

Combatting climate change

INTERVIEW WITH H.E. HUSSEIN ALI MWINYI

PRESIDENT OF ZANZIBAR



HUSSEIN ALI MWINYI is the 8th President of Zanzibar. He was elected in the October 2020 general election. In January 2022 his government allocated US\$68 million to develop Zanzibar’s blue economy and established the country’s first Ministry of Blue Economy and Fisheries, which was praised by experts for aiming to address the adverse effects of climate change on the archipelago.

How important is Zanzibar’s relationship to the United Kingdom in economic, investment and tourism terms?

The United Kingdom is a traditional ally of Zanzibar ever since the pre and post-independence era. The relationship between the two countries is based on strong bilateral political and social ties including diplomatic exchanges. Presently, the most important link is via the United Kingdom’s Export Credit Facility (UKEF) from which two major strategic projects are underway in Zanzibar, namely the construction of a 103.5 kilometre highway on the island, as well as the construction of a new airport in Pemba. The government of the UK is extending economic support on special terms via the UKEF to pending projects and programs here in Zanzibar. The UKEF facility may be used to cover the remaining 200km of road projects, the construction of modern secondary/high school facilities in all districts and maritime security. Given the current policy on PPP, UK investors may engage with the Zanzibari Government via PPP project modalities

The importance of the Zanzibar diaspora living in the UK is also another key bond cementing the socio-economic relationship between the two governments. Zanzibaris living in the UK have opportunities to invest in Zanzibar while the UK provides a significant potential market for tourism being one of the top countries in terms of the number of tourists visiting Zanzibar.

Please outline the priorities of your government and your vision for the development of Zanzibar and the improvement of the lives of its people.

Zanzibar remains strongly committed to the pursuit of sustainable economic and social development through the economic transformation as envisioned in the Zanzibar Development Vision (ZDV) 2050. This vision inspires us to build a base for transforming Zanzibar into an upper-middle-income country by 2050. This is based on transforming the economics, strengthening the human capital and social services of the islands, infrastructural linkages and governance and resilience. A large part of Zanzibar’s economy depends on the tourism sector which contributes 33 per cent of Zanzibar’s GDP. Therefore, the Zanzibar Development Plan (ZADEP), as a five-year development plan focuses on the theme of the “Blue Economy for Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development”. This is also in

alignment with Zanzibar’s Development Vision 2050.

Key areas for Zanzibar’s development that are outlined in ZADEP include exploring Blue Economy potentials through tourism and infrastructure, boosting economic diversification, human capital and social development as well again as governance and resilience. These are also in alignment with the government’s priority sectors which are the blue economy, tourism, social development and infrastructure. The government is focusing on enhancing the value addition of key growth opportunities in the priority sectors to generate employment for Zanzibaris and ultimately trickle down the impact to other sectors. The government’s focus on the blue economy model aims at sustainable use of Zanzibar’s maritime area through innovation, empowerment and social equity, while significantly reducing the impact of climate change, environmental and ecological risks. For the government to achieve its vision, it acknowledges the need to engage all stakeholders such as the private sector, civil society organisations, members of the diaspora, development partners and the citizens at large.

With COP 27 having just taken place in Sharm el Sheikh, please outline how climate change is impacting Zanzibar.

Zanzibar is a part of the United Republic of Tanzania which consists of two major islands – Unguja in Swahili (Zanzibar island) and Pemba – and more than fifty smaller islands and islets. All of the islands are situated within the Indian Ocean and lie between 4 and 6.5 degrees south of the equator. The two main islands of Unguja and Pemba lie, respectively, 40 kilometres and 60 kilometres off the coast of mainland Tanzania. The total land area of Zanzibar is about 2,645 square kilometres of which 1,666 square kilometres (63 per cent) for Unguja and the remaining 988 square kilometres (37 per cent) is for Pemba Island.

The economy of Zanzibar is highly dependent on climate with a large proportion of gross domestic product, employment and livelihood associated with climate-sensitive activities such as coastal, agriculture and tourism. The climate of Zanzibar is changing, and recent decades have seen rising temperatures, increased rainfall variability, higher wind speeds and high-tide levels, and an increase in extreme events. The latter has led to droughts and floods which have had major

economic costs, in terms of GDP, and these events appear to be intensifying. It is also clear that Zanzibar is not adequately adapted to the current climate, and there is an urgent need – as well as a large economic benefit – from addressing this existing adaptation deficit.

Zanzibar's total annual emissions are estimated at 763 Gg CO₂eq, resulting in per capita emissions of 0.6 tCO₂. This is a low per capita value in regional and global terms, reflecting the very low consumption of fossil fuels for energy on the islands. Overall, emissions increase by 190 per cent over the 20-year time horizon from 763 GgCO₂e in 2010 to 2,213 tCO₂e in 2030, leading to emissions per capita rising from 0.6 tCO₂e to 1.02 tCO₂e / capita, though this per capita level in 2030 is still significantly lower than most other countries in the region.

Our agriculture is a highly vulnerable sector, because of the dominance of rain-fed agriculture and is the basis of Zanzibar's economy, as well as having a key role in sustaining livelihoods on the islands. Recent climate variability, notably erratic rains in 2006/7, 2017, and 2020 significantly reduced agricultural production. In 2017, the rainfall in Zanzibar caused the destruction of 2,822.5 acres of crops.

The livelihoods of farmers in Zanzibar basically depend directly on this social economic activity. Future climate change has the potential to exacerbate current production risks in agriculture, either from changes in temperature and rainfall trends, from greater extremes of climate variability, or from other effects. Furthermore, some of the agricultural lands have been invaded by saltwater inundation which creates difficulties for the community to continue farming on those land. About 148 areas in Zanzibar have been affected either by erosion, inundation and saltwater intrusion in both Unguja (25 areas) and Pemba (123) areas.

Fish constitutes the most important source of protein in Zanzibar, and fisheries are an important economic sector on the island as well as sustaining many livelihoods. The impacts of climate change on fisheries potentially include shifts in species, food chain effects, diseases, and increased ocean acidity. There is some evidence that warming temperatures are negatively affecting the coral reefs of Zanzibar. Corals are vulnerable to sea temperature, most obviously seen through coral bleaching. There is evidence of the bleaching of coral reefs in Zanzibar.

Seaweed farming is an important activity for Zanzibar, supporting livelihoods. It is also a source of major foreign currency and helps to reduce the degradation of the marine environment. There have been reports of seaweed die-off along the coast of Zanzibar, and sea surface temperature is the most likely cause. This has led to a need to move seaweed farming to deeper water. The islands are also home to seagrass

meadows, which provide various ecosystem services (fish, filtering sediment, stabilisation of sea floor, and reduction of erosion). Sea grasses appear to be declining around many coasts, including Zanzibar, though this is largely attributed to human impacts. Climate change is likely to have a number of effects on sea grasses from a large number of factors including changes in salinity and temperature, ocean acidification, storm activity and ultraviolet irradiance.

The coastal zones of Zanzibar contain high populations and significant economic activity. These areas are at risk from future sea-level rise and storm surge, as well as from coastal erosion. The coastal areas of Zanzibar, which are located below the five metre contour line area most at risk from major storm surges and high tides.

What is the way forward?

Zanzibar as Island is more vulnerable to climate change and recent decades have seen rising temperatures, increased rainfall variability, higher wind speeds and high-tide levels, and an increase in extreme events (climate variability). It is clear that Zanzibar does not have adequate means to mitigate the climate change impact (finance, capacity building and technology). What Zanzibar needs is coastal protection measures in the affected coastline to prevent the existing severe ongoing rate of beach erosion of the affected areas, the strengthening of climate change financing mechanisms to enhance sustainable funding of climate actions, the establishment of climate change information and data centres and the building of internal capacity for climate modelling in terms of training and the acquisition of technology.

Other requirements would include capacity building on Carbon Trading through enhancing forestry conservation, planting and management towards green legacy initiatives and biodiversity conservation, the strengthening of Early Warning Systems for extreme weather events and other climate-related hazards and the enhancement of Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) to increase productivity, resilience (adaptation) and reduces GHGs (mitigation) where possible. E



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The Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar is a semi-autonomous government within Tanzania led by HE Dr Hussein Ali Mwinyi