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The 5th Africa Climate Talks

Climate change and development in Africa: a critical inquiry into third generation NDCs (NDC 3.0) and just transitions for Africa

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Concept Note

Introduction

The African Climate Policy Centre (ACPC) of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in partnership with the Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy, and Sustainable Environment (ARBE) of the African Union Commission (AUC); the ClimDev-Africa Special Fund (CDSF) of the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the Pan African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA), in collaboration with the University of Addis Ababa, will host the 5th round of the Africa Climate Talks (ACT!) series on the margins of the 10th session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD 10) as a build up to the 11th conference on climate change and development in Africa (CCDA-VII) and the 29th Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC (COP29). The event whose theme is “*Climate change and development in Africa: a critical inquiry into third generation NDCs (NDC 3.0) and just transitions for Africa*” will be organized in hybrid format.

The ACT! series brings together different perspectives and stakeholders to stimulate a pan-African discourse aimed at contributing to the emergence of an African narrative on climate change and development, drawing on lessons and experiences of civil society groups, academics, researchers, youth, the private sector and climate change negotiators. ACT! articulates opportunities that could be translated into policy options by African decision makers to build more resilient societies and economies, while enhancing environmental integrity. The inaugural session of the ACT! was held in Tanzania in 2015 in collaboration with the University of Dar es Salaam on the theme “The Promise of Paris – a critical inquiry into the issues, challenges and prospects of a post Kyoto climate framework for Africa”. This was ahead of the 21st Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21) that in Paris, France. Thereafter, three other rounds of the Talks were convened in Ethiopia, online (hosted by Cape Verde during the COVID-19 pandemic), Mozambique, and Niger.

The ClimDev-Africa partners have convened the past ACT! Sessions with the aim of

stimulating a wide-ranging discourse informed by emerging African common positions on a range of pertinent issues in the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC, and at creating platforms for the discussion of African perspectives on key issues in the linkages between climate change and Africa's transformative development trajectories.

A key outcome of the recently concluded UNFCCC COP28 in Dubai was the unanimous call for 'transitioning away from fossil fuels in the energy systems in a just, orderly, and equitable manner.' Although the outcome was devoid of parameters for the implementation of the process, it was significant for Africa as the continent has long advocated for differentiated transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy. to ensure that the continent can realize its development objectives.

The Global Stock take (GST) outcome agreed upon COP28 underlined that despite overall progress on mitigation, adaptation and means of implementation and support, Parties are not yet collectively on track towards achieving the purpose of the Paris Agreement and its long term goals, and encouraged Parties to come forward with ambitious, economy-wide emission reduction targets, covering all greenhouse gases, sectors and categories and aligned with the 1.5°C limit in their next round of NDCs. The latest science from the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) indicates that greenhouse gas emissions need to be reduced by 60% by 2035, compared to 2019 levels and that adaptation and mitigation must be pursued with equal force and urgency to advance sustainable development for all. The GST invited organizations in a position to do so to provide capacity-building support for the preparation and communication of the next NDCs. The GST further concluded that human-caused climate change impacts are already being felt in every region across the globe, with those who have contributed the least to climate change being most vulnerable to the impacts, and, together with losses and damages, will increase with every increment of warming; and that most observed adaptation responses are fragmented, incremental, sector specific and unequally distributed across regions, and that, despite the progress made, significant adaptation gaps still exist across sectors and regions and will continue to grow under current levels of implementation.

The ultimate objective of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) - that entered into force on 21 March 1994 and ratified by 198 countries (Parties to the Convention) - and any related legal instruments that the Conference of the Parties may adopt is to achieve, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Convention, stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. Such a level should be achieved within a time-frame sufficient to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, to ensure that food production is not threatened and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner. One of the main principles of the Convention is that of common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR) that states that Parties should protect the climate system for the benefit of present and future generations of humankind, on the basis of equity and in accordance with their common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities. Accordingly, the developed country Parties should take the lead in combating climate change and the adverse effects thereof as was the case in the first instrument of the Convention – the Kyoto Protocol. The second instrument of the convention – the Paris Agreement, shifted away from this Core principle of the Convention by adopting a bottom-up approach where all Parties make nationally determined contributions, in principle according to their respective capabilities, to meet the goal of the convention.

African countries will require significant support on various aspects of NDC preparation and implementation, including data and analysis, policy and planning, finance and investment, capacity building, and stakeholder engagement. There is a crucial need for regional institutions to deploy their capabilities across various sectors, including on climate finance, green/blue economy, circular economy, critical raw materials for green industrialization, just energy transitions, private sector investment, land policy and food security, and so on to support member states to develop NDCs that are economy wide and based on low emissions development strategies, in the context of the Africa Union's Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy.

The NDCs 3.0 processes should factor in Africa's vast deposits of oil and gas, in addition to the critical minerals that have potential to fuel renewable energy transitions. Mozambique, an LDC, holds 100 trillion cubic feet (Tcf) of proven gas reserves as of 2017¹, ranking 14th in the world, but the country is also one of the poorest countries in the world, ranked 181 out of 189 countries on the Human Development Index². Uganda, which is another LDC, discovered oil deposits along its western border with the DRC in 2005. 1.4 billion of its 6.5 billion barrels of proven oil reserves are estimated to be economically recoverable.

Allowing African countries to include fossil fuels in their energy mix during the transition period will facilitate their development and give them a short at accelerating their progress towards achieving the SDGs and the Paris Agreement goals to achieve net zero emissions by or around mid-century. Realization of SDG13 will be boosted by the availability of additional fossil fuel derived resources which can be used to finance the acquisition and deployment of costly renewable energy installations.

The COP28 outcome on just transitions further anchors decarbonization efforts such as EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), which provides for taxation of imports into EU commensurate with the level of carbon intensity in the manufacturing and shipping processes, and the EU Regulation on Deforestation-free products (EUDR), which bans the sale of coffee, rubber, cocoa and other products if sellers cannot prove that it did not come from deforested lands. Due to Africa's low development level, the CBAM will justify Africa's increased use of renewable energy in its manufacturing and infrastructure as it seeks to close the energy access gap for its 1.3 billion population.

Africa's endowment of abundant energy transition minerals is also set to play a significant role in the manufacture of electric vehicles, batteries, wind turbines and solar panels, which are critical inputs for the global energy transition. Regional consensus on the effective exploitation of the transition minerals indicates that cross-border cooperation is necessary to efficiently develop battery minerals. Such agreements have been established between the DRC and Zambia to accelerate the establishment of special economic zones for mineral processing.

A just transition for Africa inevitably encompasses addressing capacity for communities to withstand the increased impacts of climate change disasters. In this respect, the loss and damage fund adopted and launched at COP28 brings hope to communities that have borne the brunt of these impacts over the years. However, the process of constituting the

¹ Gas Reserves in Mozambique: <https://www.worldometers.info/gas/mozambique-natural-gas/#:~:text=Gas%20Reserves%20in%20Mozambique&text=Mozambique%20holds%20100%20trillion%20cubic,1%20C545.7%20times%20its%20annual%20consumption.>

² Mozambique - Country Snapshot - Action on Poverty: <https://actiononpoverty.org/our-impact/where-we-work/mozambique/#:~:text=Mozambique%20is%20one%20of%20the,on%20the%20Human%20Development%20Index.>

governance structures envisaged to launch its activities has dragged on in recent weeks. Despite the foregoing significant progress, the African region noted with concern that only \$700 million was pledged towards the fund, which is less than 0.2% of the losses developing countries face because of climate change every year.

Objective

The main objective of the 5th ACT! is to mobilize diverse African constituencies to contextualize the next generation of NDCs in the just transitions discourse on the continent. In particular, this session of the ACT! will seek to mobilize the engagement of African stakeholders into defining the NDC 3.0, focusing on defining a common framework and inclusive, transparent approach to the elaboration of the NDCs to be communicated by February 2025. These reflections contribute towards the identification of African solutions to the climate challenge.

Expected outcomes

- African perspectives of just transitions elicited and documented for inclusion in the African common positions for COP29.
- Contributions to the elucidation of the 3rd generation NDCs, with particular focus on just transitions.
- Broadening of the climate change debate to include critical linkages between climate change and underlying economic, human security and political dynamics.
- Contribution to a more comprehensive climate response, to complement regional strategies and global frameworks.
- Robust interrogation of the science behind the inter-connected crisis i.e. escalating climate change and the resulting economic challenges.
- Key messages for common position on Africa's priorities for COP29.

Targeted audience

African researchers, policy and decision makers, civil society, youth and women groups as well as marginalized groups in the climate change and development communities.
