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Concept note

Eighth Conference on Climate Change and Development in Africa

A special session in preparation for African inputs to the Climate Action Summit, to be convened by the Secretary-General of the United Nations on 23 September 2019

Theme: Stepping up climate action for a resilient Africa – a race we can and must win

28–30 August 2019

New Building Conference Centre, African Union Commission

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Hosted by the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

Convened by the African Union Commission, the Economic Commission for Africa and the African Development Bank, in partnership with the Pan African Climate Justice Alliance

“We are losing the fight against climate change... The status quo on climate policy is a suicide...Technology is on our side...We need the political will to tackle climate change...If we fail in climate change, we fail in everything...”

António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations

1. Context

The African Union Commission, the Economic Commission for Africa and the African Development Bank, in collaboration with the Government of Ethiopia and the Pan African Climate Justice Alliance are convening the Eighth Conference on Climate Change and Development in Africa from 28 to 30 August 2019 in Addis Ababa, under the theme “Stepping up climate action for resilient economies in Africa – a race we can (and must) win”.

The Paris Agreement on climate change is based on a voluntary bottom-up approach that requires all parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to develop, communicate, implement, monitor and report voluntary but ambitious nationally determined contributions to tackle climate change and adapt to its adverse impacts. Article 2, paragraph 1, of the Paris Agreement states that the overall objective of the Agreement includes strengthening “the global response to the threat of climate change, in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty, including by: (a) Holding the increase in global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels; (b) Increasing the ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and foster climate resilience and low greenhouse gas emissions development, in a manner that does not threaten food production; and (c) Making finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development”. Article 2, paragraph 2, further states that the Agreement “will be implemented to reflect equity and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in the light of different national circumstances”.

In October 2018, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released its report Global Warming of 1.5°C, an IPCC special report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty.¹ Among its findings, the report notes that the consequences of 1°C of global warming are already apparent, through more extreme weather, rising sea levels and diminishing Arctic sea ice, among other changes. The report projects that under 1.5 to 2.0°C warming, Africa will warm faster than any other continent and attain 2.0°C warming by 2050, with evidence that this will increase the intensity of extreme precipitation events over Southern Africa. The report further notes that the difference between the effects of 1.5°C and 2°C warming is significant and highlights a number of climate change impacts that could be avoided by limiting global warming to 1.5°C compared to 2°C or higher. Limiting global warming to 1.5°C would create greater chances for economies, ecosystems and societies to adapt and remain below relevant risk thresholds, making it easier to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Beyond this threshold, however, adaptation becomes increasingly difficult, and the risk of irreversible interference with the climate system increases.

The impacts of climate change are being felt everywhere and are having very real consequences on people’s lives. Climate change is disrupting national economies, with increasing costs and negative impacts on health, livelihoods and ecosystems. The IPCC report concludes that Africa will continue to experience increased temperatures and variable rainfall, with yield losses

¹ See <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>.

of staple crops. The formulation of actionable policies geared towards adaptation and mitigation of the impacts of 1.5°C and 2°C warming on key sectors such as agriculture, water, energy and health sectors is thus inevitable. This is especially so for African countries, which have contributed the least to global emissions but are already being severely impacted by the adverse impacts of climate change, including the unusual behaviour of the 2015/2016 El Niño, attributable to climate change that caused severe droughts and floods in the Horn of Africa area and Southern Africa (resulting in hydropower production from the Kariba Dam almost ceasing with serious economic consequences for Zambia and Zimbabwe); rising climate-related insecurities, such as food insecurity, loss of natural habitats and dwindling natural resources and related conflicts; and severe increases in floods, droughts and heatwaves.

The United States National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has confirmed that June 2019 was the warmest on record,² while the World Meteorological Organization has confirmed that July 2019 matched, and perhaps even broke, the record for the hottest month since analysis began.³ While assessments on the impact of these observations on the state of warming and the impact on Africa are ongoing, it has been established that 2017 was noted as a significant year for flooding in West and Central Africa.⁴ In July 2017, Greater Accra, Central Region, Western Region and Eastern Region of Ghana were declared “flood emergency” areas. In August 2017, floods and landslides killed more than a thousand people and buried hundreds of houses in Freetown, Sierra Leone. In Côte d’Ivoire, heavy rainfall flooded the southwestern areas around San Pedro, threatening the cocoa plantations. Furthermore, in August 2017, intense storms hit Lagos and Port Harcourt, triggering massive floods that killed many people and washed away houses. In the neighbouring country of the Niger, continuous heavy rainfall resulted in extensive flooding, the destruction of houses and the loss of property in several areas, including Niamey. Flooding also extended to Guinea and Mali. The Southern African subregion has also experienced extreme weather events with ever increasing frequency. Between 2018 and 2019, devastating floods, including those spawned by Cyclones Desmond, Idai and Kenneth, affected the whole subregion including Angola, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Cyclones Idai and Kenneth have had a devastating impact on the countries affected. In Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, more than one thousand people were killed, while hundreds of thousands remained in need of aid, following the devastating battering by Cyclone Idai.

Clearly, the threat of floods and other weather extremes will only increase in the foreseeable future. Since the threat of floods, droughts and heatwaves will be amplified with increasing climate variability, the best response strategy is one that improves the resilience of economies, infrastructure, ecosystems and societies to climate variability and change. Such a strategy is necessarily pivoted around an overall development approach which seeks to mitigate the risks posed by climate change and variability to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals at the global level. Without ambitious and urgent global commitments to tackle climate change, the ability of most African countries to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the ideals of Agenda 2063 of the African Union will remain elusive. Yet,

² See <https://public.wmo.int/en/media/news/earth-experienced-warmest-june-record>.

³ See <https://public.wmo.int/en/media/news/july-matched-and-maybe-broke-record-hottest-month-analysis-began>.

⁴ See, for example, <https://reliefweb.int/report/niger/west-and-central-africa-2017-flood-impact-18-oct-2017>.

according to the Climate Action Tracker,⁵ the current nationally determined contributions and targets put forward by signatories to the Paris Agreement are not enough to meet the temperature guardrail target. This places the world on a likely trajectory of 3°C warming by 2100, with devastating social, economic and environmental consequences.

Concerned about the unfolding climate crisis and lacklustre action and commitments by countries to ensure full implementation of the Paris Agreement in order to keep global warming at bay, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres, will convene a Climate Action Summit in September 2019.⁶ He has called on all leaders to come to the Summit with concrete, ambitious and realistic plans to enhance their nationally determined contributions by 2020, in line with reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 45 per cent over the next decade, and to net zero emissions by 2050 as called for by the IPCC special report. The Secretary-General has said that he specifically wishes to hear how the international community is going to stop the increase in emissions by 2020, and dramatically reduce emissions to reach net-zero emissions by mid-century. Stating that beautiful speeches at the Summit will not be enough, he has also said that leaders will need come to New York on 23 September 2019 with concrete plans to reach the goals of the Paris Agreement, emphasizing that the entry ticket to the Summit for Governments, businesses and civil society is bold climate action and much greater ambition.⁷

2. Objectives of the Eighth Conference on Climate Change and Development in Africa

In view of the importance of the Secretary-General's call to urgent climate response with bold actions and greater ambition, it was decided to hold the 2019 Conference on Climate Change and Development in Africa earlier than usual with the overall objective of garnering common African positions and concerns, as well as assessing the level of bold commitments and actions by African countries in support of the Secretary-General.

Furthermore, in view of the fact that all African countries have signed the Paris Agreement, and 50 of those countries (as of July 2019) have ratified the agreement with nationally determined contributions requiring close to \$3 trillion in conditional and unconditional financing to implement, the Eighth Conference on Climate Change and Development in Africa will specifically bring together policymakers, young people, and representatives from civil society, the private sector, academia and development partners to:

- Provide updates on the status of global climate governance (the Paris Agreement, the Kyoto Protocol, the Doha Amendment thereto and the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage Associated with Climate Change Impacts) and implications for sustainable development in Africa, with a view to ensuring that the recommendations to the Climate Action Summit by necessity also include recommendations about what needs to be done in order to ensure that the global climate governance framework delivers on the ideals of the Paris Agreement

⁵ See <https://climateactiontracker.org/global/cat-thermometer/>.

⁶ See www.un.org/en/climatechange/un-climate-summit-2019.shtml.

⁷ See <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/08/1043591>.

- Assess the status of the climate response, both globally and within Africa, and take stock of the different commitments and actions that African countries and different constituencies are taking to tackle climate change, with a focus on the six thematic and three focus areas of the Climate Action Summit
- Consolidate key commitments and actions to tackle climate change by African countries and various non-State actor constituencies, as well as major concerns as inputs to the Climate Action Summit
- Explore the linkages between the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Agenda 2063 of the African Union and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development for the following three purposes: to inform Common African positions towards the twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; to improve understanding of the revision of nationally determined contributions for better coherence, alignment and flow of resources for implementation; and to develop robust strategies for climate response and resilience.

3. Structure and format of the Eighth Conference on Climate Change and Development in Africa

The Conference will follow a traditional four-day structure: 27 August 2019 (the day before the official opening of the Conference) will be reserved for pre-events by partners and partnership meetings and the first official day (28 August 2019) will focus on setting the scene and assessing the state of global climate governance and the implications for sustainable development in Africa. This will be achieved through a keynote address on global climate governance and a keynote presentation of the Obasi Memorial Lecture, which will address questions regarding the IPCC special report on global warming of 1.5°C, what this means for Africa and what needs to be done. These will set the scene for the framing discussions on the specific focus areas of the Climate Action Summit.

The second and third days (29 and 30 August 2019) will focus on assessing the state of climate response globally and within Africa, focusing on the nine interdependent tracks of the Climate Action Summit listed below (see bullets). For each track, there will be a guiding presentation to ask the most pertinent questions, followed by a panel discussion of policymakers and other experts responding to the issues raised. This will be followed by a general discussion and suggestions for key issues to be included in the outcome document.

The third day will also include a poster session to showcase the research work of grantees of the first round of research grant awards of the Climate Research for Development in Africa programme, which is aimed at enhancing Africa's academic leadership on climate and development on the continent and thus enhancing Africa's presence in the IPCC process.

The third day will conclude with a closing plenary that will consolidate key African actions, commitments and messages for the Climate Action Summit. These will be channelled from the African Union to the Summit via the Government of Ethiopia.

4. Climate Action Summit

The Climate Action Summit to raise ambition for the Paris Agreement is organized along the following nine interdependent tracks, led by 19 countries and supported by various international organizations:

- **Climate finance and carbon pricing**

Mobilizing public and private sources of finance to drive decarbonization of all priority sectors and advance resilience. *Co-led by France, Jamaica and Qatar and supported by the World Bank*

- **Energy transition**

Accelerating the shift away from fossil fuels towards renewable energy and making significant gains in energy efficiency. *Co-led by Ethiopia and Denmark and supported by Sustainable Energy for All*

- **Industry transition**

Transforming industries such as oil and gas, steel, cement, chemicals and information technology. *Co-led by India and Sweden and supported by the World Economic Forum*

- **Nature-based solutions**

Reducing emissions, increasing sink capacity and enhancing resilience within and across forestry, agriculture, oceans and food systems, including through biodiversity, conservation, and leveraging supply chains and technology. *Co-led by China and New Zealand and supported by the United Nations Environment Programme and the Strategic Director of Skills, Systems and Synergies for Sustainable Development, David Nabarro*

- **Infrastructure, cities and local action**

Advancing mitigation and resilience at urban and local levels, with a focus on new commitments to low-emission buildings, mass transport, urban infrastructure and resilience for the urban poor. *Co-led by Kenya and Turkey and supported by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)*

- **Resilience and adaptation**

Advancing global efforts to address and manage the impacts and risks of climate change, particularly in the most vulnerable communities and nations. *Co-led by Egypt and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)*

- **Mitigation**

Generating momentum for ambitious nationally determined contributions and long-term strategies to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement. *Chile, which holds the Presidency of the twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, will be supported by the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Patricia Espinosa; the Administrator of UNDP, Achim Steiner; and the Chair of the B-Team, Paul Polman*

- **Youth engagement and public mobilization**

Mobilizing people worldwide to take action on climate change and ensure that young people are integrated and represented across all aspects of the Summit, including the six transformational areas. *Co-led by the Marshall Islands and Ireland with the support of the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth, Pan African Climate Justice Alliance and other non-State actors across the world*

- **Social and political drivers**

Advancing commitments in areas that affect people's well-being, such as reducing air pollution, generating decent jobs, strengthening climate adaptation strategies and protecting workers and vulnerable groups. *Co-led by Peru and Spain with the support of the Department Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations, the International Labour Organization and the World Health Organization*
