**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT SPEECH**

**FOR**

**HADDIJATOU JALLOW**

Ladies and gentlemen, friends and colleagues, thank you for including me at this year's celebration of this wonderful and meaningful annual event. I would like to extend a special acknowledgement to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for sharing this opportunity with me and for inviting me to participate . Everyone in this room is a respected and integral participant in determining the future of our planet and as a team we can, we must, and we **will** bring to light urgent issues threatening our sustainability as we counterbalance negativity with a constructive and detailed agenda to preserve our natural resources and treasures, and of course, our quality of life .

When it comes to protecting our environment, there is no buck to be passed. Each and every one of us is responsible for our actions and our commitment to accountability and our individual and collective respect for our communities, our country, and our global viability is non-negotiable. Albert Einstein said, "The environment is everything that isn't me." We exist in an era of heightened awareness of the damage that is being done to our world. We can no longer claim ignorance when it comes to the deterioration and degradation of our finite natural resources. With increased access to information comes greater understanding of impending irreparable damage... but it also shines a light on **potential**. It is our mandate to constantly study, educate, inform, and **act** in order to preserve our earth's precious gifts.

When one thinks of renewable energy, it is almost a metaphor. What is more fundamental to the environment than the self-renewal of the environment? What demonstrates more potential for sustainability than the elements that are such an integral part of our lives... so much so that we almost take them for granted? What is more obviously and resoundingly proactive than harnessing the power around us in healthy and positive ways?

According to information released by Worldbank, "Climate change is expected to hit developing countries the hardest. Its effects—higher temperatures, changes in precipitation patterns, rising sea levels, and more frequent weather-related disasters—pose risks for agriculture, food, and water supplies. At stake are recent gains in the fight against poverty, hunger and disease, and the lives and livelihoods of billions of people in developing countries. Addressing climate change requires unprecedented global cooperation across borders."

The time has come to go beyond discussion. We all must be willing and prepared to take **action**. Experts have noted that "Preventing global warming from becoming a planetary catastrophe may take something even more drastic than renewable energy, super efficient urban and rural design and global carbon taxation" but we have to begin somewhere. With the support of all aspects of renewable energy... from solar power to wind energy... and even harnessing tidal energy where possible, we will initiate a chain of positive impact for our communities now and into the future. Studies have shown that in some areas, "the cost of generating electricity from wind and solar has declined significantly in the past decade." The cost of financing new industires can get expensive, but with intelligent and informed choices, adequate initiation, and intuitive action, I believe we will find far more benefits than deterrents as we continue the process of converting to clean and renewable energy sources. We also have to keep in mind the benefits of clean energy go so much deeper than the obvious. Studies have shown that the market and public health plusses are impressive. In the United States, a report issued by the Department of Energy noted, "In 2013 alone, renewable standards saved customers $1.2 billion from reduced wholesale electric prices and $1.3 to $3.7 billion from lower natural gas prices." It is clear that the use of clean energy supports our environment on many levels... Economically- by ultimately lowering costs, physically by providing healthier environments reducing chronic sickness, and civically, by creating new opportunities in business... geared to the construction, operation, and maintenance of necessary equipment.

In many ways we live in frustrating times. Thanks to advances in technology and communication, we, as integral parts of a global village are more connected than ever. There's an expression, "Bad news travels faster than good." We hear of disasters and challenges plaguing people all over the world... but we also learn of innovations and solutions. Mahatma Gandhi said, "Be the change that you wish to see in the world." Every day it becomes increasingly clear that we are all accountable for the conditions that exist. Although so many things are beyond our control, we must act on those issues we **can** handle. Tackling climate change and global warming by instituting proactive environmental policies utilizing clean energy is the path we must take as we all partner to protect, save, and serve our planet.

Thank you all!