

# Ensuring fair and transparent access to critical minerals for African countries in the context of global energy transition

*Concept Note for a Side Event at Africa Pavilion, COP28*

**Date:** 30 Nov. 2023

**Venue:** Africa Pavilion, COP28

**Time:** 9:00- 10:30am

**Organiser:** This event is organised by the Pan-African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA) and the Africa-Coalition for Sustainable Energy and Access (ACSEA) in partnership with the Africa-Renewable Energy Initiative (AREI) and the Africa Development Bank.

**Background and Context:** The transition towards low-carbon and renewable energy sources requires a significant increase in the demand for critical minerals, such as lithium, cobalt, copper, nickel, and rare earth elements, which are essential for producing batteries, electric vehicles, wind turbines, solar panels, and other clean technologies. However, the supply of these minerals is unevenly distributed across the world and often concentrated in countries with weak governance, environmental and social standards, and human rights violations. Moreover, the extraction and processing of these minerals pose significant challenges to the environment and local communities, such as water pollution, land degradation, biodiversity loss, and social conflicts.

African countries have a large potential to contribute to the global supply of critical minerals, as they host about 30% of the world's mineral reserves. They also face many challenges in ensuring that their mineral resources are developed sustainably and inclusively and benefit from fair and transparent access to global markets. To overcome these challenges, African countries must strengthen their governance and regulatory frameworks, diversify their economies, enhance their value addition and beneficiation capacities, and foster regional cooperation and integration.

**Objectives:** The main objective of the proposed side event is to raise awareness and foster dialogue on the opportunities and challenges of ensuring fair and transparent access to critical minerals for African countries in the context of the global energy transition. The event aims to identify best practices and policy recommendations for enhancing the sustainability and inclusiveness of mineral development in Africa and promoting cooperation and partnerships among relevant stakeholders.

**Draft Programme:** The side event will consist of a panel discussion moderated by a representative of the Pan-African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA), followed by an interactive Q&A session with the audience. The panel will include representatives from:

- UN Environment (UNEP)
- United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA),
- the African Development Bank (AfDB),
- and a civil society organisation (CSO).

These representatives will share their experience, expertise, and perspectives on critical mineral development in Africa, including the current status and trends, the main opportunities and challenges,

the latest projections and scenarios of critical mineral demand and supply, the implications for climate change mitigation and adaptation, the transparency standards and initiatives in the extractive sector, and the environmental and social impacts and risks associated with critical mineral extraction and processing.

### **Key messages:**

Some of the key messages that the side event will aim to convey are:

- Critical minerals are vital for the global energy transition but pose significant challenges for sustainability and inclusiveness.
- African countries have an immense potential to contribute to the global supply of critical minerals. Still, they also need to ensure that their mineral development is aligned with their climate commitments and low-carbon development pathways.
- Fair and transparent access to critical minerals for African countries requires strengthening governance and regulatory frameworks, diversifying economies, enhancing value addition and beneficiation capacities, and fostering regional cooperation and integration.
- Cooperation and partnerships among relevant stakeholders are essential for enhancing the sustainability and inclusiveness of critical mineral development in Africa.

### **Agenda**

#### **Opening remarks**

- **Dr Mithika Mwenda, ED, PACJA**
- **Dr Chantal Colle, Arei (TBC)**
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#### **Panel Discussion**

**Critical minerals are essential for the development of clean energy technologies and the transition to a low-carbon economy. However, many African countries face challenges in ensuring fair and transparent access to these resources, as well as managing their environmental and social impacts.**

- What are the main barriers and opportunities for African countries to supply and access critical minerals in the global market?
- How can African countries enhance their governance and regulatory frameworks to ensure responsible and sustainable extraction and processing of critical minerals? **UNECA TBC**
- What are the best practices and lessons learned from other regions and sectors in managing the risks and benefits of critical mineral development? **Government Rep**
- How can African countries foster regional cooperation and integration to create synergies and economies of scale in the critical mineral value chain? **AUC TBC**
- What are the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders, such as governments, private sector, civil society, and development partners, in promoting fair and transparent access to critical minerals for African countries?

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