

CLIMATE DIPLOMACY IN AFRICA

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NOVEMBER 2016

Climate change is real and happening faster than we thought – with devastating impacts on the African continent. Delaying action makes lower climate risk levels unattainable. Climate Diplomacy is the interface between national interest debates and international cooperation. It ensures the accurate assessment of other countries' interests and intentions, and finds the space for agreement. This is essential for establishing the links between domestic, foreign and international climate policy. African political leadership has recognized the importance and timeliness for Africa to actively engage in Climate Diplomacy through a coordinated common position and to design robust policy approaches for a collective effort in confronting complex climate change challenges.

**The views expressed by the authors of this paper do not necessarily reflect those of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Agency and other African institutions.*

Historical presence of Africa in the climate change debate prior to the UNFCCC process

Africa's presence and participation in the global environmental debate spans several decades. The Stockholm Conference of 1972 represented a first stock-taking of the global human impact on the environment. Before the adoption of the United Nations Framework on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1992, there were a series of debates related to climate change, in which Africa had taken part. The African Union (AU) has played a key role in ensuring that Africa takes a united stand in global negotiations and evolving mechanisms. One of the major developments was the establishment of the Climate Change and Desertification Unit (CCDU) at the African Union, this having stemmed from several decisions by Heads of State and Government to address the challenge of climate change. The African Group of Negotiators in the UNFCCC processes, inputs from relevant Science and Technology Committees (STCs), the work of the Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSCC) and the African Ministerial Conference on Climate



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Change (AMCEN) have all been brought into a coherent AU framework. The African Heads of State and Government, having appreciated the gravity of the climate change challenge unfolding on the continent, made a number of seminal decisions to help Member States deal effectively, efficiently and equitably with the risks posed by climate change.

Africa's contribution to the design and development of the UNFCCC

Within the AU, climate change is seen as a more complex phenomenon presenting a security challenge. AU's response to climate change is demonstrated through its commitment to the international environmental regimes and its own environmental regimes. Notwithstanding this commitment, the AU's climate change regime is a recent development facing a series of obstacles, such as member states' conflicting needs and interests, poverty, low institutional capacity, scepticism among some heads of state about the reality of climate change, and lack of progress among member states to implement national climate change policies.

Africa participated in the journey of the UNFCCC through different strategies. Firstly, the continent provided leadership support and a voice in UNFCCC implementation. On the continent of Africa, former President Kufour of Ghana, for instance, led the UN delegation on climate change, which partly carried out the recommendations of the UNFCCC. Such leadership roles create the platform for development and implementation of African, regional, and nation-wide systems for climate change advocacy, capacity building of negotiators and supporting multi-disciplinary experts. These are all necessary indirect inputs for UNFCCC implementation. Africa forms part of the G77 political coalition, and its leadership role and commitment can be seen in its work within the G77 and the African Group.

Principle of common but differentiated responsibilities

The economic, political and social structure of economies differs. Invariably, economies have different capacities in responding to environmental impacts. International environmental regimes recognize this situation and are therefore based on "equity" or "common but differentiated responsibilities". This principle recognizes that there are asymmetries in the international system. While developed countries have technological, financial, economic and human capacities, developing countries have fewer of these necessary ingredients for responding to climate change demands.

African development objectives are shaped by the global development agenda, such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In line with this, Africa has had a singular voice in global environmental negotiations, advocating greater respect for the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. In the application of this principle, development aid and climate finance regimes have been the dominant sources for technological transfer, financial support for developing and implementing projects, capacity building, institutional support, infrastructural transformation, information gathering and dissemination etc.

Diplomatic and political responses to climate change challenges

As part of Africa's drive towards reducing the devastating effects of climate change on the continent, leadership has been provided through the CAHOSCC. African leaders use this political platform to advance their interest in the climate change debate.

Africa's involvement to address climate change has been demonstrated through many on-going initiatives at the global, regional, sub-regional and national levels. At the global level, such initiatives include the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the UNFCCC, the Kyoto Protocol, the Nairobi Work Programme and the Bali Action Plan, among others. At the regional level, such initiatives include the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), the Framework of Southern and Northern Africa Climate Change Programmes, and the East African Community Climate Change

Policy. Another demand from the perspective of the Africans is the implementation of the Bali Action Plan, which is centred on adaptation, mitigation, technology and financing. The Action Plan presents a more comprehensive and long term cooperative framework for ensuring global emissions reduction. Through the engagement of Heads of State, the AU approach on climate matters has evolved from an aggressive and evasive to a more cooperative one.

Within the AU/NEPAD framework, African leaders have adopted an Environment Action Plan (EAP) to confront the environmental challenges of the continent. This action plan was coordinated by the NEPAD Agency, AU Commission in collaboration with UNEP, AMCEN and the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The action plan is aimed at promoting sustainable use of Africa's natural resources. It strengthens public and political support for environmental initiatives. It promotes mainstreaming of environmental issues into poverty reduction strategies and contributes to NEPAD implementation through the environment initiative.

What is unique about this action plan is the space provided for civil society engagement and dialogue on the environment. It also allows for resource mobilization towards programmes such as the Great Green Wall programme to battle desertification. AMCEN supports the initiative through the establishment of the African Environment Partnership Platform to mobilise resources for developing programmes around thematic areas, such as green economy, land degradation, desertification, biodiversity and ecosystems-based adaptation as well as the Africa Sustainable Energy Development Programme.

The Regional Economic Communities (RECs), such as Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) and Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), are to serve as implementing agencies of continental action plans and complement them, if necessary, based on jurisdictional specifics. Indeed, RECs are responsible for transposing the AU and NEPAD action plans in the sub-region and also possibly providing a monitoring and evaluation mechanism for national implementation.

Most recently in 2016, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union dedicated an open session to climate change, state fragility, peace and security in Africa. Participants stressed the need for Member States to continue to build their national resilience capacity and to mainstream climate change in their national development agendas. The council also committed to mainstream climate change in all its activities, particularly in early warning and conflict prevention efforts. It highlighted the role of early warning centres of the RECs and regional mechanisms for conflict prevention, management and resolution in building national early warning capacities on potential climate change-related conflicts.

African solutions to climate change challenges

Through its various continental bodies such as the AU/NEPAD, CAHOSCC, AMCEN, African Development Bank (AfDB), RECs, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) etc., Africa provides both leadership and resources to support bilateral and multilateral climate change diplomacy. Climate for Development in Africa (ClimDev-Africa), launched jointly by the African Development Fund, the AU Commission, the AfDB and UNECA, is aimed at anchoring climate-resilient economic growth and SDGs by mainstreaming climate risk management (CRM) in sensitive sectors. In 2014, NEPAD successfully launched a Climate Change Fund with support from the government of Germany. This Fund offers technical and financial assistance to AU member states, RECs and institutions that meet the eligibility criteria and the clearly defined target areas for support.

Livelihoods depend heavily on agricultural activities across most of the continent. Several programmes at regional and at continental level could provide entry points, such as the “SIP Institutional Support to New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) for Sustainable Land Management Scale-up in Sub-Saharan Africa”.

The African Risk Capacity (ARC) helps Member States improve their capacities to better plan, prepare and respond to extreme weather events and natural disasters, therefore protecting food security. During the German Presidency, the G7 committed to supporting insurance schemes to lift millions of people out of food insecurity.

Through various national communications to the UNFCCC, African countries have demonstrated some practical sectorial responses to climate change mitigation and adaptation. Most African countries have submitted at least two communications. A number of African countries are using public-private partnerships to source expertise and finance to implement climate resilient development projects.

Ways forward

15 years after the Marrakech Accord, which saw the launch of the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) providing technological and financial support to developing countries in mitigating climate change impacts, it is now again in the city of Marrakech that Africa has the opportunity to advocate ambitious climate action. Substantive decisions on the implementation of the landmark Paris Agreement need to be taken. **Africa’s contribution, besides ensuring that all African countries ratify the agreement, would be to emphasize that adaptation remains a top priority for the continent.**

Since the African continent is among the most vulnerable to climate change impacts, long-term, stable and scaled-up support to increase resilience to climate is very relevant. The African Development Bank Group (AfDB) poignantly stated that: “Africa is part of the solution for the implementation of the Paris Agreement, which starts with COP22 in Morocco. Africa currently has four priorities: adaptation, mitigation, financing and the strengthening of the negotiation process”.

In light of COP22, the African Group of Negotiators (AGN) especially called for **new investments in agricultural transformation**. They identified critical issues that need to be addressed in Marrakech, including early warning systems, risk and vulnerability assessments for agriculture, information services, and climate risk finance and insurance schemes.

The High Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda presented **five goals for big transformation shifts in socio-economic development**: (1) leave no one behind, (2) put sustainable development at the core, (3) transform economies for jobs and inclusive growth, (3) build peace and (4) effective open and accountable institutions for all, and (5) forge a new global partnership. These goals must be clearly considered in the clarification and implementation of the SDGs but also of the Paris Accord, since the goals are interconnected with climate change mitigation and adaptation.

The proliferation of **climate change funds creates problems of access** for African countries. Hence they look forward to a negotiation that would conclude on the reassembling and proper coordination of these funds based on coherence monitoring, review and verification (MRV). Perhaps, the financing of climate change adaptation within agriculture is among the most important questions to be pursued in Marrakech. The 100 billion dollars per annum commitment by 2020 present an opportunity for advancing Africa’s climate-resilient development, but are well below the scale of financial resources required to implement the Climate Change Convention and Paris Agreement.

African negotiators are expected to urge developed countries to increase their provisions of **financial support to adaptation in the pre-2020 period** and to better **address immediate needs** of vulnerable African states. It also needs to be ensured that unnecessary bureaucracy within the operations of intermediaries, such as the implementing agencies and entities, are removed. The continent of Africa needs direct access to any new funds with minimal management by intermediaries. This would shift the responsibility of decision making to national governments, which aligns with the Paris declaration on aid effectiveness.

Moreover, **research on climate change** in Africa would need to involve more African scientists who could contribute to and model recommendations based on their own experiences anchored in the African political and administrative ecology. Therefore, considerations to set up a climate change research hub in Africa led by recognized African scientists should be another important focus of Africa in Marrakech.

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The **climate diplomacy initiative** is a collaborative effort of the German Federal Foreign Office in partnership with adelphi. The initiative and this publication are supported by a grant from the German Federal Foreign Office.

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Design: Steffen Kalauch and adelphi

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