

# 2022 AEC- Concept Note

## SUPPORTING CLIMATE-SMART DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

9-11 December 2022 - Port Louis, Mauritius

### 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The 2022 African Economic Conference (AEC 2022), jointly organized by the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), is planned with the theme **“Supporting Climate-Smart Development in Africa”**. It will be held in **Port Louis, Mauritius**, from **9-11 December 2022**.

1.2 The conference will bring together a variety of stakeholders—including policymakers, climate experts, the private sector, researchers, and youth—to discuss the challenges posed by climate change, identify opportunities and strategies for adaptation and mitigation, draw lessons from successes, identify key strategies for financing mobilization and draft an action plan to support the low-carbon and climate-resilient development of Africa.

1.3 The AEC 2022 will be an opportunity to reflect deeply on the institutional capacities to build climate-smart development mechanisms and support our regional member countries to build resilience and transition to low-carbon development pathways. It will also be an occasion to reflect on how countries can actively rebuild better from the COVID-19 pandemic with climate-smart solutions.

1.4 The conference will provide a platform for established academics and young researchers alike to present their solution-oriented research to policymakers and decision-makers on how to strengthen Africa’s response to climate change and its ripple effects.

### 2. CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

2.1 Africa’s vulnerability to climate change calls for innovative solutions. Agriculture employs half the African workforce, and over 90% of African agriculture is reliant on rainfall. It is expected that the vast majority of Africans and the African economy will suffer more from climate extremes, as extreme weather events become more frequent and severe, causing damage to agriculture, tourism, cities, infrastructure sectors, including water and energy systems, and even the extractive sector.

2.2 Adapting to climate change could cost the continent at least \$50 billion annually by 2050. Yet Africa has the lowest per capita climate finance flows in the world, challenging the principles of true climate justice<sup>[1]</sup> (AfDB, 2022).

2.3 It is essential to Africa’s economic, social, and material well-being to develop climate change adaptation, mitigation, and transformation strategies by working with all key stakeholders, including farmers. The goal is climate-resilient, low-carbon development that boosts growth, fosters alternative energy production and reduces

the energy deficit, especially in rural areas. While most of Africa's limited emissions come from various forms of agriculture and land use, rather than from the energy sector, the continent has enormous potential for renewable energy—hydro, solar, wind, and geothermal power.

2.4 In Africa, green growth strategies can accelerate investment in resource-efficient technologies and industries, and manage costs and risks to taxpayers, businesses, and communities. Africa is increasingly alerted to the costs associated with high-carbon development and the benefits of renewable energy, sustainable land use, low-carbon development, and other energy services. Plans to integrate climate action with sustainable development are already being implemented, including in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Rwanda.

2.5 The long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on agriculture, and thus on household finances, will limit access to electricity and countries' ability to adopt climate-smart strategies. Countries with low government capacity and limited government investment in climate-smart policies before the pandemic will likely continue to lag in their adaptation to cleaner energy and climate-smart development.

2.6 The combined effects of the global economic slowdown and climate change have curtailed investment in climate-smart strategies over the past two years in many African countries. Countries already spend substantial sums on the effects of the climate crisis, diverting scarce resources from investments in socioeconomic development programs, and threatening to drive countries deeper into poverty (AfDB, 2022).

2.7 At the same time, several initiatives are helping African countries adapt to and mitigate climate change. The focus has shifted from reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation to adaptation, in line with the 2009 Copenhagen Conference of Parties (COP). This trend has been reinforced by official commitments at successive COPs. In 2021, the Global Center on Adaptation (GCA) and the African Development Bank joined forces to develop the Africa Adaptation Acceleration Program (AAP) to support all African countries in designing and implementing transformational adaptation of their economies for post-COVID development<sup>[2]</sup>.

2.8 Despite these initiatives, climate finance inflows to Africa have failed to match the commitments made by developed countries and have not met the continent's adaptation and mitigation needs (AfDB, 2022). Africa's share in total global climate finance grew by only 3 percentage points on average during 2010-19, from 23% (\$48 billion) in 2010-15 to 26% (\$73 billion) during 2016-19. Given the resources needed to meet Africa's Nationally Determined Contribution targets—estimated at \$118.2–\$145.5 billion a year until 2030—more concrete measures are needed to close Africa's annual climate finance gap (AfDB, 2022).

2.9 When facilitating the mobilization of resources, it is essential to design programs that target both mitigation and adaptation and balance them comprehensively, and systemically. More research is critical to inform climate adaptation and mitigation policies and ensure sustainable and environmentally sound growth and development.

### 3. OBJECTIVES OF THE CONFERENCE

3.1 The AEC is the leading forum for discussing Africa's pressing concerns. Its specific objectives are to:

- promote knowledge management as an important driver of policy dialogue, planning, and implementation;
- foster dialogue among researchers, development practitioners, and policymakers;
- encourage and enhance research on African economic and policy issues by promoting evidence-based policymaking;
- provide an opportunity for young African researchers, Africans in the diaspora, and organizations to share their knowledge with policymakers; and
- serve as a platform for researchers, policymakers, and private sector operators to meet and have a consensus on regional and continental integration to accelerate Africa's inclusive and sustainable development.

3.2 Since 2006, the AEC has fostered the exchange of knowledge on a variety of issues (see Box 1).

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#### Box 1. Past African Economic Conference themes

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1. AEC 2021– Financing Africa's Post-COVID-19 Development
2. AEC 2020 –Africa beyond COVID-19: Accelerating towards Inclusive Sustainable Development
3. AEC 2019 – Jobs, Entrepreneurship and Capacity Development for African Youths
4. AEC 2018 – Regional and Continental Integration for Africa's development
5. AEC 2017 – Governance for Structural Transformation
6. AEC 2016 – Feed Africa: Towards Agro-Allied Industrialization for Inclusive Growth
7. AEC 2015 – Addressing Poverty and Inequality in the Post 2015 Development Agenda
8. AEC 2014 – Knowledge and Innovation for Africa's Transformation
9. AEC 2013 – Regional Integration in Africa
10. AEC 2012 – Fostering Inclusive and Sustainable Transformation in Africa in an Age of Global Economic Uncertainty
11. AEC 2011 – Green Economy and Structural Transformation in Africa
12. AEC 2010 – Setting the Agenda for Africa's Economic Recovery and Long-Term Growth
13. AEC 2009 – Fostering Development in an Era of Financial and Economic Crises
14. AEC 2008 – Globalization, Institutions and Economic Development of Africa
15. AEC 2007 – Opportunities and Challenges of Development for Africa in the Global Arena
16. AEC 2006 – Accelerating Africa's Development Five Years into the 21st Century.

## 4. FORMAT OF THE CONFERENCE

4.1 The seventeenth edition of the conference will be held physically. However, it will accommodate virtual attendees, where possible.

4.2 The conference will be organized around four pillars, each including a plenary session and parallel sessions that focus on key solutions to building, adopting, and implementing climate-smart strategies.

The four pillars are as follows:

1. **Just energy transition in African economies** – Under this pillar, papers will consider strategies to move from significant reliance on fossil fuels to clean energy use; discuss how clean energy development and sustainable development could be pursued in tandem; assess the implications and impacts of an energy transition in Africa; evaluate how energy transition could be financed; consider policies, regulations and best practices to accelerate clean energy development in the continent; and develop a consensus on “just” energy transition pathways for Africa; and contribute to the broader discussion on energy and economic development in Africa.
2. **Climate change, the food system, and ocean economies.** Papers under this pillar will look at (i) the impact of climate change on African livelihoods, particularly those of rural residents and farmers; (ii) how farmers are adapting to such impact, including management of water-related resources; and (iii) how private sector engagement with smallholder farmers can be strengthened by building on significant advances in digitization. Papers under this pillar may also consider the issue of climate-resilient ocean economies. Papers may explore (i) the impact of climate change on ocean systems; (ii) cascading impacts on key economic sectors, including direct losses (in the form of fish catch or tourism revenue) and increased uncertainty; and (iii) policies and strategies to ensure that oceans reduce carbon emissions whilst stimulating economic growth in coastal and small island states.
3. **Climate-smart industrialization.** Under this pillar, papers may focus on i) green industrial policies; ii) efficient exploitation of the continent's natural

resources to generate inclusive growth; and iii) appropriate strategies to dissociate industrial growth from negative environmental externalities by maximizing the use of clean energy and green-production technologies without disrupting productivity enhancements in Africa.

4. **Africa's governance, strategies, financing, and policies to building and mainstreaming resilient and sustainable climate-change adaptation and mitigation.** Papers in this category will explore the inclusivity of existing financial and social policies among vulnerable groups and fragile states. Given the low share of climate finance in Africa, papers will discuss how to mobilize climate finance resources and efficiently allocate them. Finally, papers will investigate whether climate change mitigation policies are robust and responsive to the African landscape and may focus on the link between green financing and the generation of jobs, especially for youth and women.

## 5. PAPER SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

5.1 Interested authors must submit their papers to [aec2022@afdb.org](mailto:aec2022@afdb.org)([link sends e-mail](#)). Only full papers addressing the theme of the conference will be considered for presentation. We also encourage the submission of policy- and solution-oriented papers based on strong empirical work, prioritizing solution-oriented papers.

5.2 Participants and experts submitting papers must adhere to the following key deadlines:

Description	Deadline
Call for papers	30 June 2022
Deadline for paper submissions	<i>15 September 2022</i>
Notification of final acceptance	15 October 2022
Last day of registration for presenters	15 November2022

Conference dates	9-11 December 2022
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Note: Registration details will be provided shortly.

5.3 Young African researchers are especially encouraged to submit articles. One of the objectives of the AEC series is to provide young African researchers, especially women, with the opportunity to share their work with a broader audience and to expand their networks.

5.4 All papers will be blind peer-reviewed by the co-organizing institutions. Papers accepted for presentation shall be original quality work.

5.5 A distinguished panel will assess the papers presented and award a prize to the young author whose paper is deemed the best conference paper. The winner will be announced at the closing ceremony.

## 6. EXPECTED OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES

6.1 The expected outputs of the conference are:

- a conference report;
- a compilation of the proceedings of the conference, incorporating relevant comments and feedback from peer review and conference participants (may be issued after the conference);
- inclusion of selected papers in special issues of the *African Development Review* and the *Journal of Africa's Transformation*.
- policy briefs; and
- a market platform for economic research in Africa.

## 7. SPONSORSHIP

Authors are to indicate whether they require support to cover expenses (travel, accommodation, and daily subsistence allowance) associated with their participation in the conference. Only one author per paper accepted for presentation will be eligible for sponsorship. Support is reserved mainly for presenters and young researchers from Africa.

[1] These principles would have seen Africa receive nearly 10 times the global climate finance it received between 2016 and 2019.

[2] <https://gca.org/call-for-partnerships-africa-adaptation-acceleration-program/>