

COP 27:

WHY AFRICA NEEDS TO BE AT THE FOREFRONT OF THE CLIMATE CHANGE CONVERSATION

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INTRODUCTION

The 27th Conference of the Parties (COP) of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC) is set to take place from the 6th to 18th of November 2022 in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt. 196 countries will again gather to discuss the progress made implementing commitments from the last COP. The COP presents countries of the world the opportunity to meet and discuss the problem of climate change facing the planet. At last COP in Glasgow, Scotland, the UK led an aggressive campaign to ensure parties make firm commitments in line with the Paris Convention, however, the results from that COP are mixed. But where is Africa in all of these?

KEY COMMITMENTS MADE AT COP26

In 2015, at the Paris Convention (COP21), parties agreed on a new international climate agreement that aims to keep global warming at 1.5oC - 2 oC in accordance with the recommendations of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. COP26 represented another milestone in the climate change journey for countries around the world, especially African countries. COP26 saw developed countries make more commitments towards mitigating the impact of climate change.



At COP26, parties agreed on a number of issues: global warming needed to be kept at 1.5oC above pre-industrial levels; use of unabated coal power will be phased down and inefficient fuel subsidies phased out; the EU and the US launched the Global Methane Pledge with the goal of cutting methane emissions by 30% by the year 2030; more than 100 countries, including Brazil, Russia, Canada, and the Republic of Congo, announced the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use pledging to end deforestation by 2030; car manufacturers such as Ford, General Motors, Volvo, and Mercedes Benz agreed to only sell zero-emissions cars by 2040; and countries pledged to contribute to the Adaptation Finance. The COP also saw massive participation of the private sector with financial institutions promising to mobilise more than \$100 trillion to finance the energy transition.

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HIGHLIGHTING THE COP27

Commitments are a good way to go and indicate the intention of parties to make progress towards a set goal. However, in the case of climate change, mere commitments are insufficient. Actions are needed at this critical time in human history. Below are some of the reasons Africa should lead conversations at the COP27 in Egypt.

Underdevelopment and poverty. Many African countries are third world countries with many barely making it to the middle of the United Nations Human Development Index. Underdevelopment and poverty are glaring realities in many African countries with citizens largely living below poverty line and with many lacking access to basic amenities including electricity supply.

Africa contributes the least greenhouse gases yet is the continent most affected by it. Against the backdrop of underdevelopment and poverty prevalent in many African countries is the reality of coping with the effects of climate change. Climate change is attributed largely to the greenhouse gases created by the industrial activities of developed countries.

Africa in its entirety accounts for 3.8% of the entire greenhouse gases produced by the world. Declared by the United Nations as a climate change hotspot, an entire continent bears the brunt of the impact of climate change. Experts have indicated that Africa is the most vulnerable continent to climate change impacts under all climate scenarios above 1.5 degrees Celsius.

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Africa is experiencing urgent and apparent effects of climate change. Desertification is fast creeping in on Africa's forested areas. According to the UN, around 46% of Africa's land is impacted by desertification.

Africa's agricultural sector is critical to the economies of all African countries as more than 70% of Africans are dependent on agriculture for their livelihoods. Increased desertification means less land for agricultural purposes for a continent on the verge of food crisis.



Africa is not the climate change culprit. The world has already acknowledged that Africa is not the culprit when it comes to climate change and greenhouse gases. The entire continent produces a small percentage of the greenhouse gases produced by China alone yet is most vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

Not being the guilty party means that the continent is entitled to take the reins in directing the climate change conversations in its favour.

Climate change adaptation needs funding. Behind the rhetoric on climate change adaptation strategies is the reality that the wheels of climate change adaptation can only be efficiently oiled by the financial contributions of the industrialised nations. The issue of climate change mitigation funding has been a thorny issue in COP conversations since COP21 and has remained unresolved ever since. Industrialised nations are reluctant to remit pledged funds and Africa is in the unfortunate position of being unable to fund home-grown adaptation solutions. The funding issue has created a clear dichotomy between the Global North, who are industrialised, wealthy and clear participants in the climate change crisis and the Global South, undeveloped, poor and helpless in the face of the climate change crisis.

CONCLUSION

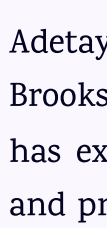
This year, COP27 will be held on African soil in Egypt. It presents yet another opportunity for African countries to lead the climate change conversations and to tell their stories. Africa must understand that it will be a herculean

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task to make industrialised nations remit their pledges to aid Africa in its climate change adaptation journey. Therefore, innovative solutions need to be worked around. For instance, a particular percentage could be imposed as climate change mitigation tax on transactions and trade done by industrialised nations with African countries. In 2021 alone, China's trade with Africa was valued at US \$176billion. 10% climate change adaptation tax on that amount would amount to \$US17.6billion. Africa should also explore the option of partnering with other industrialised countries that are sympathetic to its cause to act as collection agents. On the other hand, African leaders also need to do better regarding accountability, transparency and the fight against corruption. Contributors to adaptation finance need the confidence that the taxes, grants or funds in whatever dimension will be put to the agreed purpose and not diverted for personal gains.

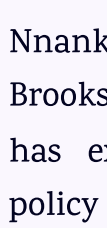
Negotiations take a while and COP27 is clearly not the end of the road, but African voices need to be the loudest and be heard if the UNFCCC desires to make progress. Time is fast running out.

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