Hon. Cedric Frolick – Opening remarks International Conference on Climate Change Adaptation, Beijing 2 July 2013

Dr Rebecca Nadin, Project Director: Adaptation to Climate Change in China

Su Wei, Director-general: National Development and Reform Commission of China

His Excellency, Sebastian Wood: Her Majesty’s Ambassador to the People’s Republic of China

His Excellency, Jacques De Watteville; Swiss Ambassador to the People’s Republic of China

Fellow Legislators from the countries represented here in this Climate Adaptation Legislation Summit

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is indeed indisputable that we are gathered here with a clear understanding that we, as public representatives, have to do something about the ongoing threats of climate change, especially to the poor who constitute the vast majority of our populations in developing countries. We are acutely aware that the impacts of climate change do not fall equally on countries, regions and even on communities. The poor and marginalised communities in our respective countries are more often than not without sufficient financial and social resources to face the mounting challenges of adapting to the changing climate. For example, yearly floods in the southern African region and in South Africa, in particular, demonstrate the challenges poor families face in finding shelter and new housing after floods destroy their homes.

Poor families are also less likely to have the financial resources to prepare for storms and wildfires, buy hazard insurance, or have the resources to relocate to less risky areas, where a persistent lack of affordable housing limits the mobility of vulnerable populations.

It is in this respect that there is an expectation on us to make this Summit achieve desirable outcomes from the many discussions and sharing of experiences that take place here. Adaptation to climate change is a cause for which we should unite and speak with one voice, as legislators, considering the slow pace of climate change negotiations. Fortunately for us, there is overwhelming understanding among legislators that international negotiations on climate change is not the only route to achieve substantive pro-poor climate outcomes. We believe that effective domestic climate legislation can shape multilateral processes, as a bottom-up strategy.

I would like to remind all of us who are gathered here that we are privileged that this Summit is organised in Beijing in the People’s Republic of China, a nation that has achieved much in terms of climate change mitigation and adaptation. I am confident that we will learn from China’s “best practices” in climate adaptation and go back home not only refreshed, but enriched with better
perspectives on adaptation. We need to work together, as legislators, on climate change to build the necessary capacity that we need to proactively instigate appropriate domestic climate change policy responses that should feed into multilateral climate processes.