsible and accountable way, ensure that diversity is respected and included, that there is respect for the rule of law, human rights, equity and justice, the country indirectly pre-empts causes of conflict and wars and provides a conducive environment for wealth creation and poverty reduction.

And indeed looking around the world, many conflicts and wars are precipitated by competition over resources such as grazing and agricultural land, water, oil, minerals, forests etc. To promote peace and development and therefore to reduce poverty, it became obvious that nations have to manage their resources sustainably and share them more equitably. It also became clear that it is impossible to do so without investing in good governance, which may be described as democracy, but broadly, it is a political and economic system that is based on the rule of law, respect for human rights, equity and justice for all. The paradox of a resource-rich Africa and Africans who live in dehumanizing poverty can only be reversed by demanding good governance and more responsible and accountable management of resources, which should be distributed more equitably.

To explain myself, I embraced the idea of a traditional African three-legged stool and suggested that a state, like the stool, rests on three legs that stabilize and support the person on the stool to be effective, productive and realize goals. One leg of the stool represents good governance; the other sustainable management of resources that are managed responsibly, accountably, and are distributed equitably. The third leg represents a culture of peace that is deliberately nurtured by promoting justice, fairness and equity for all. All the legs must be crafted simultaneously. Once ready, development can find a stable and peaceful milieu in which to affect progress. The bowl part of the stool represents the milieu, in which development takes place and thrives once the country rests on those three legs and is stable and peaceful.

If a country balances on two legs or on one leg, it will most likely be unstable, stagnate and barely plod along, largely in poverty. If the country has none of the legs, it is
considered a failed state and is likely to be in a state of conflict or war. Such countries produce refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), traumatized citizens and dysfunctional communities. Under such circumstances, there is no conducive environment for investors, tourists and creativity. Lack of such milieu has driven our countries into economic stagnation and the people into dehumanizing poverty.

This stagnation led me to present a paper in Beijing in 1995 entitled, Bottlenecks of Development in Africa. Among several factors I felt were responsible for this situation were bad governance characterized by high level corruption and irresponsible and non-accountable leadership. I also mentioned crushing debts, loss of values and culture. At that time I was warned that I could not speak like that about Africa and especially Kenya at an international conference! I was removed from the national delegation. Fortunately, I still managed to go to Beijing and presented my paper, which eventually inspired me to write The Challenge for Africa. Just as many of us would not choose to balance on a stool that is lacking legs, we should not accept countries to slide into situations where they do not have those basic pillars. Without them, no matter how much money is thrown into the country by donors, supporter and civil society, poverty will only increase.

But as I reflect in The Challenge for Africa, Africa can largely only blame herself. She has been slow at making demands for good and responsible governance both at the national level or even through regional fora like the Organization of the African Unity (OAU) or the African Union (AU). For sure the OAU must be commended for the role it played for the decolonization of Africa. But, hiding behind the policy of non-interference with internal affairs of another country, the regional body largely remained a forum for Heads of States and Governments to support each other, even when they were butchering their own citizens or appropriating national wealth to themselves and thereby reducing their people to paupers.

They were not alone. Due to the Cold War, they were supported by outsiders, who organized loans that eventually made the region heavily-indebted. National and
international calls for change were met with ruthless brutality and contempt, while the regional organization looked on.

It was easier for victims of mis-governance to seek help and shelter from outside Africa. Some of us survive and are able to continue our work because of that outside help and support. At the national level good ideas that could make substantial contribution towards development and therefore reduce poverty, are at best ignored and at worst banned. In Kenya, at the rate we were persecuted, you would have thought that we were a threat to the State. Yet, today Government Ministers are desperately trying to implement what we called for three decades ago. Now the environment is being attended to because as a result of a prolonged drought, crops have failed, rivers have dried up, over 10 million Kenyans are facing starvation, the landscape is dotted with thousands of causes of dead animals and the glaciers on Mt. Kilimanjaro and Mt. Kenya are melting away. Even Sudan and Egypt are concerned about the levels of water in the Nile. But we failed to act when we were less vulnerable.

In the course of work with the Green Belt Movement it became clear that common natural resources like land, forests, rivers, wetlands, lakes and wildlife are essential for the survival of communities, but they cannot be protected unless the country has good governance: responsible, accountable and indeed visionary governance and leadership that manages the natural resources for the common good of all. Such governance would mobilize citizens so that together they avoid deforestation and degradation of forests and land; fight desertification processes (by for example promoting tree planting, soil conservation, harvesting of rain water and protecting biodiversity).

Recently I visited Japan and while trying to share my message and encouraging them that despite their great wealth, for the sake of the planet, they could consider practicing 3R (REUSE, REDUCE, RECYCLE). In the process they taught me an old Japanese traditional practice known as Mottainai, which embraces the concept of RESPECT, GRATITUDE AND DO NOT WASTE. Everybody can do mottainai and reuse, reduce
and recycle. These simple and inexpensive initiatives could create employment, generate wealth and make communities less vulnerable.

It is not as if we need rocket science and huge financial resources. However, at the national level, there is need for political will, commitment to action and a willingness to get things done for the benefit of the majority, rather than a small minority.

In many countries, the greatest threat to the natural resources is the ruling elites, who use their political power and privileges to assign these resources to themselves, their friends, supporters and fellow tribesmen. They also facilitate the exploitation of the same resources by outsiders, so that resource-rich nations in Africa enrich outsiders rather than own citizens. Indeed in many countries wealth becomes a curse rather than a blessing. A good case in point is the oil in Nigeria where Saro Wiwa and his colleagues were killed for demanding that the Oil Company stop polluting the environment and the local people be given a just share of the revenue from the natural resource.

To succeed in reducing poverty, we need to appreciate that we need to be partners: the government, development agencies and citizens. The poor, like those Kenyan women in 1975, need clean drinking water, food, shelter etc. Even if you had the financial resources to enable people meet those needs, as well as have decent and affordable housing, education, employment etc., if I take Kenya as an example, to give them clean drinking water you would need to first ensure that all the five forested water towers (Mt. Kenya, Aberdare range, Mau Complex, Cherangani and Mt. Elgon) are protected because they are the source of rain, rivers and underground water reservoirs.

Yet, as we speak, Kenya is struggling to reverse past political decisions whereby thousands of supporters and friends of politicians were permanently settled in these water towers. Even the government has unsustainable commercial plantations of exotic monocultures (shamba system) in the same forests. It will also be necessary to fight charcoal burners (which is the main source of energy for the urban poor). You must promote agro-forestry to give firewood to the rural populations, also give them building
and fencing materials, fodder and food. You will also have to fight other drivers of deforestation and land degradation like grazers, cultivators, poachers and even marijuana growers in the forests! Protecting these natural resources can therefore be politically and economically very challenging.

One of the reasons why it is important to have citizens as a partner in poverty reduction is that poverty has a way of entrenching itself. This is because the poor are concerned about survival NOW, not long term goals and promises. In the process they are often engaged in activities that can only make them poorer and undermine their survival, now and in the future.

When we plant trees for example, they want to plant fast growing exotic species so that they can convert them into money sooner. They want solutions now! Therefore, they will support politicians who help them get into the forested mountains to deforest and grow annual crops. They consider it too much work to dig terraces, cut-off drains and trenches to harvest rain water, even though they want boreholes dug. When there is money for work, they will try to cheat the system to get it without working. Sometimes you feel like there is a sense of entitlement, like taking donor money without working for it is OK because it is meant for them anyway. This creates a dependency syndrome which is counter-productive. A combination of bad governance entrenched in corruption from the top and an impoverished citizenry that has lost basic human values of discipline, respect for hard work, respect for the rule of law, justice and fairness is a recipe for failure.

With the threat of climate change, many of the developed countries will use their technology, creativity and awareness to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Many of them are already involved in political, economic, social and legislative changes to adopt and mitigate against the climate change.

In Africa, we are told that the region will be disproportionately adversely impacted since it accounts for meager Greenhouse Gases, but the negative impact will be huge and
negative. While Climate Change will no doubt exacerbate the situation, we make ourselves very vulnerable by continuing to both neglect and mismanage our environment.

In their national budgets it is the Ministries of Defense and State that often take the largest share of the national budget. Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture, are often at the bottom of the list. Tourism is a contributor to national revenue but it is dependent on good management of habitats that sustain wildlife. The slow movement towards serious investment in the restoration, conservation and protection of our natural resources will make our communities extremely vulnerable to threats from Climate Change.

We are hoping for an ambitious political, economic and financial commitment in Copenhagen so that developing countries like those in Africa can be assisted and take quick actions to especially mitigate against Climate Change. Without capital or technology, African countries will be very threatened.

But whatever the outcome in Copenhagen, it is important for us Africans to be responsible for our destiny. The African leadership must be responsible for their people. So, let us not wait for other regions to save us from the negative impact of Climate change. We should not only focus on the money the developed world will provide and the technology they may be willing to transfer. We might fail to access those resources or purchase those technologies if were are not prepared. It is those countries that are preparing that will benefit from whatever agreements come out of Copenhagen. But whatever may, and despite wonderful friends and supporters, regions will first and foremost seek to help their own citizens before they can reach out to others. Therefore, adequate preparation for implementation and adoption is paramount in Africa. The responsibility to save Africa for Africa must surely lie with the African leaderships and their citizens.
One of the areas where Africa has something to put on the table is in the fact that Africa has a large Congo forest. If Copenhagen embraces avoided deforestation, forest and land degradation as part of the solution to Climate Change, Africa (and other countries with huge forests like the Amazon and the forests in South East Asia), could benefit from the emerging Carbon Market. In Copenhagen, the AfDB, the World Bank and the Green Belt Movement will share an experience of our work both in the Congo and in Kenya, where we have pilot projects designed to benefit from the Carbon Market. As Goodwill Ambassador of the Congo Forest and Co-chair of the Congo Fund with the former Prime Minister of Canada, the Rt. Hon. Paul Martin, I am grateful to the heads of States in the Central African Region for their commitment to save the Congo Basin forest and to the British and Norwegian Governments for providing US 200 million (100 Million each) to establish the Congo Basin Forest Fund, which is managed by the African Development Bank. We are hoping that other governments will join the Fund the and the Congo Basin Forest Partnership especially after Copenhagen.

It can be overwhelming but our mission is to never give up.

We are not alone. The Norwegian Nobel Committee decided in 2004 that the linkage between peace, good governance and sustainable management of resources is very important for the world. In the following years they also gave the Prize to my friend and mentor, former Vice President Al Gore, who was championing Climate Change issues, then Mohammed Yunus, who was addressing the issue of poverty reduction in Bangladesh through Grameen Bank. The Norwegian Committee was sending a message to the world that many conflicts are caused by competition of dwindling natural resources and that we need to work together to pre-empt them. So I appeal to you to be a humming bird and do your part.