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# Sonjica: 'Weak' climate agreement disappointing

**Mirah Langer (https://mg.co.za/author/mirah-langer)** **22 Dec 2009 12:37**

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The agreement to which South Africa was a signatory at the climate-change talks in Copenhagen last week is “not acceptable”, Water and Environmental Affairs Minister Buyelwa Sonjica said on Tuesday.

“For us it’s not acceptable, it’s definitely not acceptable, it’s disappointing,” the minister told reporters in Pretoria before rushing off to attend the funeral of the former health minister Manto Tshabalala-Msimang.

However, the minister said she remains “cautiously optimistic” that future negotiations could reach more viable global agreements on climate change.

“It was not the breakthrough that the world expected and the climate needed. It is weak in that it is partial and political, rather than legally binding.”

Sonjica said South Africa had pushed for a legally binding agreement.

Last week 28 countries, including South Africa, the United States, Brazil, India and China, signed a political agreement after 12 days of talks at the United Nations conference on climate change in Copenhagen, Denmark.

One-hundred-and-thirty heads of state and government had attended the conference aimed at consolidating a global plan to deal with climate change—but which ended without a final comprehensive agreement.

Sonjica said the agreement did resolve some key issues among the signatories and should help the issue of climate change “move forward”.

“Where, how and when that happens will occupy us for a while.”

The agreement in effect means negotiations will continue next year.

Sonjica said it was problematic that the Latin American Bolivarian countries were excluded.

“Latin America has for years not coordinated the region effectively,” she said.

The deal did agree on how to record economy-wide binding emission reduction targets for developed countries, including the US.

However, the minister said: “These would need to be turned into commitments attached to a legally binding instrument.”

The leaders also agreed on how to measure and report, as well as verify, developing countries’ mitigation action.

“[This] resolved a key dispute over review versus transparency.”

Protocol was also established on how to record emission reduction actions by advanced developing countries like China, India, Brazil, South Africa, as well as Mexico, Indonesia and South Korea.

Agreement was reached on financial support of $10-billion per year up to 2010 and $100-billion per year by 2020.

“The long-term finance is still beset by conditionalities, but it is the first time that this scale of money is on the table”.

Sonjica said the European Union blocked an attempt by South Africa to get parties to agree to a second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol.

Discussion of the equitable sharing of remaining carbon development space—of which “very little [is] left”—needed to continue, as did a plan for the long-term target to cut emissions.

Sonjica highlighted the complexity of the negotiations in Copenhagen.

“We were trying to find a good deal in accordance with everyone … We had to make sure, if anything, that we have to protect South Africa’s interests. If we were not there no one would.”

The minister said that despite the weakness of the political agreement eventually reached, walking out of the conference was not an option.

“Walking out was not within our means … Our president went to consult with [delegates from] Africa, and Africa felt it would not be a good idea to walk out specifically because we felt our battle was not on process but on content.”

She added: “I’m very worried. I was still hoping reason would prevail.”—Sapa

Copenhagen summit (https://mg.co.za/tag/copenhagen-summit) Buyelwa Sonjica (https://mg.co.za/tag/buyelwa-sonjica) South Africa (https://mg.co.za/tag/south-africa)

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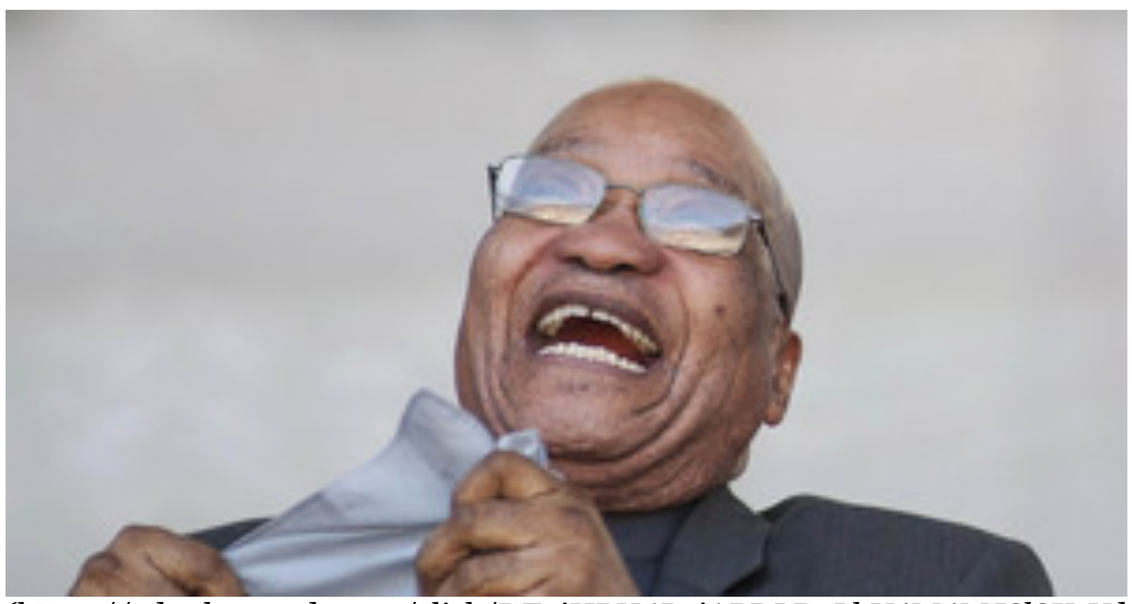

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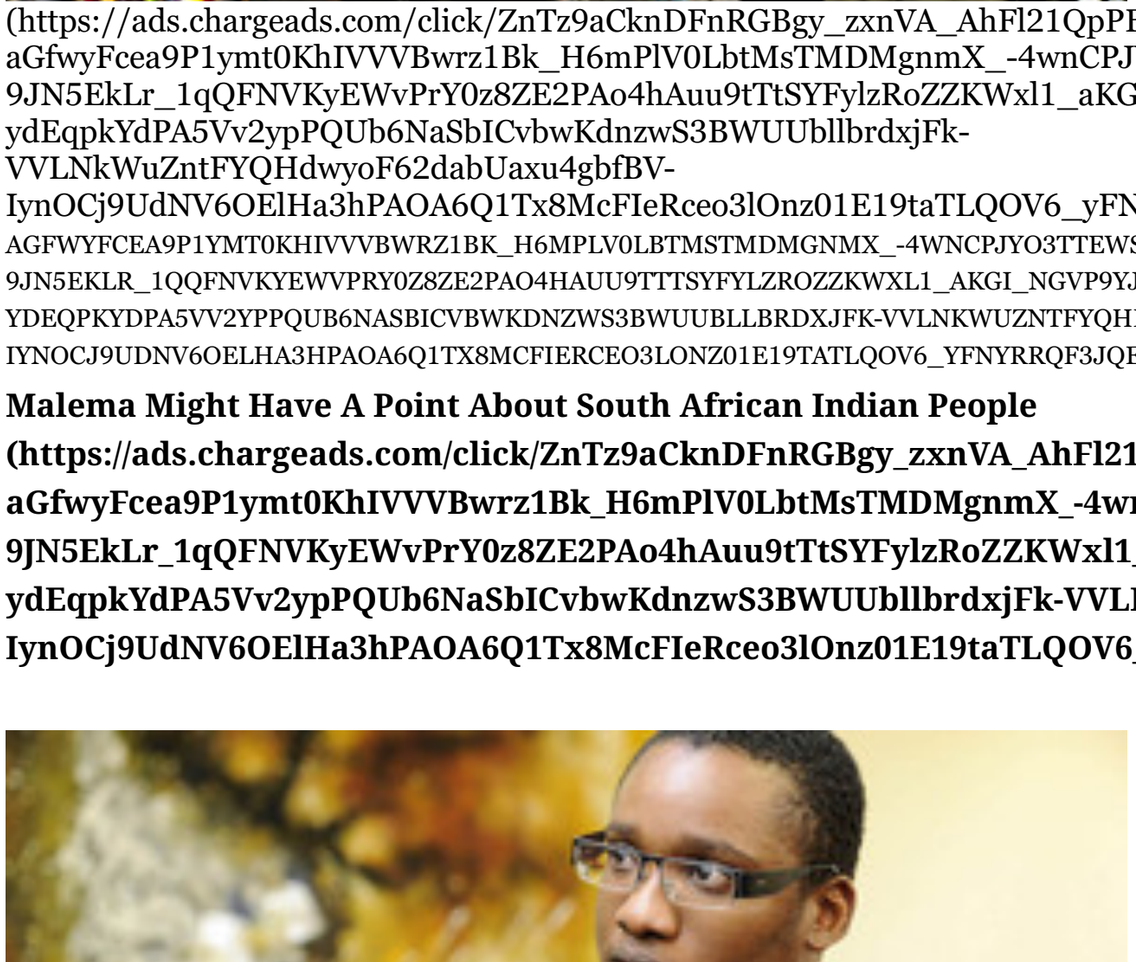

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9MMZWZVOR7DGGGYFUR2O4GYXS6V_MJFJJDRVZXWDIQ3UVWIJ9AGWN2XMGU9MKEIQMSMII_3KVSHMWPHWAB3CNTNWS6MQ6YNZIIIHORIH5UMIH4Q5KU3_9BJH2CJET4HVVDWCNB3RYQRIXY2XT1ZQ
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