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SHIFTING POWER QUARTERLY

A PUBLICATION OF **POWER SHIFT AFRICA**

NEW CAMPAIGN FOR ADAPTATION

The Pan-African Coalition for Adaptation and Resilience (PACAR) has a new campaign. Put your best foot forward and join it. **Page 32**

PIPE DREAMS AND UNREFINED IDEAS

Billionaire Dangote wants a refinery in East Africa. In 2026. Bang in the middle of an energy transition! **P.12**



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SB64: THE AFRICAN AGENDA

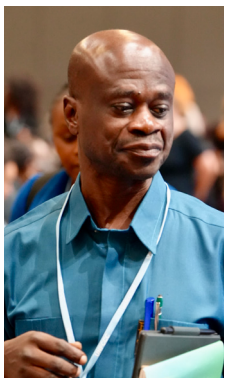


UN Climate Change Executive Secretary Simon Stiell makes his opening speech at the 64th sessions of the Subsidiary Bodies under the UNFCCC (SB64). **PHOTO | POWER SHIFT AFRICA**

In this special issue from the German city of Bonn, our analysts present Africa's priorities as delegates to the SB64 talks debate the planet's climate future. Fittingly, Bonn is the birthplace of Ludwig van Beethoven, whose deep appreciation of nature found expression in his *Pastoral Symphony*, a timeless reminder of the need for harmony between humanity and the natural world

THE AGE OF ADAPTATION IS HERE: And what we do with it depends on whose interests we serve. Page 6

AGN CHAIR ROOTS FOR SOLUTIONS: Talk is good... but actions are better, he says. **Page 4&5**



BUMPY ROAD FOR FINANCE: Even in Bonn the pledges will come, but will the money flow? Page 16

THE YOUTH COULD BE ON THE MENU: Remeber that old adage about being either on the table or becoming the meal? It holds true, even in climate negotiaions. Page 24

yay or nay

WHERE THE WORLD MADE OR SHED CLIMATE PROGRESS IN THE LAST THREE MONTHS

FRENCH COUNCIL BLOCKS ATTEMPT TO ABOLISH LOW-EMISSION ZONES: In May 2026, France's Constitutional Council blocked an attempt to abolish low-emission zones in major cities. Environmental groups welcomed the ruling, arguing it preserved a key climate and public-health policy. The decision kept restrictions on high-polluting vehicles despite growing political pressure from conservative and far-right lawmakers.

AMERICA REPEALS LEGAL FINDING ON POLLUTION LIMITS FOR VEHICLES: In May 2026, the US Environmental Protection Agency repealed the legal finding underpinning federal greenhouse-gas limits for vehicles. The move effectively dismantled national emissions standards introduced after 2009, triggering lawsuits and fierce criticism from climate advocates, who warned the policy rollback would weaken America's ability to reduce transport-sector emissions

KENYA INTRODUCES NEW CLIMATE CHANGE REGULATIONS: Kenya introduced new Climate Change Regulations in February 2026, expanding support for non-market climate projects such as reforestation, renewable energy and climate-smart agriculture. The rules created a legal framework for community-focused climate action beyond carbon trading, signalling a broader policy shift towards resilience and sustainable development initiatives.



GERMANY REPLACES GREEN HEATING LAW WITH WEAKER RULES: Germany's government voted in May 2026 to replace its controversial green heating law with weaker building-modernisation rules. The original policy required most new heating systems to use at least 65% renewable energy. Critics said the rollback undermined climate targets, even as Germany already appeared likely to miss its 2030 emissions goals.

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editor's note

We have to let the rubber meet the road at Bonn talks

Our climate story should humanity's story; a reflection of the fact that we are but passing custodians of this planet. At the SB64 talks, a solutions orientation emerged at the opening plenary

MOHAMED ADOW

Friends, welcome to yet another edition of *Shifting Power Quarterly*, this time produced in Bonn, Germany as part of our coverage of the African and Global South agenda at the June climate talks. The analyses, arguments, and perspectives presented in this magazine are important because international climate negotiations often unfold in the language of targets, timelines and technical decisions, yet beneath the complexity lies a simpler question: can humanity act collectively in the face of a challenge that respects no border, ideology or level of development? As delegates convene in Bonn, that question remains as relevant as ever.

In his opening remarks at the opening ceremony of the SB64 talks, UN Climate Change Executive Secretary Simon Stiell reflected on the extraordinary nature of the climate process itself. Few issues have required such sustained cooperation among nations with differing histories, interests and priorities. Progress has not always been linear, nor has it come easily. Yet despite setbacks and disagreements, the international community has continued to build a framework through which collective action remains possible.

This achievement should neither be overstated nor underestimated. The world is not yet on a pathway consistent with its climate ambitions. At the same time, climate action today occupies a place in economic planning, investment decisions and public policy that would have been difficult to imagine only a generation ago. The challenge before us is therefore not simply one of ambition, but of implementation.

For Africa, this distinction matters profoundly. Across the continent, climate change is a present reality. Communities are adapting to changing rainfall patterns, growing pressures on food systems, rising temperatures and increasingly frequent climate-related disasters.

The interventions of the Chair of the African Group of Negotiators, Dr Antwi Amoah, at the opening session reflect this reality. His emphasis on adaptation, finance, technology and just transition is rooted not in abstract negotiation positions, but in the everyday realities facing developing countries.

Adaptation remains central because it speaks to humanity's enduring capacity to respond to change. The ongoing discussions surrounding the Baku Adaptation Roadmap, the Belém-Addis Vision and the development of meaningful indicators are important efforts to better understand where support is needed, what progress is being made, and how collective learning can be strengthened.

Similarly, discussions on climate finance continue to occupy a prominent place because trust remains the currency of international cooperation. Commitments carry meaning when they are translated into predictable and accessible support. For developing countries, clarity around definitions, accountability and delivery is not a procedural concern; it is essential to effective implementation.

The same logic applies to the evolving conversation on just transition. Every society will navigate the climate transition through its own economic, social and developmental circumstances. The task before the international community is not to prescribe a single pathway, but to create conditions that allow countries to pursue climate objectives while advancing prosperity, inclusion and social stability.

Trade, technology and transparency also feature prominently on the Bonn agenda. Here, too, the underlying challenge is one of balancing environmental responsibility with developmental aspirations, national circumstances with collective obligations, and immediate needs with long-term sustainability.

The road from Bonn to future COPs will undoubtedly present further challenges, but the central task will remain translating consensus into action and commitments into outcomes. For Africa, the measure of progress will be found in stronger communities, more resilient economies and a climate process that continues to demonstrate that cooperation, however difficult, remains both possible and necessary.



the team

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POWER BRIEFS

SOUTH AFRICA RAISES CARBON TAX, TIGHTENS REGIME South Africa has increased its carbon tax from R236 to R308 per tonne of CO_2e as Phase II of its carbon pricing system began earlier this year. The policy also reduced tax-free emissions allowances for large emitters. Officials say the reforms strengthen long-term decarbonisation incentives, though industry groups warn of higher electricity and industrial production costs across coal-dependent sectors.

EU CARBON BORDER RULES RESHAPE AFRICAN EXPORT The European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism entered full enforcement in May, requiring importers to pay for embedded emissions in steel, cement, and aluminium. African exporters are now under pressure to adopt stricter carbon accounting systems. Policymakers across the continent are reviewing industrial strategy and emissions reporting rules to protect export competitiveness in European markets.

AFRICA'S SOLAR APPETITE GROWING, SHOWS APRIL DATA Countries across the continent rushed in April to import panels from China before prices jumped. The spike was driven by energy-security fears and the Iran-war shock to global markets, but it also shows how quickly African buyers are turning to renewables to power their ambitions.

NIGERIA IN NEW ROUND OF FOSSIL-FUEL PHASE-OUT TALKS Nigeria is one of about 60 governments discussing how to shift industry from gas to electricity and trim fossil-fuel subsidies. For Africa, that matters as it it signals that some policymakers are finally treating exit plans as an economic issue. Eyes are now on how long this round of talks takes.

diplomacy

Now or never: Antwi calls for African agency at Bonn talks

In opening remarks at SB64 talks, Dr Antwi welcomes updates to the Climate Finance Work Programme, particularly discussions on scope and modalities, but stresses that negotiations must remain focused on Article 9.1.

BONN, GERMANY: JUNE 08, 2026

The chair of the African Group of Negotiators (AGN) has called for stronger action on adaptation, climate finance, just transition and trade issues as negotiators gather for the latest round of UN climate talks in Bonn, Germany

In remarks delivered on behalf of the AGN at the opening plenary of the SB64 sessions here, Nana Dr Antwi-Boasiako Amoah said African countries were seeking concrete progress on several key negotiating tracks ahead of COP31, and also addressed the need for outcomes that support implementation rather than create additional burdens for developing nations.

On adaptation, Dr Antwi said the group looked forward to productive discussions on the Baku Adaptation Roadmap, the Belem-Addis Vision, and technical work related to adaptation indicators agreed at COP30 in Belem. He said the indicators should provide clear and practical information to feed into the Global Stocktake, helping assess adaptation action as well as support needed and provided.

The AGN, he said, is also seeking progress on the composition and modalities of the Technical Task Force.

"We reiterate that the primary purpose of agreed indicators is to ensure we have clear and usable information feeding into the global stocktake in respect of adaptation action as well as on support needed and provided," he said in his remaks.

Climate finance remains a central concern for African negotiators, and Dr Antwi reminded delegates that the Climate Finance Work Programme emerged from a united effort by developing countries, and is rooted in Article 9.1 of the Paris Agreement. He expressed concern that the programme is not reflected in the CMA.8 agenda, arguing that this omission should be corrected. The AGN welcomed updates to the Climate Finance Work Programme, particularly discussions on scope and modalities, but stressed that negotiations must remain focused on Article 9.1, with other provisions of Article 9 serving only as context. He also called for work towards a clear operational definition of climate finance, including issues such as grant equivalence, additionality, predictability and accountability.

On just transition, the AGN chair described the agreement on a Just Transition Mechanism at COP30 as one of the conference's major achievements.

However, he said negotiators must ensure sufficient time is allocated to all elements of the agenda, including key messages from the dialogue process, development of terms of reference for reviewing the work programme, and operationalisation of the new mechanism.

The AGN also expressed concerns over the relationship between climate policy and international trade, with Dr Antwi saying African countries wanted constructive discussions on how trade measures affect their ability to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement while pursuing sustainable development and poverty eradication.

"Africa is unapologetic about protecting her development space," he said, while pointing to concerns over unilateral measures, climate-related trade restrictions, and supply-chain regulations that impose costs on developing countries without corresponding support.

Looking ahead, the AGN outlined several priorities for the subsidiary bodies. These include advancing the Mitigation Work Programme as a facilitative platform that supports implementation without creating new obligations; progressing negotiations on agriculture with the aim of agreeing the agenda's scope at COP31; resolving arrangements for hosting a Climate Technology Centre and fully operationalising the Belem Technology Implementation Programme; and ensuring adequate support for transparency-related reporting and capacity building.

The group also emphasised the importance of technical assistance from the Consultative Group of Experts and the UN climate secretariat to help developing countries establish national systems capable of using the new Global Goal on Adaptation indicators.

The intervention signals Africa's intention to push for implementation-focused outcomes, greater support for developing countries and stronger recognition of development priorities as negotiations continue.



POWER FACT

Cometh the man, cometh the hour: Dr Nana Dr Antwi-Boasiako Amoah makes his remarks at the opening session of the SB64 talks in Bonn. The June climate talks are the first for him as Chair of the African Group of Negotiators on Climate Change. Although he has attended previously, this marks his first chance to steer the process from the top.

fyi

The SB64 talks in Bonn are expected to advance technical work on adaptation under the Global Goal on Adaptation. African Negotiators, led by Dr Antwi (above) are focusing on refining a set of indicators to track progress across resilience, planning and implementation. Discussions are also expected to address adaptation finance, with developing countries seeking greater clarity and predictability, while developed countries are gearing up to protect existing funding mechanisms. Efforts continue to improve reporting frameworks ahead of COP30, aiming to strengthen transparency and comparability of adaptation actions globally.



the watchdog

The age of adaptation is here; what we do with it is up to us



BY AMOS WEMANYA

Bonn is often described as the technical bridge between COPs, yet the decisions and discussions that take place at SB64 will shape the trajectory toward COP32 in Addis Ababa. For Africa, this is a defining moment. The continent is increasingly united around a simple but powerful proposition; that adaptation is not a side issue, a humanitarian concern, or an environmental add-on, but the foundation upon which future development will be built

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For decades, adaptation occupied the margins of climate policy. It was often framed as a technical exercise managed by environmental ministries, supported by small donor-funded projects, and discussed largely as a humanitarian response to disasters. Yet economic planning, infrastructure development, food system strategies, and national budgets continued to be designed and implemented on separate tracks.

That era is over. Across Africa, droughts, floods, heatwaves, crop failures, and water shortages are no longer future climate risks; they are present-day economic realities disrupting national development pathways. The question is no longer whether countries should invest in adaptation, but whether development can happen at all without it.

As Africa heads toward COP32 in Addis Ababa and engages in critical negotiations at SB64 in Bonn, adaptation should move from the sidelines to the centre of global climate governance.

For Africa, the need is more urgent than ever. The continent is warming faster than many parts of the world, forcing communities that have contributed the least to global emissions to face some of the most severe climate impacts.

In the Horn of Africa, a devastating drought following failed rainy seasons has left 3.5 million Kenyans facing acute food insecurity, severely compromising crop production and livestock productivity.

Across Southern Africa, relentless downpours and cyclones triggered historic flooding in Mozambique, affecting over 720,000 people and wiping out 440,000 hectares of vital crops. Meanwhile, in West and Central Africa, escalating climate disasters are displacing hundreds of thousands of people, straining limited public resources and forcing governments to rely heavily on international emergency funding.

These climate shocks are exposing vulnerabilities that run much deeper than weather. Food systems collapse because they remain heavily dependent on rain-fed agriculture. Water insecurity worsens because investment in resilience has lagged behind climate realities. Social protection systems become overwhelmed because climate risks compound existing poverty and inequality.

Climate impacts are no longer simply environmental events as they have transformed to economic, fiscal, food security, and governance shocks. This is why adaptation can no longer be treated as an environmental sector issue; it is now central to national development planning, economic stability, and state resilience.

Africa already loses billions of dollars annually from climate-related disasters. Some estimates suggest that climate impacts are reducing economic growth by as much as five per cent of GDP in several countries. Compounding these challenges, geopolitical crises are magnifying climate vulnerability.

The recent global food and energy price shocks triggered by conflicts beyond Africa's borders exposed the dangerous interconnectedness of climate risks, energy insecurity, and food dependence. Rising fuel prices increased transportation and agricultural production costs, fertiliser prices surged, food imports became more expensive, inflation rose, and household vulnerability deepened.

For millions of Africans, climate vulnerability is no longer driven solely by rainfall patterns, but by a complex combination of climate shocks, debt pressures, global market volatility, and fragile supply chains. Adaptation cannot be viewed simply as responding to climate hazards, and must instead become part of a broader strategy for economic transformation, resilience, and sovereignty.

For too long, adaptation has been reduced to isolated projects — a seawall here, an irrigation scheme there, a flood barrier somewhere else. While such interventions remain important, they often fail to address the deeper structural drivers of vulnerability.

Africa needs to move away from incremental adaptation toward transformational adaptation as the latter recognises that resilience requires systemic change. It requires climate considerations to shape how countries plan cities, design infrastructure, manage water resources, support farmers, structure social protection systems, and allocate public finance.

Perhaps the most important shift taking place is the growing recognition that Africa already possesses many of the solutions needed to build resilience. Across the continent, communities have developed adaptation practices over generations. Farmers have preserved traditional seed systems capable of withstanding climate variability. Pastoralists have developed mobility systems that respond to changing environmental conditions. Communities have refined water harvesting technologies and land restoration approaches adapted to local ecosystems.Yet these solutions remain undervalued within many global climate processes.

The dominant climate narrative often portrays Africa as vulnerable, dependent, and lacking solutions, but the reality is very different. Africa is rich in knowledge, innovation, and resilience. There is need for stronger recognition of indigenous knowledge systems, agroecology, traditional farming practices, community-based resource management, and locally driven adaptation models.

The future of adaptation in Africa cannot be imported. It must be co-created with the communities already living on the frontlines of the climate crisis. This means placing farmers, women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, and local communities at the centre of adaptation planning and implementation.

Bonn is often described as the technical bridge between COPs, yet the decisions and discussions that take place at SB64 will shape the trajectory toward COP32 in Addis Ababa. For Africa, this is a defining moment. The continent is increasingly united around a simple but powerful proposition; that adaptation is not a side issue, a humanitarian concern, or an environmental add-on, but the foundation upon which future development will be built.

As climate impacts intensify, the distinction between adaptation policy and development policy is rapidly disappearing. The countries that succeed in the coming decades will not necessarily be those with the most resources, but those that successfully integrate climate resilience into every aspect of national planning.

The Bonn talks must help move adaptation from the margins of climate negotiations into the centre of economic decision-making, finance reform, and international cooperation. Because for Africa, adaptation is no longer a side quest; it is the main mission.

Romance without finance? Why Global Goal on Adaptation is the unkept bargain of developed countries

What we need now is not just better metrics — even though useful — but a renewed political commitment to elevating adaptation as a global priority; one that puts the cost of resilience into practice and acknowledges that the adaptation needs of one country are the shared responsibility of all

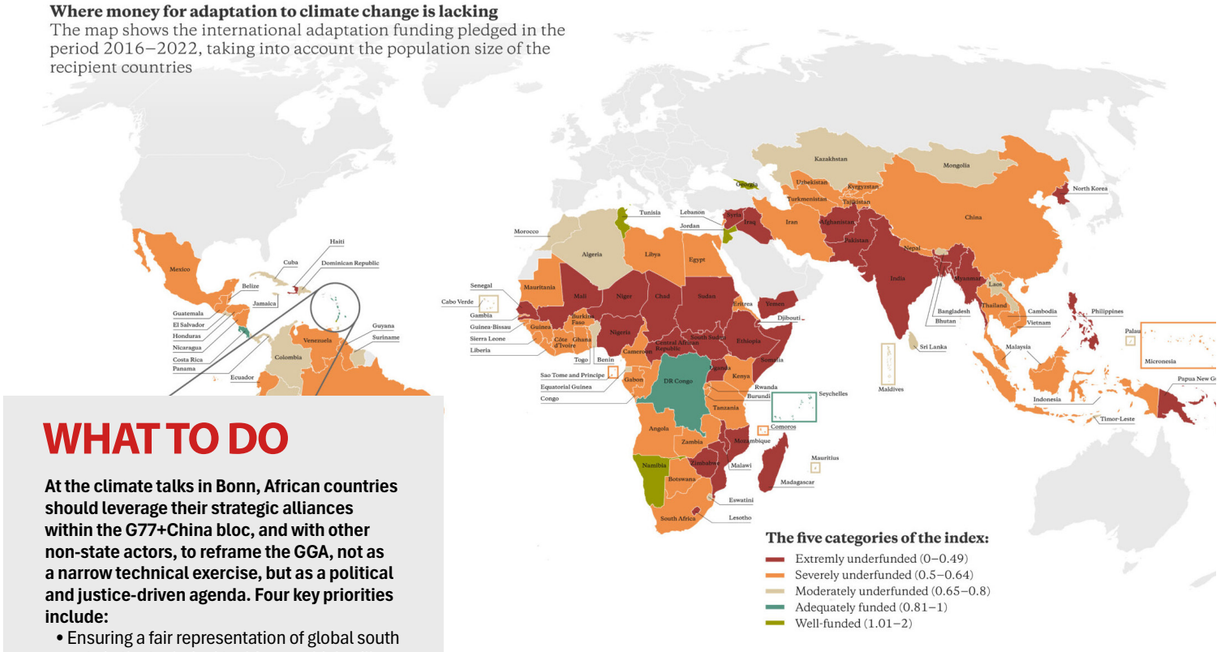


BY PATIENCE AGYEKUM AND AMY G. THORP

For decades, adaptation under the UNFCCC remained the ugly stepsister of global climate action. Overshadowed by mitigation, its progress stalled, and critically underfunded, it appeared to be a low political priority and largely confined to small-scale, incremental projects. At the root of these delays lay a Global North fear that prioritising adaptation might divert attention away from cutting greenhouse gas emissions. In the global climate change landscape, visibility often dictates funding flows. However, adaptation has lately gained political traction, both within and outside UNFCCC. At the heart of the renewed attention is the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA), enshrined in Article 7 of the Paris Agreement and akin to the 1.5 °C goal. Conceived and championed by the African Group of Negotiators (AGN), the GGA represents a concerted effort from developing countries to reframe adaptation as a collective global priority and goal, helping elevate it to achieve material and political parity with mitigation.

How GGA has progressed since Paris

The initial fanfare surrounding the adoption of the GGA quickly faded, with momentum stalling for nearly five years as work on mitigation advanced steadily. Frustration from developing countries eventually helped revive the adaptation agenda, and at COP26 in 2021, parties launched the Glasgow–Sharm El-Sheikh (Glass) Work Programme to give meaning to the GGA, clarify what it means in practice, how it can be achieved, and how progress can be measured. Through workshops and Party submissions from parties and other non-state actors on defining the GGA from COP26 to COP28 in 2023, the United Arab Emirate Framework for Global Climate Resilience (UAE-FGCR) was adopted. Many consider this framework as the turning point for the GGA, with countries finally agreeing on a set of 11 targets: seven of them thematic (food and agriculture, water, health, ecosystems, poverty and livelihoods, cultural heritage, infrastructure), and four related to the adaptation policy cycle that will help countries assess and strengthen their national adaptation planning and implementation processes. At the same time, the two-year UAE-Belem work programme was also launched to develop indicators to assess progress across the 11 targets.



WHAT TO DO

At the climate talks in Bonn, African countries should leverage their strategic alliances within the G77+China bloc, and with other non-state actors, to reframe the GGA, not as a narrow technical exercise, but as a political and justice-driven agenda. Four key priorities include:

- Ensuring a fair representation of global south experts in the technical taskforce, which will be established to refine the Belem Adaptation Indicators
- Providing the necessary political leadership to retain momentum on adaptation finance by linking the new tripling of adaptation finance by 2035 goal to the UNFCCC adaptation architecture. The Belem-Addis Vision (BAV) and the Baku Adaptation Roadmap (BAR) can serve as platforms for tracking progress and demanding accountability.
- Ensuring the tripling commitment is also accompanied by a roadmap to scale up adaptation finance, with intermediate targets and increased flows through multilateral climate funds such as the Adaptation Fund and Green Climate Fund.
- Providing clear guidance on how the Global Environmental Facility, Green Climate Fund and Adaptation Fund respond to the call in paragraphs 17,18 and 19 of the COP30 decision on the GGA to support developing countries in implementing the framework for global resilience, including on testing the indicators.

Shift from cooperation to metric game

The negotiations and discussions that have followed the adoption of the UAE-FGCR in 2023 and the Belem Adaptation Indicators at COP30 in 2025 have largely revolved around how adaptation is measured, which indicators are most useful, and how to balance global applicability with local relevance. While these debates are important for measuring progress and tracking accountability, they have also reduced adaptation, which is vital to communities' livelihoods and wellbeing, to a mere technical exercise and jargon. In the process, big words and circular arguments have once again quietly shifted political attention away from the big elephant in the negotiation room: the means to support implementation.

The central idea underpinning the GGA is about enhancing global cooperation to collectively reduce vulnerabilities, enhance adaptive capacity, and build resilience. Yet it now risks being reduced to a technical tool for measuring efficiency, one that could inadvertently restrict access to finance for some vulnerable countries. The success of the GGA will not only rest on the sophistication of its indicators, but ultimately whether climate-vulnerable countries and communities have access to the finance, technology and capacity building support needed to reduce their vulnerability and strengthen resilience in practice.

For Africa, the GGA must address historical responsibility, the structural drivers of vulnerability, and mobilise global solidarity and support for communities to secure their food, water and health systems; protect livelihoods and ecosystems; build climate-resilient infrastructure; and withstand increasingly severe climate impacts.

No resilience without finance

The provision of finance from developed to developing countries, as part of their means of implementation support, has always been a contentious issue within the UNFCCC. Developed countries often claim to have met their obligations, but adaptation finance for developing countries remains wholly inadequate and far below the $310-to-$365 billion annual gap. The fact that the majority of funds continue to flow into mitigation projects not only leaves adaptation underfunded, but also illuminates the political prioritisation of mitigation over adaptation by developed countries. Worse still, Africa only received one-fifth of its annual adaptation finance needs in 2021/2022, and the majority of this finance came in the form of loans. This means that African countries are not only more debt distressed, but are also spending more from their domestic budgets on adaptation than the support they receive.

Amy G Thorp is the Programmes Manager while **Patience Agyekum** is the Climate Adaptation and Campaigns Officer at Power Shift Africa.

Reporting by Meshack Mboya in Cape Town, James Kahongeh in Nairobi, and Karabo Mokganyana in Brazzaville and Washington, DC.

power briefing

ECONOMY

DEVELOPMENT FINANCE TAKES CENTRE STAGE AT AfDB ANNUAL MEETINGS

Brazzaville, Republic of Congo: Africa's future development financing model emerged as the defining theme of the 2026 African Development Bank (AfDB) Annual Meetings, where governments, financiers, private sector leaders and civil society representatives gathered to chart the continent's economic priorities under newly elected AfDB President Sidi Ould Tah.

While the bank's ten-year strategy (2024–2033) remains firmly in place, discussions focused on how it will be implemented through upcoming sector frameworks, including agriculture, gender and a Climate Change Action Plan due later this year. Participants stressed the need for integrated approaches linking infrastructure, energy, industrialisation and climate resilience.

A recurring focus was the New African Financial Architecture for Development (NAFAD), a framework aimed at reducing dependence on external financing amid declining aid flows, rising debt burdens and growing geopolitical uncertainty. Delegates cited pension funds, sovereign wealth funds, insurance assets and diaspora capital as underused sources of development finance.

Concerns over debt sustainability also featured prominently, with participants warning that some countries are increasingly borrowing at higher costs to service existing debt obligations. Many called for stronger domestic resource mobilisation and improved financial governance.

Energy security remained a key issue, particularly through Mission 300, the joint AfDB-World Bank initiative to connect 300 million Africans to electricity by 2030. Discussions centred on renewable energy, regulatory reform and institutional capacity, while debate continued over the Mozambique LNG project and its social and environmental implications.

The meetings also marked a milestone in civil society engagement, with the Bank's first-ever Civil Society Town Hall signalling a broader push for transparency and accountability.

At the end of the talks, it was clear to many that Africa's development future will depend increasingly on its ability to mobilise, govern and deploy its own capital.

Nairobi, Kenya: Climate justice advocates, researchers, organisers and policy actors from across Africa gathered in Nairobi from May 7 to 9, 2026 for a convening on energy development and just transition, with participants warning that the continent's energy future cannot be reduced to a simple swap from fossil fuels to renewables.

The convening brought together voices from movements working on climate justice, labour, gender, tax justice, food systems, migration, extractives and industrial policy. Many participants argued that these struggles are too often treated separately, even though they are deeply connected. They called for a stronger continental strategy capable of linking energy access, value addition, job creation and public accountability.

The discussions took place against a backdrop of global fragmentation, competition over critical minerals, shrinking climate and development finance, rising economic nationalism, debt pressures, and persistent energy insecurity. In that climate, participants said Africa risks being pushed into another extractive cycle unless it builds stronger regional bargaining power.

A recurring concern was that the continent remains strategically important to the global energy transition yet structurally vulnerable within the global economy.

Participants warned that fragmented national approaches weaken Africa's hand when dealing with multinational companies, trading firms and external powers. They called for coordinated regional industrial strategies, stronger taxation systems, domestic resource mobilisation and collective bargaining frameworks.

Much of the discussion centred on the danger that Africa could be locked into a "green extractivism" model, in which mining expands under the banner of decarbonisation while local economies remain stuck exporting raw materials.

Participants argued that renewable energy and mineral wealth should instead support domestic industrialisation, regional manufacturing, job creation and infrastructure development.

WASHINGTON, DC

Springing feuds? A clash of ideas at 2026 World Bank meetings



Divisions over climate finance, fossil fuel investment and the future direction of development lending dominated discussions at the 2026 Spring Meetings of the World Bank in Washington, DC, as governments, financiers and civil society groups clashed over the institution's shifting priorities.

The meetings came at a pivotal moment for the Bank, which is restructuring through its "One World Bank Approach", an effort to align operations across institutions including the International Finance Corporation and the International Monetary Fund. The overhaul is already reshaping internal strategies on climate, energy and development finance, while opening new political battles over how the Bank should operate in an increasingly unstable global economy.

One of the fiercest debates focused on the Bank's Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP), which expires in June 2026. Board members remain split on whether the framework should continue, be weakened, or be quietly dropped altogether. Tensions also emerged around the Bank's target of directing 45 per cent of financing toward climate-related projects. Several actors are reportedly pushing to lower the target, a move critics argue would damage accountability and dilute climate commitments at a time when climate disasters across the Global South are accelerating.

Disagreement also continues over the Bank's energy strategy, particularly the role of natural gas. Board members have yet to agree on whether gas should remain part of future investments, creating uncertainty around the institution's long-term position on fossil fuels. Campaigners warn that vague policy language and "energy security" arguments are increasingly being used to justify continued gas expansion in Africa.

The debate has become closely tied to the Bank's Fragility, Conflict and Violence strategy, where energy access is emerging as a growing concern in conflict-affected regions. Civil society groups and development advocates called for renewable energy to be embedded directly into FCV programming, arguing that decentralised clean energy systems can support resilience, recovery and peacebuilding in fragile states. Fossil fuels, meanwhile, remain linked to corruption, resource capture and political instability in several regions.

Questions also remain over the Bank's minerals and metals agenda, with officials expected to release a Minerals and Metals Implementation Plan in June. While country-level compacts are likely to follow, concerns persist over transparency and governance.

Attention also turned to proposed IFC-backed gas projects in Senegal and the wider Sahara region. Civil society organisations raised concerns that the projects are being advanced at management level before full Board scrutiny, while disputed emissions metrics and projected energy demand are being used to defend fossil fuel investments.

Power Shift Africa participated in several high-level engagements during the meetings, including shareholder bilaterals, climate roundtables and side events linked to its "Don't Gas Africa" campaign. The organisation also launched a new Clean Cooking Report and held strategy discussions with partners, including Natural Resources Defense Council and Recourse.

INDUSTRIALISATION

HOW GREEN STEEL CAN BECOME A CLIMATE SOLUTION AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY

Cape Town, South Africa. As governments and industries race to decarbonise heavy manufacturing, researchers, policy experts and civil society groups from across the Global South gathered in South Africa to examine whether green steel could become both a climate solution and a development opportunity. The workshop, titled **Building Global South Narratives and Pathways: Iron and Steel Transitions in India, South Africa, and Brazil,** brought together participants working on industrial policy, energy transitions and development finance. Discussions focused on how emerging economies can cooperate on low-carbon industrialisation while avoiding the unequal patterns that shaped previous extractive and manufacturing booms.

Steel production currently accounts for roughly 11 per cent of global carbon dioxide emissions, making it one of the world's most polluting industries. Yet demand for steel continues to grow, driven by infrastructure expansion, urbanisation and renewable energy development. Participants argued that the challenge facing the Global South is no longer whether industrial transitions will happen, but who will control them, finance them, and benefit from them.

Part of the workshop included a visit to the former ArcelorMittal Saldanha Steel plant in South Africa, which shut down in 2020 after struggling with high electricity costs. The site is now being repositioned as part of a proposed green iron project centred on hydrogen-based steelmaking.

Project developers outlined plans to use on-site hydrogen electrolysers powered by solar energy and battery storage, alongside off-site wind generation, to produce Green Direct Reduced Iron (DRI). The process replaces coal and gas with hydrogen to remove oxygen from iron ore, significantly cutting emissions from steel production. The project is designed to supply European markets seeking lower-carbon materials under tightening climate regulations such as the European Union's CBAM.

opinion & analysis



BY MOHAMED ADOW

Letter to Samia and Ruto: Banish this bad idea of a Dangote refinery

Nearly 600 million Africans still lack access to electricity, and their biggest problem is not a shortage of refined petrol but the absence of affordable, reliable power for homes, schools, hospitals and businesses; that's the direction our leaders should be facing

Billionaire Aliko Dangote wants to build a massive new oil refinery in East Africa. The proposal, which seeks backing from the governments of Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo, would if approved see a Nigeria-style refinery built in Tanzania's port city of Tanga or Kenya's Mombasa port for processing of crude from across the region.

But this is precisely the wrong investment at precisely the wrong time. Africa is being sold a 20th-century energy model just as the economics of the 21st century are moving decisively in another direction.

The real story of Africa's energy future is happening elsewhere; on rooftops, in mini-grids, in battery storage systems, and in rapidly expanding solar markets.

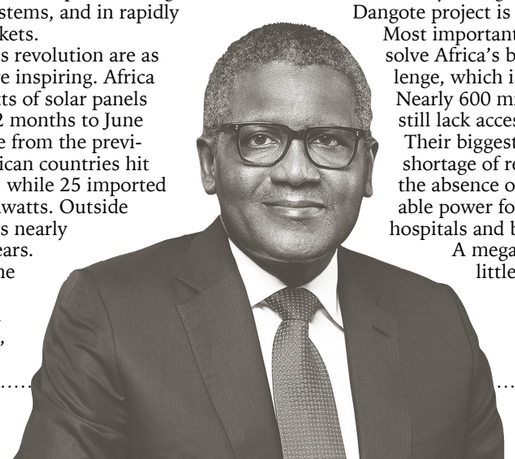
The numbers of this revolution are as staggering as they are inspiring. Africa imported 15 gigawatts of solar panels from China in the 12 months to June 2025, a 60% increase from the previous year. Twenty African countries hit record import levels, while 25 imported more than 100 megawatts. Outside South Africa, imports nearly tripled in just two years.

Yet that was only the beginning. Africa's solar imports surged again in March 2026, up 238% year-on-year, reaching $438 million in a single month. This is what an energy revolution looks like, and Africa is quietly but determinedly shifting its aspirations towards cleaner, safer and more sustainable solutions.

As the oligarchs plan their next moves, African households, businesses and governments are voting with their wallets. And why wouldn't they? A solar project can be deployed in months while a refinery takes years to build. At the same time, as solar costs fall, oil markets remain volatile and hostage to geopolitical shocks. Add to that the fact that distributed renewables bring electricity directly to communities while refineries primarily enrich political elites, fossil fuel companies and construction contractors, and you begin to see why the Dangote project is a bad idea.

Most importantly, solar helps solve Africa's biggest energy challenge, which is electricity access. Nearly 600 million Africans still lack access to electricity. Their biggest problem is not a shortage of refined petrol, but the absence of affordable, reliable power for homes, schools, hospitals and businesses.

A mega-refinery does little for a farmer in rural Tanzania trying to irrigate crops. It does little for a small business owner in Uganda relying on an expensive diesel generator, or for families in Kenya struggling with rising electricity bills. Solar, fortunately, can help all of them.



Unrefined idea? Aliko Dangote.

And let's be honest about what this refinery really represents, which is a dangerous long-term bet on declining global demand. The world is moving toward electric vehicles, battery storage, renewable power and cleaner transport systems.

Even major oil companies are being forced to confront the reality that long-term fossil fuel demand growth is slowing. Why, then, would Africa lock itself into billions of dollars of infrastructure that risks becoming a stranded asset before it has paid for itself?

We have seen this movie before. The oligarchs keep telling African leaders that fossil fuel megaprojects will bring prosperity, but too often they bring debt, corruption, pollution and profits that flow elsewhere. Communities, meanwhile, are left with degraded land, polluted air and broken promises.

We in East Africa have a chance to choose differently. We are blessed with some of the best renewable resources on Earth, including abundant solar potential, geothermal strength in Kenya, wind corridors across the Horn of Africa, and huge opportunities for battery-backed distributed systems.

That is where public money should go, and where Africa's development banks should focus. This might sound like an argument against industrialisation, but it isn't. Rather, it is a call for building industries that belong to the future instead of hanging onto the coat-tails of a glorious but dirty past.

Imagine an East Africa that becomes a global leader in solar power, battery assembly, electric mobility and clean industrial growth. That future is far more exciting and far more resilient than becoming locked into another generation of oil dependency.

Aliko Dangote is no doubt eager for East African countries to back his business ventures, but our leaders have a responsibility to think about our long-term future. The truth of the matter is that Africa does not need another monument to fossil fuel dependence as the solar revolution is already here.

Are our leaders paying attention?

Mohamed Adow is the director, Power Shift Africa.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Money, power and respect: How refinery plan gained momentum

2010s: Oil discoveries and regional ambitions. The origins of the Dangote refinery proposal can be traced to the period when major oil discoveries were made in Uganda and South Sudan. These discoveries triggered regional discussions about reducing East Africa's dependence on imported refined petroleum products. Despite possessing crude oil reserves, most East African countries continued exporting crude while importing expensive fuel from the Middle East and Asia. At the same time, Kenya and Tanzania were competing to position themselves as regional energy and logistics hubs. Governments increasingly viewed local refining as essential for industrialisation, energy security, and economic independence.

2016–2021: Pipeline politics reshape the debate. Attention shifted towards infrastructure planning with the development of the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP). The pipeline, designed to transport Ugandan crude oil to Tanzania's port city of Tanga, transformed regional energy calculations. As EACOP advanced, Tanga emerged as a possible refining centre because it would become the export point for Ugandan oil. Regional leaders and investors increasingly discussed the possibility of establishing a refinery linked to the pipeline system. However, financing problems, political negotiations, and environmental criticism delayed several refinery proposals.

2024: Dangote refinery begins operations in Nigeria. A major turning point came in 2024 when the Dangote Petroleum Refinery in Lagos officially commenced operations. With a refining capacity of 650,000 barrels per day, it became Africa's largest refinery. The success of the Lagos project immediately sparked speculation about whether the Dangote model could be replicated elsewhere on the continent. East Africa quickly emerged as a likely target because of rising fuel demand and limited refining capacity.

April 2026: Dangote announces interest in East Africa. The decisive public moment came during the Africa We Build Summit in Nairobi in April 2026. Speaking at the summit, Dangote stated that he was willing to invest in an East African refinery if governments provided policy support and commercial guarantees. The announcement triggered regional competition. Tanzania initially appeared favoured because of the EACOP connection and Tanga port. However, Kenya rapidly emerged as a strong contender, with Mombasa attracting attention due to its deep-water port, transport links, and access to regional markets.

May 2026: Leaders scramble for attention and ambition. As discussions expanded, the proposed refinery evolved into a symbol of regional industrial ambition. Leaders in Kenya and Uganda publicly supported strengthening East Africa's refining capacity as part of a broader strategy for economic integration and energy independence. Although no final investment decision has been confirmed, the proposal has already reshaped debates surrounding East Africa's industrial future and control over regional energy supply chains.

policy analysis

Why Africa's adaptation actions are a theatre of contemporary contradictions in climate policy



BY DR BRIAN MANTLANA

Adaptation advocates have not successfully dispelled its three major deterrents: removing attention from the core mission of climate response, which is reducing of greenhouse gas emissions; removing the label of adaptation as a 'public good' that is not an easy fit for private sector investments; and opening a door for liability and financial consequences for developed countries for limited adaptative capacity of developing countries.

Climate change adaptation has become the theatre where the contradictions of the contemporary global climate policy are staged. Today, most people may not remember that as recent as two decades ago, climate change adaptation was perceived not as a policy objective, but an index that could be used to understand the extent to which societies could tolerate changes in climate. A lot has happened since them.

Here is a contradiction. On one hand, once derided and relegated to be a distant cousin to climate change mitigation, climate change adaptation has become a central response to climate change. Today, the prominence of climate change adaptation is visible in many areas. For example, at the global climate negotiations under the UNFCCC and its Paris Agreement, climate adaptation has secured a prominent seat indicated by a fully architecture in those negotiations.

Internationally, there is an adaptation ISO standard (ISO 14090) established in 2019. Nationally, on the academic front, there are several climate adaptation specific journals, and the climate adaptation framings have shifted over time from climate change adaptation (CCA) to climate variability adaptation (CVA), and then to vulnerability-centred adaptation (VCA). Importantly, there are global funding mechanisms dedicated to climate adaptation.

All these unprecedented efforts are supported by extensive national and sub-national climate adaptation policies and strategies, most of which are Cabinet approved, where appropriate.

On the other hand, climate change adaptation remains ambiguous, conceptually. It is characterised by varying and evolving definitions, interpretations and framings of key adaptation concepts. Empirical evidence suggests that documented adaptation actions are generally fragmented, local, incremental, and show limited evidence of risk reduction outcomes.

The overall knowledge base of climate adaptation remains fragmented. There is limited understanding of the extent to which practical adaptation initiatives are equitably spread within and across countries. In any given context, there is inadequate understanding of what climate adaptation success would look like; what priorities to aim for, and how to evaluate progress toward intended outcomes.

These vague expressions of adaptation manifest the clearest in the adaptation section of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and unfortunately even in the NDCs of African countries. Because language is never neutral, the framings of adaptation used in national policy documents need considerable clarity.

Another venue of contradictions regarding climate change adaptation is the conflation of development with adaptation that is prevalent in the donor community, where funds allocated for development are labelled as support for climate adaptation; while international funding agencies regard adaptation as 'the additional layer' of actions to development initiatives to enhance societal resilience to impacts of climate change.

Policy makers in developing countries find themselves locked at the heart of these contradictions. They are aware that climate adaptation policies would be inadequate if they do not address the underlying socio-economic 'structural deficits' such as unemployment, poverty, and inequality. Yet, intentionally or not, policymakers have opted to operate within the confines of the narrow framings of climate adaptation that are contained in the UNFCCC and IPCC documents.

In these processes, adaptation is largely framed as "an adjustment" and is often defined away from the politically sensitive issues of access and control of natural resources. Policymakers are then left in a precarious position, constrained to unleash climate adaptation as a tool for effecting profound changes in the society.

In the 2020s, there is no doubt that climate change adaptation is more than 'a glass half-empty' in national and global climate policy formulation and implementation. However, adaptation advocates have not successfully dispelled its three major deterrents that are playing out in the theatre of global climate policy: removing attention from the core mission of climate response, which is reducing of greenhouse gas emissions; removing the label of adaptation as a 'public good' that is not an easy fit for private sector investments; and opening a door for liability and financial consequences for developed countries for limited adaptative capacity of developing countries.

My view is that the intersections between climate change adaptation and development provide the sweet spot for overcoming the above-described contradictions. Climate adaptation and development is 'a two-way street' where both actions become complementary and synergistic. Climate adaptation actions should address development challenges. While well planned and effectively implemented development actions should address multiple sources of climate vulnerability, including the underlying socio-economic structural sources of climate vulnerability like poverty, access to and control of resources.

Positioning development and adaptation as a two-pronged process with complementary and synergistic outputs and outcomes is not aimed at erasing the differences between adaptation and development.

Also, I should note that linking development and adaptation is not without its complications. Firstly, pursuit of these linkages risks leaving countries that have extensive development deficits ravaged by perpetual lack of adaptation.

Secondly, realisation of development–adaptation linkages require explicit targeting of climate resilient investments by African governments for their societies.

Thirdly, as mentioned above, the donor community tends to, conveniently and erroneously, conflate development and adaptation. And, fourthly, donor support for development is not equal across African countries.

Importantly for African policy makers, climate adaptation and adaptation are not politically contested topics in Africa. It is possible that adaptation and development mean different things to different sections of the African society.

Still, they remain politically uncontested issues. This reality provides several entry points for public-private partnerships and civil society–government partnerships to intentionally pursue actions that implement these interactions.

The adaptation concept occupies a prominent place in the African climate change policy landscape. However, adaptation remains plagued by several contradictions. The prioritisation of climate adaptation is essential to secure the development gains achieved by African countries.

The prevailing climate adaptation deficit in Africa, coupled with development challenges for many African countries, necessitates a government-led shift away from prioritising climate adaptation planning in African countries to implementation of climate adaptation actions that directly support development.

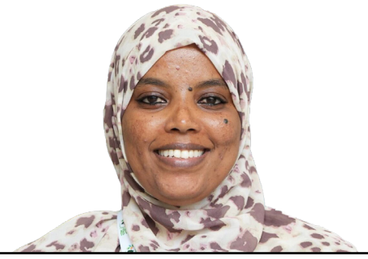


All decked up: Leshao Leshao from Kenya at the opening plenary of SB64.

Dr Brian Mantlana holds a PhD in Terrestrial Ecosystem Ecology from Wageningen University in The Netherlands and Max Planck Institute for Biogeochemistry in Jena, Germany. He leads the Holistic Climate Change Impact Area at the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research in South Africa, and is also a commissioner on the South African Presidential Climate Commission. bmantlana@csir.co.za

money matters

It's a bumpy road ahead for finance as we embark on the shift from talk to implementation



BY SAADA MOHAMED

The Bonn sessions are not usually a summit of headline-grabbing political announcements, but they remain a critical test of whether the world is serious about moving from broad commitments to concrete implementation arrangements; and for countries on the frontlines of climate change, that shift is overdue

The year 2025 marked big shifts in ambition and evolving geopolitical context that plunged the global climate finance landscape into a period of heightened complexity.

It defined COP30 in Brazil, where the Presidency united the world in celebration of the collective milestones achieved in the 10-year anniversary of the Paris Agreement while affirming the shared resolve to overcome the challenges, gaps, and barriers to transformative climate action.

This culminated in the political "Mutirão" decision that set in full motion the Paris Agreement policy cycle, fundamentally structured as a five-year ambition phase that enables transition of the agreement from negotiation to full implementation.

Countries also stressed the need for strong political will to uphold the Paris Agreement and its policy cycle as a foundation for trust, effective multilateralism, and accelerated action to continuously close ambition and implementation gaps.

However, the ultimate success of the policy cycle to effectively "move the needle" from negotiation to real-world action directly depends on predictable provision of quality and accessible finance from developed to developing countries.

The transition toward implementation of the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) from 2026 onwards is in motion as the previous $100 billion annual climate finance expired in 2025. This next phase is defined by scaling up financial targets as developed countries are tasked to take lead in mobilising at least $300 billion per year by 2035, including efforts towards at least tripling adaptation finance

However, this remains a pipe dream, if the climate finance numbers recorded over the last decade and evolving global trends are anything to go by.

Reports show that climate finance from the developed countries cumulatively reached $136.7 billion in 2024, the highest amount recorded, but which represents barely a fraction of the true scale of finance for Africa alone, estimated at approximately $280 billion annually by 2030.

Moreover, adaptation finance remains largely stagnated, accounting for less than a third of total climate finance in 2024. This is negligible as the annual investment needs, estimated at between $310 and $365 billion by 2035, dwarf the current adaptation finance level by a factor of more than 10.

Although international public finance represented the largest share, of around three-quarters of the total climate finance reported in 2024, over 67% was delivered mainly in form of non-concessional loans through multilateral development banks. Framing loans at market-rate interest as climate finance is the highest form of climate injustice as it diminishes the actual value of finance received if the loans are counted as grant equivalent rather than at face value.

As such, recurrent climate-induced shocks continue to spike the debt burden as it increases cost of capital, worsens debt-to-GDP ratio, shrinks fiscal space, and hinders domestic investment in future resilience. This trend locks vulnerable countries in a systemic debt trap loop while rich countries generate billions of dollars in economic gains from the high interest repayments and attached conditionalities.

Last year also marked a period of historic contraction of the Official Development Assistance (ODA), with a 9%-to-17% projected drop following a 9% decline in 2024. This downward trend is largely driven by major donors like the US, Germany, France, and the UK cutting simultaneously for the first time in decades, and the outlook beyond 2025 remains highly uncertain.

These announced cuts have direct and indirect consequences for climate finance delivery since developed countries draw most of their climate finance contributions from reclassifying the existing ODA with climate objectives.

This is evident as most countries are also retrenching their international climate finance targets and commitment periods while redirecting funds toward defence and other domestic priorities. The UK recently halved its prior commitment to Green Climate Fund by approximately £815 million between 2024 and 2027, while both France and Germany announced lower contributions to multilateral climate-related funds.

On the other hand, wealthy nations have positioned multilateral development banks as pivotal actors in advancing climate action, leveraging their business models to mobilise substantial financial resources, including private capital.

As such, the World Bank has underscored its role as a global climate leader by implementing a five-year Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP) beginning in 2021. This plan has served as a cornerstone for setting climate finance targets within its lending framework and aligning the Bank's overall financial strategies with the Paris Agreement.

Still, Africa is heading to the mid-year climate negotiations in Bonn with more rigour and hope to defend multilateralism for climate action and shape the technical foundations of future climate decisions amid all these uncertainties and fragmented geopolitical environment.

Top on the agenda is the commencement of the two-year work programme on climate finance, and Africa should leverage this space to demand that rich countries step up their climate leadership and reaffirm their real commitment to multilateralism for climate action. At the same time, developed countries should demonstrate good political will by prioritising incremental multi-year climate finance commitments to guarantee predictability and adequacy of public finance provision to enable climate action in developing countries.

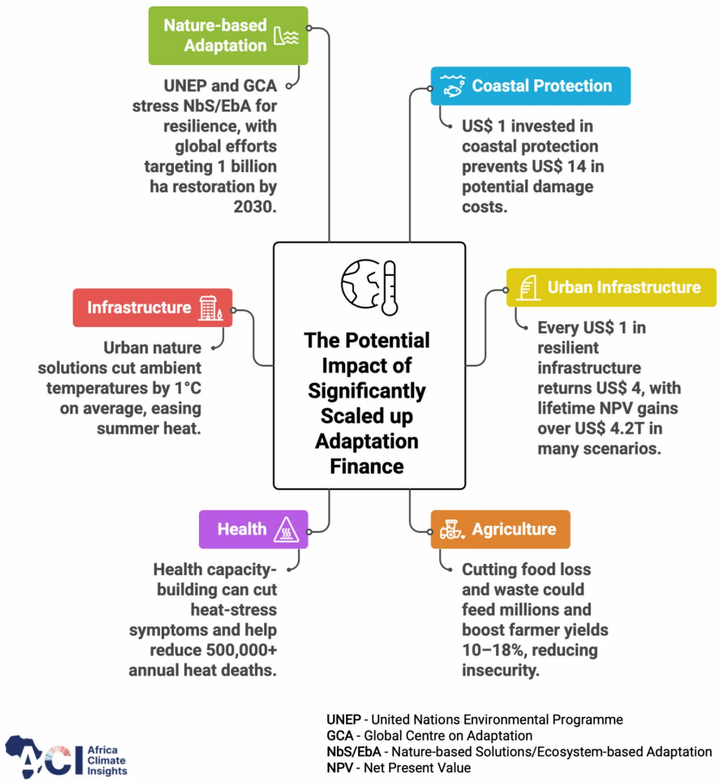
Africa should also urge rich countries to accelerate the implementation of their existing finance commitments, and lead in delivery of scaled-up quality and accessible climate finance, particularly for adaptation and loss and damage needs. This is vital to protect and advance the gains towards achieving global climate ambitions.

Most importantly, the discussions in Bonn should also lay groundwork for establishing a robust tracking and accountability framework that can effectively monitor the progress and delivery of the new finance target across all relevant actors.

The work programme should help identify potential action to improve the availability and comparability of data, and set up clear rules for reporting to enhance transparency and accountability arrangements. It should also advance the work on climate finance definitions, review reporting and accounting methodologies, including grant-equivalent perspectives, distinctions between provision and mobilisation reporting, and ways for addressing reporting lags.

Saada Mohamed is Climate Finance Advisor, Power Shift Africa. smohamed@powershiftafrica.org

Data Source: UNEP Adaptation Gap Report 2025; Global Commission on Adaptation (2021) "Adapt Now" Report; World Bank (2023) "Adaptation Actions" Data Portal



UNEP - United Nations Environmental Programme
GCA - Global Centre on Adaptation
NbS/EbA - Nature-based Solutions/Ecosystem-based Adaptation
NPV - Net Present Value

Africa Climate Insights

$136b

Reports show that climate finance from the developed countries cumulatively reached $136.7 billion in 2024, the highest amount recorded, but which represents barely a fraction of the true scale of finance for Africa alone, estimated at approximately $280 billion annually by 2030.

CCAP

The World Bank has asserted its role as a global climate leader by implementing a five-year Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP) beginning in 2021. This plan serves as a cornerstone for setting climate finance targets within its lending framework and aligning the Bank's overall financial strategies with the Paris Agreement.

letter from accra

Dear friends in West, stop forcing us to borrow to survive



BY DR GEORGE MANFUL

"The climate crisis was not made in Africa, but the bill is landing here."

The crisis is here; the money is not

Climate change is not an abstract story in Africa. It is a farmer watching the sky and wondering if the rain will come, a mother crossing a flooded street to reach a clinic, a trader losing stock when a market floods, a fisher family watching the sea move closer, or a mayor trying to repair roads again and again with a budget that was never enough in the first place. That is why adaptation finance matters. It is not about conferences, slogans, or distant promises, but whether communities can protect their lives, incomes, food, water, homes, and dignity before the next shock comes.

A gap too big to explain away

Africa's adaptation finance has increased in recent years, from $6.3 billion in 2017 to $14.8 billion in 2023. But this is still far below what African countries say they need. Their own national climate plans point to at least $70 billion a year. At the global level, developing countries may need $310-365 billion a year for adaptation by 2035, yet international public adaptation finance reached only $26 billion in 2023.

This is not a normal funding shortfall. The climate bill is growing faster than the finance being offered. Communities are facing the damage now, but the money is arriving late, in small amounts, and with too many conditions. The question the poor and vulnerable communities are asking is: Why are the needs racing ahead, and the money is crawling behind.

Do not call it charity; call it protection

Adaptation is often treated as aid for weak countries. That is the wrong idea. Adaptation is not charity, but smart prevention. It is the work done before disaster destroys lives and budgets. A strong drainage system can stop a flood from becoming a national emergency. Better water systems can protect farmers from drought. Early warning systems can give families time to move, save crops, and protect livestock. Climate-ready roads and bridges can keep children going to school and traders reaching markets. Coastal protection can defend homes and businesses. It is, essentially, hard protection for real people and real economies.

Rescue is expensive; prevention wiser

The tragedy is that Africa is being asked to face a fast-moving crisis with slow, small, and scattered finance. Even worse, too much of the money comes as loans. That matters because many adaptation investments do not produce easy cash for repayment. A flood wall may save thousands of homes, but it may not earn direct income. A drought warning system may protect food supplies, but it may not make profit. A restored wetland may stop flooding and protect nature, but private investors may still call it 'not bankable'.

If vulnerable countries must borrow to protect themselves from a crisis they did little to cause, then climate finance becomes another debt burden. That is not fair, or sustainable, or serious.

Africa needs a resilience compact

Africa needs a strong, predictable, locally led Adaptation Finance Compact. This compact should move the continent away from begging for scattered, project-by-project grants and create a clear investment platform linked to national climate plans, including National Adaptation Plans and Nationally Determined Contributions. It should help countries turn good plans into projects that can be funded and delivered. The principle should be simple: finance resilience before disaster strikes. Fund protection before roads wash away. Fund water security before harvests fail. Fund drainage before schools flood. Fund health preparedness before clinics are overwhelmed. Fund local action before families lose everything.

Where the money should land

First, finance must protect food and water. Communities need climate-smart farming, irrigation that saves water, drought-resistant crops and value chains, protected watersheds, better groundwater management, and rural livelihoods that can survive climate shocks. Second, finance must protect towns and cities. Drainage, roads, bridges, markets, schools, clinics, houses, ports, and energy systems must be climate-ready. Urban flooding, heat stress, and coastal erosion are now everyday threats to jobs, health, and safety. Third, finance must pay for early warning and early action. A warning that comes too late is not a warning. Risk data, local alerts, digital advice, social protection triggers, and pre-arranged disaster finance can save lives and reduce loss. Fourth, finance must protect nature, because nature protects people. Mangroves, forests, wetlands, rangelands, and watersheds are community defence systems. They reduce floods, slow erosion, support livelihoods, and keep ecosystems alive. Fifth, finance must build local capacity. Local leaders and community groups need training, project-preparation support, monitoring tools, and flexible funds. People cannot implement resilience projects with empty hands.

Grants first; debt last

A serious compact must be grant-heavy and debt-sensitive. Grants should pay for early warning, local adaptation, nature protection, project preparation, and public goods that do not generate profit. Concessional loans should be used only where repayment is realistic. Guarantees, local-currency tools, resilience bonds, and debt-for-resilience swaps can help where they fit, but they must not become excuses to push more debt onto countries already under pressure. Africa also needs a strong project-preparation facility. Many countries already know what they need. The problem is that plans are often not turned into ready projects. That gap between planning and financing must close.

A fair deal, not sympathy

Africa has contributed the least to the climate crisis, yet it is paying one of the highest prices. But this is not only a moral issue; it is also good economics. A resilient Africa means stronger food systems, safer cities, better markets, healthier ecosystems, and more stable economies.

Adaptation delayed is development reversed. The time to pay for resilience is before the next flood, drought, failed harvest, or emergency appeal.

Pay now, or pay far more later.

Dr George Manful, formerly a Senior Task Manager at the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), is a senior technical advisor to the Chair of the African Group of Negotiators on Climate Change. The views expressed here are his.



financing loss and damage

Critical test for Loss and Damage fund at Bonn talks

BY MARY KYANYI

Experts call for faster access to climate finance, stronger support for non-economic losses, and greater accountability as vulnerable countries grapple with mounting climate impacts.



Ahead of the 64th session of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies (SB64), the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD) came under close scrutiny, with negotiators and observers looking for concrete movement on resource mobilisation, access arrangements and the delivery of support to vulnerable communities affected by climate change.

Established at COP27 in 2022 and operationalised in 2023, the FRLD was designed to help developing countries recover from climate-related losses that cannot be prevented through mitigation or adaptation measures. While the fund's initial financing package of approximately US$250 million under the Barbados Implementation Modalities (BIM) has been welcomed as an important milestone, experts warn that significant gaps remain.

"The true measure of the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage is not in its institutional arrangements or governance structures, but in its ability to deliver direct, adequate and timely finance to communities recovering from climate impacts," said Amos Wemanya of Power Shift Africa.

The fund is intended to address both economic and non-economic losses resulting from climate change. These include damage to infrastructure, homes and livelihoods, as well as less visible impacts such as displacement, loss of cultural heritage, biodiversity decline, mental health challenges and the breakdown of social systems.

Recent floods across Mozambique, Kenya, Ethiopia, Morocco and South Africa have shown the urgency of addressing both forms of loss. While damaged roads, schools and homes can be quantified financially, the emotional trauma, disruption of education and loss of community networks often remain unaccounted for.

"Non-economic losses remain one of the most overlooked dimensions of climate change, despite their profound effects on lives, cultures and communities," Wemanya said.

Experts argue that conventional valuation methods are poorly suited to measuring such losses, creating challenges for compensation and recovery efforts. Technical support provided through the Santiago Network is expected to play a key role in helping countries such as Kenya, Rwanda and Zambia develop frameworks to assess and quantify non-economic losses.

Concerns also persist about the scale and predictability of funding. Although international pledges to the FRLD have surpassed US$700 million, many developing countries have stressed that pledges do not automatically translate into signed contribution agreements or actual disbursements.

The issue is particularly significant for Africa, which is estimated to lose approximately US$200 billion annually due to climate-related losses and damages. Despite annual climate finance needs estimated at US$277 billion, the continent currently receives less than 11 per cent of the required financing through existing climate funds and mechanisms.

At SB64, negotiators are expected to focus on implementation issues, including resource mobilisation, direct access arrangements, and collaboration with the Santiago Network. Stakeholders are urging parties to ensure that funding reaches affected communities quickly and without the bureaucratic hurdles that have slowed access to other climate finance mechanisms.

Observers say the Barbados Implementation Modalities offer a promising foundation, particularly through their emphasis on direct budget support and country ownership. However, questions remain about whether local institutions will have sufficient capacity and authority to manage resources effectively and transparently.

Mary Kyanyi is a Climate Adaptation Fellow at Power Shift Africa.

BRIEFLY SPEAKING

Although international pledges to the FRLD have surpassed US$700 million, many developing countries argue that pledges do not automatically translate into actual disbursements. Despite annual climate finance needs estimated at $277 billion, Africa currently receives less than 11 per cent of the required financing.

POWERSHOWS

YOU HAVE READ IT, NOW WATCH IT ON

YouTube

Mozambique, like many Global South territories, is caught in the snare of a worsening climatic catastrophe. In February this year, a team of Power Shift Africa producers spent time in Mozambique and witnessed first-hand the devastation caused by flood waters in the southern part of the country. The documentary from this exclusive production is now **LIVE** on our YouTube channel. Watch it to follow our examination of the tragedy of a region suffering the consequences of a crisis it did not cause, and to hear our answer to the question of the moral



SCAN THIS QR CODE TO WATCH 'WASHED AWAY: ON THE TRAIL OF THE LIMPOPO'

clean cooking

BY JAMES KAHONGEH

We all belong in the kitchen, so why are we not boiling over clean cooking plans?

With 960 million Africans still lacking access to clean cooking, negotiators gathering in Bonn are facing growing pressure to turn climate finance commitments into practical solutions that improve lives, and observers will be watching closely for signals that climate finance mechanisms can better support household energy access, particularly in vulnerable rural communities where clean cooking adoption remains lowest

The most consequential climate challenge discussed around SB64 may not be found in energy grids, carbon markets or negotiating texts, but in the kitchen. While clean cooking is not a standalone negotiating item on the meetings' agenda, discussions on climate finance, adaptation, implementation and just transitions are expected to shape how countries and development partners support efforts to expand access to modern cooking technologies.

For many African countries, the issue extends far beyond household energy to sit at the intersection of public health, climate action, gender equality, environmental protection and economic development.

Today, around 960 million Africans still lack access to clean cooking solutions, with the overwhelming majority living in sub-Saharan Africa. Only 18% of households in the region currently use clean cooking technologies, leaving four out of five homes dependent on firewood, charcoal, kerosene and agricultural waste for daily cooking.

The human cost is immense. Indoor air pollution from traditional cooking methods contributes to an estimated 815,000 premature deaths annually in sub-Saharan Africa, according to international health estimates. Women and children are disproportionately affected because they spend the most time near cooking fires and smoke-filled kitchens.

The economic burden is equally significant. The African Development Bank estimates that health impacts linked to traditional cooking cost the continent more than $526 billion annually. When lost productivity, education disruptions and environmental degradation are included, the overall economic burden approaches $791 billion each year.

Against this backdrop, policymakers and advocates are looking to SB64 as a critical opportunity to elevate clean cooking within broader climate and development discussions.

Observers will be watching closely for signals that climate finance mechanisms can better support household energy access, particularly in vulnerable rural communities where clean cooking adoption remains lowest. Discussions on adaptation finance, implementation pathways and just transition frameworks could all influence future investment in the sector.

Momentum has already been building. The 2024 Summit on Clean Cooking in Africa, co-hosted by Tanzania, Norway, the African Development Bank and the International Energy Agency, mobilised $2.2 billion in commitments from governments, donors and private investors.

The African Development Bank subsequently pledged $2 billion over the next decade, while the African Union launched the African Clean Cooking Programme to accelerate access across the continent.

Several countries have also introduced national strategies. Tanzania adopted a ten-year National Clean Cooking Strategy in 2024, Kenya launched its National Cooking Transition Strategy, and Uganda followed with an integrated clean cooking strategy in 2025. Since 2024, at least 17 African countries have introduced new clean cooking policies.

Yet despite growing political support, a major challenge remains, and that's financing. The African Union estimates that achieving universal access to clean cooking by 2030 will require approximately $4 billion annually, or roughly six times current investment levels. Experts say this financing gap is likely to feature prominently in discussions around climate finance delivery ahead of COP31. Many argue that clean cooking has historically fallen between sectors, receiving insufficient support from energy, climate and development financing mechanisms alike.

The debate over which technologies should be prioritised is also intensifying. Liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) has emerged as the dominant route for expanding access. Of the estimated 13 million Africans who recently gained access to cleaner cooking solutions, nearly 12 million did so through LPG. Governments increasingly view LPG as the fastest way to reduce indoor air pollution and achieve national access targets. Kenya plans for LPG to provide half of its clean cooking access by 2028, while Tanzania is rapidly expanding cylinder distribution programmes.

However, concerns remain over long-term dependence on a fossil fuel whose price is linked to global oil markets. Recent energy price volatility has exposed the vulnerability of LPG-dependent households to international shocks, prompting calls for greater investment in renewable alternatives.

Electric cooking is increasingly being promoted as a long-term solution. Electricity access across sub-Saharan Africa has risen to approximately 51%, supported by grid expansion, mini-grids and solar systems. Yet unreliable supply, high electricity costs and limited appliance affordability continue to constrain uptake.

Another challenge is fuel stacking, where households continue using charcoal or firewood alongside cleaner fuels because of cost, reliability or cultural preferences. Experts say addressing these behavioural and economic barriers will be just as important as expanding infrastructure.

As climate negotiators gather in Bonn, many advocates argue that clean cooking should no longer be treated as a niche household issue, but as a core development and climate priority.

The outcomes of the discussions may not immediately transform kitchens across Africa, but they could influence the policies, investments and partnerships that determine whether millions of households gain access to cleaner, safer and more affordable cooking solutions in the years ahead.

fyi

The World Health Organisation categorises types of cooking according to their respective attributes in six areas: energy efficiency, pollution control, convenience in terms of fuel provision, safety, affordability, and availability. 'Clean cooking' refers to cooking primarily with electricity, liquified petroleum gas (LPG), natural gas, biogas, bioethanol, solar and very-low-emission biomass stoves.

Numbers that tell a dirty story

960m

Number of Africans who lack access to clean cooking.

815,000

Number of premature deaths annually linked to household air pollution.

18%

Percentage of households in sub-Saharan Africa that use clean cooking technologies.

Amount of money needed annually to achieve universal access by 2030; $2.2 billion was pledged at the 2024 Africa Clean Cooking Summit. **$4bn**

17

Number of African countries that have adopted clean cooking policies since 2024.

HOT OFF THE PRESS

Want to learn more? Our new policy brief provides an account of the clean cooking landscape in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). It highlights the extent of the challenge to provide clean cooking facilities across sub-Saharan Africa, the efforts being made to overcome these challenges, and their limitations, and provides recommendations on how to accelerate the provision of clean cooking in an equitable and just fashion.

Find it at **powershiftafrica.org.**



What to Watch at SB64

- Climate finance commitments
- Adaptation funding decisions
- Just transition discussions
- Support for household energy access
- Gender-responsive climate action
- Financing mechanisms for clean cooking programmes

RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

If you do not see young people at the tables in Bonn, look for them on the menus

BY NANA MINTA ASIEDU AMPADU-MINTA



If Africa wants to influence global adaptation outcomes, including the Global Goal on Adaptation, we need young people who can read negotiation texts, track agenda items, understand indicators, and translate global decisions into national and community action; in other words, Africa needs an adaptation generation

Africa is already living the adaptation crisis. The continent is home to 17 of the 20 countries most threatened by climate change, and climate impacts are already taking an estimated 2% to 9% of national budgets across the continent. For communities, those figures show up as floods that close schools, droughts that reduce harvests, heat waves that worsen health risks, and coastal erosion that slowly takes away homes, farms, and memory.

At the same time, Africa is the world's youngest continent, with about 70% of its population under the age of 30. By 2050, the continent's youth population is projected to increase by 73%, compared with only 6% in the rest of the world. This means adaptation in Africa is not only a climate policy question, but a generational one as well. So when we young Africans speak about adaptation, we are not only speaking about the future, but also about our present.

I have seen this clearly through youth declarations and youth climate processes. Declarations matter because they capture lived experience, political demands, and the moral clarity of a generation that will live longest with the consequences of today's decisions. But a youth declaration should not end as a beautiful document shared after a convening. It should become an accountability tool that asks: Which demands are reflected in the National Adaptation Plan? Which priorities have been budgeted? Which ministry or local authority is responsible? Which youth groups are involved in implementation? What data will be used to track progress? Who reports back to communities?

The urgency is obvious. As of September 2025, 144 countries had initiated the National Adaptation Plan process, and 67 developing countries had formally submitted NAPs to the UNFCCC. These plans are becoming roadmaps for resilience in water, food, health, infrastructure, ecosystems, and local development. But if NAPs are to be more than government documents, they must be connected to the people already living and responding to climate impacts. Young people are part of that response.

The African youth climate ecosystem is an emerging delivery system. The *State of the Youth Climate Movement in Africa* report, produced by Green Africa Youth Organisation (GAYO) and Purpose Africa, examined 75 youth climate organisations across 25 African countries. The report shows that young people are working on policy advocacy, capacity building, environmental conservation, education, grassroots mobilisation, innovation, waste management, climate-smart agriculture, and community implementation. It also shows that youth movements are becoming more institutionalised as only 6% of the organisations interviewed were not yet formally registered, and 40% had 50% or more women in leadership positions.

That evidence matters because it challenges the old assumption that youth are only advocates. Advocacy is important, but young people are also implementers, researchers, organisers, entrepreneurs, communicators, and accountability actors. In the mapping report, policy advocacy and capacity building appeared as two of the strongest areas of youth climate work, while partnerships with local NGOs, community groups, government bodies, and international actors helped youth organisations expand their impact.

But this is also where the contradiction becomes clear. Young people are being asked to help solve a crisis that is underfunded, technically complex, and politically slow-moving, while many youth-led organisations are still operating with fragile resources. The same report highlights finance, human resource and volunteer management, organisational capacity, institutional and legal issues, and technology and communication gaps as barriers limiting youth climate organizations. In research and evidence work, 60% of the 75 organisations interviewed reported lacking adequate funding and resources to conduct comprehensive research projects. So the question is not simply whether young people are inspired, but whether the systems around them are serious.

If adaptation finance is scarce, we need young people who can help design bankable, locally grounded projects. If NAPs are moving into implementation, we need young people who understand local governance, Indigenous knowledge, gender realities, disability inclusion, health, water, agriculture, and participatory planning. If Africa wants to influence global adaptation outcomes, including the Global Goal on Adaptation, we need young people who can read negotiation texts, track agenda items, understand indicators, and translate global decisions into national and community action. In other words, Africa needs an adaptation generation.

That generation will not be built through one-off panels or symbolic youth slots. We need mentorship pipelines, technical training, youth-accessible finance windows, community evidence systems, policy schools, placement opportunities, and digital knowledge platforms that retain lessons across countries and across time.

One of Africa's biggest adaptation risks is the loss of institutional memory. A negotiator leaves, a project closes, a consultant exits, a funding cycle ends, and the next group starts again from zero. Stronger systems do not work like that. They keep archives, build teams, mentor successors, document lessons, and make sure one generation does not have to begin where the previous one left off.

That is why youth involvement must be framed around three things: institutional memory, workforce readiness, and leadership continuity. Institutional memory means that knowledge from negotiations, advocacy, and implementation is deliberately passed on. Workforce readiness means preparing young Africans with the technical, policy, finance, advocacy, data, and implementation skills needed for the adaptation transition. Leadership continuity means ensuring that today's youth engagement does not end at a summit, declaration, or COP, but rather strengthens national- and community-level implementation over time.

Every youth adaptation declaration should be mapped against national adaptation priorities, and every NAP review should include a youth accountability session. Every adaptation finance mechanism should include a youth-accessible window, and every major adaptation programme should create structured roles for young people in design, implementation, monitoring, and evidence generation. For governments, this means treating youth organisations as implementation partners, not only consultation participants. For funders, it means providing flexible, accessible, and trust-based resources that strengthen institutions, not just activities. For civil society and regional platforms, it means organising youth capacity around clear areas, such as negotiation literacy, adaptation finance, project design, research, community implementation, communications, and accountability. For youth movements, it means matching passion with discipline, documentation, coordination, and evidence.

So the question is no longer whether young people are present in the boardrooms, but whether they are being prepared, trusted, resourced, mentored, and positioned to advance Africa's adaptation agenda.

A WORRYING GAP

Even as we clamour for youth participation in the design and implementation of climate solutions, the dream of adaptation itself is severely underfunded, according to UNEP's **2025 Adaptation Gap Report**, which estimates that developing countries will need between $310 billion and $365 billion per year by 2035 for adaptation, yet international public adaptation finance flows were only $26 billion in 2023. That means needs are about 12-14 times higher than current flows. For Africa specifically, analysis by the Global Center on Adaptation and Climate Policy Initiative estimates that the continent needs about $52.7 billion annually, or 2.5% of GDP, for adaptation finance by 2035, while adaptation finance averaged only $11.4 billion



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sustainable agriculture

Farms for food... and money

Negotiations in Bonn should not only end at the high-level policy issues, but also consider the input-output considerations of agriculture



BY FREDRICK OTIENO AWINO



The 64th subsidiary body meetings in Bonn will witness agriculture negotiations around the Sharm-el-Shekh joint work, including further considerations of a holistic and systemic approach for advancing agriculture.

It is important for negotiators and other actors to push for thinking of the agriculture track as a platform to drive more than just international support towards food security in an era of climate change. Instead, agriculture should be positioned as a primary livelihood sector capable of generating socio-economic resilience. While ensuring food and nutritional security is important, negotiations should not overlook the potential of agriculture generating wealth and building economic resilience, especially in Africa where smallholder farming is the mainstay.

Agriculture as a climate change adaptation sector goes beyond just the mere provision of food and nutrition. It is a core livelihood activity for most communities in Africa. As a livelihood activity, it should generate economic returns, support the achievement of financial resilience, and cement control of local food systems for farmers and farm families.

An estimated three-quarters of Africa's population practise some form of agriculture at different scales. Smallholder farming, with its common challenges, is the most common.

Climate change has resulted in unpredictable rainfall patterns, increased incidences of pest and disease infestation, and flooding of cropland. These hazards have resulted in low yields, as well as pre- and post-harvest losses that make more farm families poorer. To survive the climate scourge, agriculture must be looked at holistically as a system than just a mere practice.

As a starting point, farming requires primary input and supportive conditions. In crop production, soil health, moisture, temperature, pest and disease control all play an important role in ensuring that farmers attain the greatest yields from their farms, yet these pertinent elements that contribute to agriculture barely make it to the negotiation text.

Without looking at the inputs and conditions that support agriculture, most smallholder farmers in Africa are consigned to continue to depend on the unpredictable forces of nature, still largely rely on the increasingly unpredictable rainfall, lack the means to deliberately invest in replenishment of soil health, lack the resources to harness water for irrigation, barely apply integrated pest management, and barely embrace an agribusiness mindset.

Negotiations in Bonn should not only end at the high-level policy issues such as considering the synthesis report on the Sharm-el-Sheikh joint work on agriculture, but but consider the input-output considerations of agriculture in order to ensure that investments into the sector are oriented towards achieving both food security and economic prosperity of farming families. Therefore, language on the agricultural commodity market, inputs, and investments should stand out in the negotiation text.

Indeed, negotiations under the UNFCCC should refrain from being overly prescriptive as language that looks at agriculture as a system rather than a standalone sector is necessary to drive long term-investments that spur a renewed green revolution.

During a recent visit by the members of the Pan African Coalition for Adaptation and Resilience to a farm in Machakos County in Kenya, participants saw first-hand that agriculture can still create wealth if done correctly. But to do this, all the resources that support it must be thought through and delivered on scale.

The farm that participants visited is not only extensive but also practices ecologically friendly management, including organic manure, bio-control methods for pests and diseases, and mixed cropping.

Practices on this farm also reminded participants that water harnessing for irrigation, application of water efficient drip irrigation, crop diversification, use of biological approaches such as push-pull, organic manure application to reduce dependence on synthetic fertilisers, and a combination of both export and subsistence crops are key in making agriculture a source of wealth.

Constrained by limited investments, family farm production systems in Africa produce largely for subsistence, with only a little fraction of the produce sold to markets. This means that farmers are unable to get the finances needed to build wealth.

The seasonality of production dictated by rainfall patterns further limits reliability of production for both consumption and sale. In the long run, farm families continue to endlessly till their poorly nourished soils, wait upon unpredictable rainfall, and end up with failed harvest seasons, poverty, food and nutritional insecurity.

An important part of the production system practised in Stoni Athi, supported by its investment in water infrastructure and irrigation, is succession planting. This approach to farming ensures that a farm can produce a particular output throughout the year regardless of the season. By staggering the casting of seeds or transplanting of seedlings, farmers can guarantee continued supply of produce to the market, thus ensuring stable all year-round income from their produce.

As climate negotiators give the global policy direction in Bonn, they should remember that the Sharm el-Sheikh joint work on implementation of climate action on agriculture and food security nears its end this year but with minimal influence. For instance, there is no evidence that the Sharm el-Sheikh online portal has acted as a matchmaking platform between investors and farming families, or projects and initiatives for transformative agriculture that has the potential to generate wealth.

And, as negotiators frame out the next course of agriculture negotiations, it is important that key elements such as water harnessing, soil health, seeds and strong local food systems feature prominently.

Fredrick Otieno Awino is a Programmes Project Officer at Power Shift Arica.

energy & people

Pipe dreams: How the Africa Forward Summit blew hot and cold on oil and gas



As wealthier countries transition away from fossil fuels, African governments continue to face pressure to expand drilling through subsidies, tax incentives, and long-term concessions, yet after decades of extraction, oil and gas have not delivered inclusive prosperity for African populations. So why are African leaders allowing themselves to be boxed into a destructive corner?



Scraping the barrel? Presidents Emmanuel Macron (France) and William Ruto (Kenya) in Nairobi, May 2026.

BY CHRISTIAN HOUNKANNOU

For decades, African countries have been told that oil and gas are the pathway to development. Drill more, export more, and prosperity will follow. Yet across the continent, the lived reality tells a very different story.

New analysis in a new report by Power Shift Africa and Oil Change Internations, titled *Pipe Dreams: How Oil and Gas Fail to Deliver Economic Development in Africa,* report examines whether decades of oil and gas extraction have delivered meaningful development outcomes for African countries. Looking across 13 fossil fuel-producing nations, the findings show that, despite significant fossil fuel wealth, many African countries remain energy poor, heavily indebted, and deeply unequal.

Around 600 million people across the continent do not have access to electricity while nearly 970 million lack access to clean cooking. Households are forced to spend hours searching for firewood and other traditional fuels, with serious consequences for health, livelihoods, and the environment. Meanwhile, schools, hospitals, and public infrastructure remain underfunded, even as crude oil and gas continue to flow steadily toward export markets *(International Energy Agency, 2025)*.

Structural problem

This reflects a deeper structural problem. Africa's challenge is not a lack of resources, but a development model built on extraction for external markets. Across the continent, oil and gas industries operate largely as enclaves, where financing, engineering, refining, and high-value services take place elsewhere. What remains locally are limited jobs, environmental risks, and economies exposed to volatile global prices. Communities living near extraction sites frequently experience pollution, displacement, and the loss of livelihoods, while promised development benefits fail to materialise.

Employment outcomes are particularly revealing. Fossil fuel industries generate relatively few long-term jobs while exposing economies to inflation, debt, and recurring price shocks that disproportionately affect ordinary households. By contrast, renewable energy systems create employment across manufacturing, installation, maintenance, and decentralised energy access sectors that can directly benefit local communities *(International Renewable Energy Agency)*.

Governance and inequality further compound these challenges. Fossil fuel wealth often concentrates power and resources in the hands of political elites and multinational corporations, while transparency remains weak. The well-documented "Dutch disease" phenomenon, where extractive industries crowd out other sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and tourism, has played out repeatedly. Nigeria is perhaps the clearest example as its decades of oil production have generated enormous revenues yet broad-based development remains elusive.

Despite this record, Africa is increasingly portrayed as the world's final frontier for fossil fuel expansion. As wealthier countries transition away from fossil fuels, African governments continue to face pressure to expand drilling through subsidies, tax incentives, and long-term concessions. In countries such as Mozambique, governments may wait decades before seeing public returns from gas projects while assuming significant financial and environmental risks.

It is in this context that the recent Africa Forward Summit Declaration becomes both important and revealing. On one hand, it reflects a significant shift in how energy and development are framed as, for the first time in many such partnerships, energy transition is explicitly linked to industrialisation, job creation, and African economic sovereignty. The declaration recognises the importance of renewable energy, local value addition, clean cooking, regional value chains, and "Made in Africa" production ideas that African movements have championed for years.

This signals that Africa is no longer being seen only as a supplier of raw materials, but increasingly as a potential hub for clean energy production, manufacturing, and economic transformation.

But the declaration also exposes deep contradictions. While it speaks of renewable energy and climate justice, it still leaves wide political space for continued fossil fuel expansion. Gas, nuclear, hydrogen, and renewables are grouped together under the banner of "energy transition," allowing fossil fuel projects to be rebranded as part of the solution. This risks locking African economies into another generation of infrastructure that may soon become obsolete. The same tension appears in the growing focus on critical minerals and green industrialisation. While the declaration promotes value chains and beneficiation, it pays limited attention to community ownership, land rights, labour protections, and environmental safeguards.

There is a real risk that Africa is moving from fossil fuel extraction to mineral extraction without fundamentally changing the underlying model of development.

Another gap is energy access. While clean cooking and electrification are acknowledged, the declaration does not sufficiently prioritise decentralised renewable energy systems, which are the fastest and most effective way to reach energy-poor communities. Instead, the emphasis remains on large-scale infrastructure, private investment, and industrial competitiveness. Without deliberate policy choices, the energy transition risks becoming an elite and industrial agenda rather than a people-centred development pathway.

Climate finance presents a similar contradiction. The declaration calls for "fair" and "just" financing, but offers few concrete commitments on grant-based finance, debt relief, or loss and damage. Heavy reliance on blended finance and private capital raises concerns about rising debt burdens and the prioritisation of profit over public need.

Who benefits from transition?

These contradictions mirror a broader political reality. Africa is now central to the global energy transition not only as a source of energy, but also as a supplier of critical minerals, a growing market, and a strategic geopolitical partner. But the key question remains unresolved: who will benefit from this transition?

There is, however, a clear alternative pathway. Renewable energy offers Africa the opportunity to break from extractive models and build a more inclusive and resilient future. Solar, wind, and battery technologies can be deployed rapidly and at scale, while decentralised systems can reach communities that centralised fossil fuel infrastructure has long neglected. Renewable energy also creates opportunities for local manufacturing, job creation, and community ownership.

A just transition is not simply about replacing fossil fuels with clean energy, but transforming the underlying model of development. It means prioritising universal energy access, investing in local industries, strengthening regional value chains, and ensuring that communities benefit directly from the transition.

Did they get it wrong? The problem with the Africa Forward Summit Declaration

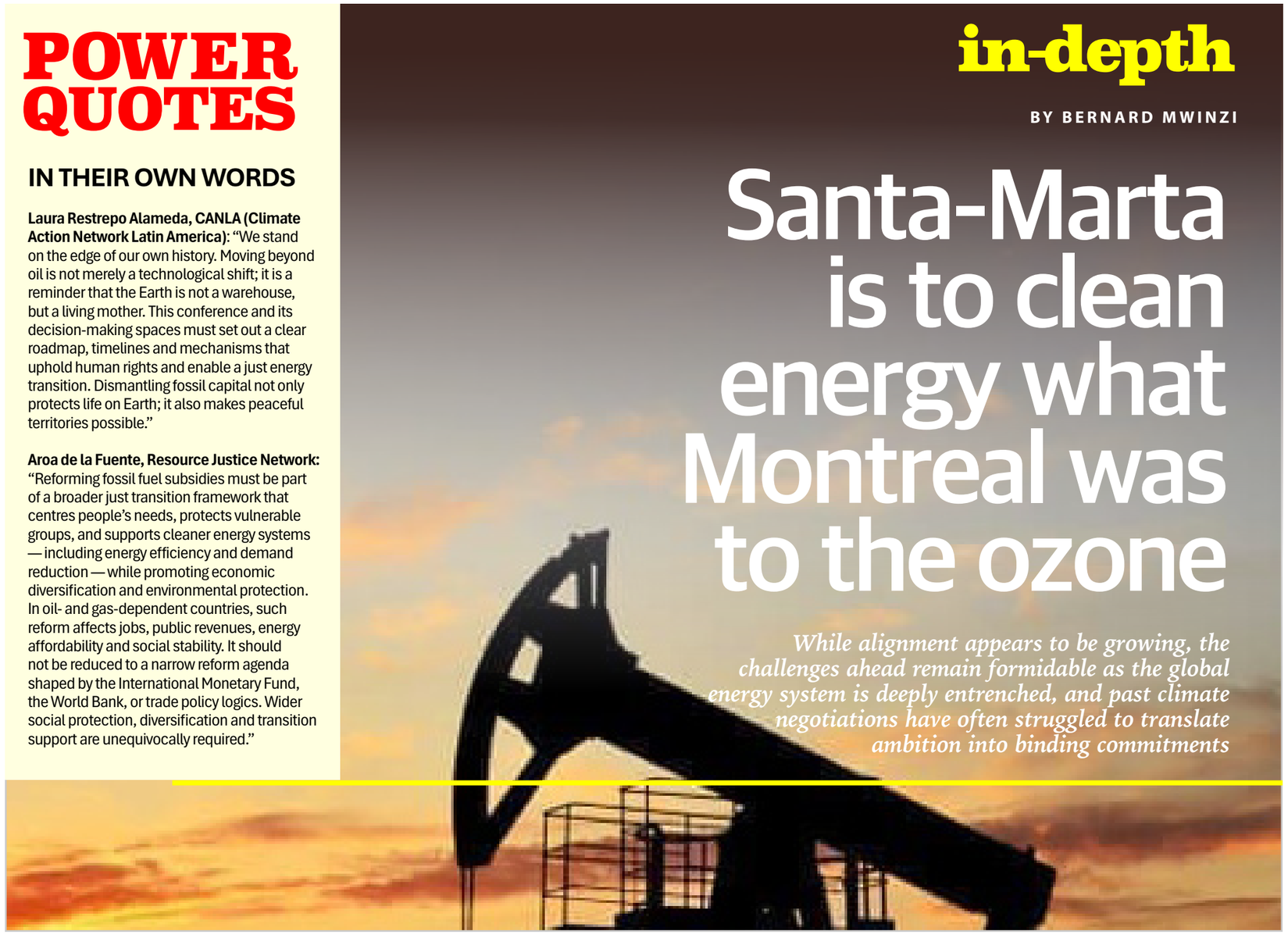
The Africa Forward Summit Declaration, announced by Presidents William Ruto of Kenya and Emmanuel Macron of France in Nairobi in May, reflects a significant shift in how energy and development are framed as, for the first time in many such partnerships, energy transition is explicitly linked to industrialisation, job creation, and African economic sovereignty. The declaration recognises the importance of renewable energy, local value addition, clean cooking, regional value chains, and "Made in Africa" production ideas that African movements have championed for years. However, it also exposes deep contradictions. While it speaks of renewable energy and climate justice, it still leaves wide political space for continued fossil fuel expansion. Gas, nuclear, hydrogen, and renewables are grouped together under the banner of "energy transition," allowing fossil fuel projects to be rebranded as part of the solution. This risks locking African economies into another generation of infrastructure that may soon become obsolete.

Christian Hounkannou is an Energy Coordinator at Power Shift Africa.

in-depth

BY BERNARD MWINZI

Santa-Marta is to clean energy what Montreal was to the ozone



While alignment appears to be growing, the challenges ahead remain formidable as the global energy system is deeply entrenched, and past climate negotiations have often struggled to translate ambition into binding commitments

SANTA MARTA, Colombia

Civil society organisations from across the Global South in April delivered a scathing assessment of the world's energy system, noting in a series of arguments that the era of fossil fuels must end, and that governments can no longer afford delay.

Their contentions, made at the First Conference on Transitioning away from Fossil Fuels in the historical city of Santa Marta, Colombia, came at a moment of deep geopolitical strain and energy market volatility. Recent oil supply disruptions linked to conflict have sent prices soaring, exposing the fragility of economies built on fossil fuels and sharpening the urgency of transitioning to cleaner, more resilient energy systems.

Against this backdrop, speakers framed the phase-out of coal, oil and gas as not only a climate imperative, but a matter of economic security, social justice and global stability as well.

Rodrigo Estrada of Greenpeace International set the tone early when he argued that "security risks connected to fossil energy are undeniable", and that "phasing in renewables means stability and a viable future in a world that's becoming increasingly volatile". He added that governments, particularly in developed countries, must move beyond rhetoric and "act now to leave coal, oil, and gas behind and accelerate a just transition".

That sense of urgency ran through the discussions at the conference, with speakers repeatedly linking fossil fuel dependence to a broader system of inequality and harm. **Liliana Buitrago,** representing the Pacto Ecosocial e Intercultural del Sur and regional climate justice networks, described what she called a "global care crisis driven by the fossil fuel regime and the extraction of the planet's vital energy for the benefit of a few".

"Fossil patriarchy produces inequality and multiple forms of violence," she said, calling for reparations and guarantees against what she termed "false transitions" that perpetuate extractive economic models under the guise of climate action.

The critique extended into the structure of global energy governance, with **Nikki Reisch** of the Center for International Environmental Law describing the conference as both overdue and urgently necessary.

"The historic conference on the transition away from fossil fuels... is 30 years overdue and not a moment too soon," she said.

Pointing to recent geopolitical tensions and oil market shocks, she argued that fossil fuel dependence is inherently destabilising. "No country can deny that the fossil fuel phaseout is not just a scientific imperative and a legal obligation, but an opportunity to break free from a destructive system," she said, and called for structural change and a legally binding mechanism to drive the transition.

Mohamed Adow of Power Shift Africa viewed Santa Marta as the beginning of a revolution, arguing that "progress in international cooperation often begins with a smaller group willing to move first".

"The Montreal Protocol, initially driven by a relatively small group of industrialised countries, aimed to phase out ozone-depleting substances," argued Adow. "It gained momentum as evidence mounted and alternatives became viable. Over time, it achieved near-universal ratification and is widely seen as the most successful environmental treaty. Trade agreements, debt relief initiatives, and even public health breakthroughs have followed a similar pattern: a critical mass acts, and the rest of the world follows. Santa Marta has the potential to do the same for fossil fuels."

Crucially, he continued, this conference was not bound by the same rules that have stymied progress at UN COP summits as it was designed to operate "outside the consensus model that has allowed obstruction to thrive, enabling countries that are ready to act to move forward together".

But moving forward together, particularly for countries whose economies are closely tied to oil and gas, would require consensus-building on a mechanism that binds, and works for, all. In this regard, **Aroa de la Fuente** from the Resource Justice Network warned against narrow approaches to reform, particularly those driven by international financial institutions.

"Reforming fossil fuel subsidies must be part of a broader just transition framework that centres people's needs, protects vulnerable groups, and supports cleaner energy systems," she said. In oil- and gas-dependent countries, she noted, such reforms have far-reaching implications for jobs, public revenues and social stability, and cannot be reduced to technocratic policy adjustments.

This point was reinforced by **Ana Carolina González** of the Natural Resource Governance Institute, who advised that credible transition plans must engage the very actors at the heart of the fossil fuel economy. "Promises mean nothing without a credible roadmap, and that cannot be built without the companies that produce more than half of the world's oil and gas," she said, pointing to the central role of national oil companies in Global South economies.

While much of the discussion focused on the risks of inaction, speakers also outlined what a managed transition could look like. **Laura Restrepo Alameda** of Climate Action Network Latin America argued that the shift away from fossil fuels must be grounded in human rights and justice.

"We stand on the edge of our own history," she said. "Moving beyond oil is not merely a technological shift; it is a reminder that the Earth is not a warehouse, but a living mother." She called for the conference to deliver clear timelines, mechanisms and commitments capable of enabling a just energy transition while protecting communities and ecosystems.

Momentum is also building around proposals for new global frameworks to govern the phase-out. **Alex Rafalowicz,** Executive Director of the Fossil Fuel Treaty Initiative, described the discussions in Santa Marta as a turning point, noting in a statement that "today marks a decisive shift in climate diplomacy" and pointing out that calls for a fossil fuel treaty were now being echoed by both governments and civil society.

"For too long, multilateral consensus has been held hostage by fossil fuel interests," he said. "What is emerging here… finally recognises these crises as inseparable." He added that the conference could move governments "beyond vague promises toward the practical architecture of a just transition".

Yet, even as alignment appears to be growing, the challenges ahead remain formidable. The global energy system is deeply entrenched, and past climate negotiations have often struggled to translate ambition into binding commitments.

What set Santa Marta apart, participants argued, is the explicit focus on fossil fuels themselves, long considered the "missing piece" of international climate policy. By centring discussions on production and use, rather than emissions alone, the conference attempted to confront the root of the problem.

For many in attendance, that shift reflects the broader realisation that incremental approaches are no longer sufficient in a world facing accelerating climate impacts and increasing geopolitical instability.

POWER QUOTES

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Laura Restrepo Alameda, CANLA (Climate Action Network Latin America): "We stand on the edge of our own history. Moving beyond oil is not merely a technological shift; it is a reminder that the Earth is not a warehouse, but a living mother. This conference and its decision-making spaces must set out a clear roadmap, timelines and mechanisms that uphold human rights and enable a just energy transition. Dismantling fossil capital not only protects life on Earth; it also makes peaceful territories possible."

Aroa de la Fuente, Resource Justice Network: "Reforming fossil fuel subsidies must be part of a broader just transition framework that centres people's needs, protects vulnerable groups, and supports cleaner energy systems — including energy efficiency and demand reduction — while promoting economic diversification and environmental protection. In oil- and gas-dependent countries, such reform affects jobs, public revenues, energy affordability and social stability. It should not be reduced to a narrow reform agenda shaped by the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, or trade policy logics. Wider social protection, diversification and transition support are unequivocally required."

adapt2live

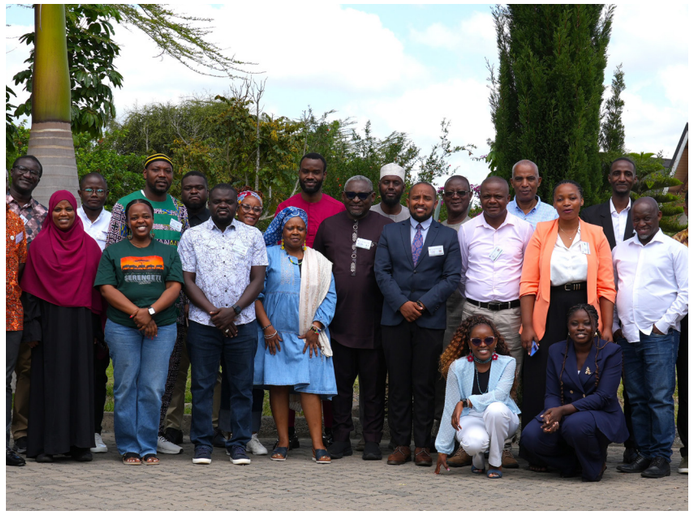
ADAPT 2 LIVE

Climate change stops being an abstract debate if you're living through it. If, like hundreds of millions of people in the global south, you are caught in the grip of a warming planet, climate change is your crops dying, your water disappearing, or your health dimming. **adapt2live.org** is built around that reality. It is a platform that shares practical, local solutions for adapting to climate change across African communities, while also spotlighting the people already doing the work on the ground. It brings together lived experience, Indigenous Knowledge and policy conversations that often feel far removed from everyday life. The aim is to make resilience practical, visible and shared. Not just surviving climate change, but shaping responses that actually fit real lives and real places.

Join us! New plan targets adaptation









This May in Nairobi, Kenya, Power Shift Africa hosted the annual convening of the Pan-African Coalition for Adaptation and Resilience (PACAR), bringing together a powerful, diverse group of African adaptation actors from across the continent, alongside policymakers, researchers, youth, women, indigenous leaders, and members of the African Group of Negotiators on Climate Change (AGN).

The meeting, as Nana Dr Antwi-Boasiako Amoah, chair of the AGN, noted in his opening remarks, came at a moment when adaptation is quickly evolving from being a side issue for Africa to become a development necessity.

Conversations over three days were grounded in African realities, but they also looked forward to the common future we want for ourselves and for posterity. This is important for us because building momentum now, on the road to COP32 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, matters since the continent has the rare opportunity to shape the agenda, defend the gains, and push for stronger delivery on adaptation finance, locally led solutions and credible global monitoring.

We examined the progress from COP30, including the Belém Adaptation Indicators, the commitment to triple adaptation finance, and the Belém to Addis Vision for Adaptation, and explored how these can be protected, sharpened and turned into real outcomes. With geopolitical uncertainty, shrinking aid, protectionism and climate denialism all crowding the field, we certainly do not want to wait politely in the queue.

We are excited about the strength of grassroots leadership in the PACAR movement. These organisations are building the communities, shaping the narratives, and strengthening the confidence of the champions — big and small — who will carry the adaptation movement forward.

Over a bonfire, we heard stories about how these partner organisations are turning lived experiences into advocacy, local knowledge into policy influence, and resilience into a political demand. That is why, for us, the launch of the #Adapt2Live campaign during this convening was such a fitting moment as it signalled a more united, visible and people-centred platform for African adaptation voices; one that can connect local realities to regional strategy and global negotiations.

mission 300

RESEARCH BY MESHACK MBOYA, REVIEW BY KARABO MOKGONYANA AND KUDAKWASHE MANJONJO

How to build a just energy transition in Kenya

HOT OFF THE PRESS
The arguments in this article are based on our new report, **Mission 300: Building Just Transition Pathways Through Kenya's National Energy Compact.** Find it at **powershiftafrica.org.**



Africa's energy future is entering a decisive decade. In this article, Meshack Mboya (above) argues that the centre of that transition is Mission 300, a continental initiative aiming to connect 300 million Africans to electricity by 2030. For Kenya, the programme presents both a major opportunity and a serious political test. The country has already emerged as one of Africa's renewable energy leaders, driven by geothermal power, off-grid solar growth, and rapid electrification efforts. Yet the challenge is no longer simply expanding access. The deeper question is whether the transition will be fair, affordable, and community-driven. Who benefits from new energy systems? Who controls the infrastructure? And can Kenya avoid repeating older patterns of debt, exclusion, and fossil fuel dependence?

1 **Kenya's energy revolution:** Over the past decade, Kenya has quietly built one of Africa's most significant renewable energy success stories. Electricity access has increased from roughly 30% in 2014 to more than 75% in 2024 through rural electrification programmes, grid expansion, mini-grids, and off-grid solar systems. Projects such as the Last Mile Connectivity Programme and the Kenya Off-Grid Solar Access Project have expanded electricity into previously underserved regions. Renewables now dominate Kenya's electricity system. Around 82% of installed generation capacity comes from renewable energy, while 93% of electricity consumption is renewable. Kenya is Africa's largest producer of geothermal power and ranks among the world's leading geothermal economies. Regional transmission interconnections have also strengthened electricity trade with neighbouring countries. For many communities, especially in rural areas, electricity is no longer simply about lighting homes as it supports irrigation, refrigeration, healthcare, digital access, education, and small businesses. Energy access has become a foundation for development itself.

2 **What Mission 300 promises:** Mission 300 is led jointly by the World Bank Group and the African Development Bank, with support from African governments and international development partners. Its objective is to connect 300 million Africans to electricity by 2030. The initiative was formally endorsed during the 2025 Africa Energy Summit in Dar es Salaam, where governments adopted the Dar es Salaam Energy Declaration and announced more than $50 billion in financial commitments. The initiative promotes rapid electrification through grid expansion, mini-grids, standalone solar systems, policy reform, and private investment. Central to the strategy is the idea of "least-cost electrification", meaning countries are encouraged to pursue the fastest and cheapest pathways to delivering energy access. For Kenya, Mission 300 aligns closely with the National Energy Compact for 2025–2030, which commits the country to universal electricity access, universal clean cooking access, and a fully clean electricity grid by 2030. On paper, the vision is ambitious and transformative. In practice, however, the transition may prove more complicated.



3 **Risks behind the transition:** Despite widespread enthusiasm, Mission 300 has also attracted criticism from civil society groups and energy justice advocates. Their concern is that Africa has experienced ambitious development programmes before, many of which produced rising debt, dependence on foreign capital, and profits flowing outward rather than strengthening local economies. Critics warn that Mission 300 risks repeating these patterns if it relies too heavily on private finance while neglecting public ownership and social justice. Energy projects can expand access while still excluding communities from economic benefits and decision-making power. The debate has intensified around proposals for nuclear power and liquefied natural gas infrastructure. Although Kenya's Energy Compact does not explicitly promote nuclear energy, the government has continued discussions around a future nuclear power plant. Critics argue this could divert resources away from decentralised renewables. Similar concerns surround LNG projects, which opponents say could deepen fossil fuel dependence, expose Kenya to volatile international markets, and undermine long-term climate goals despite being labelled "transition fuels".

4 **Why justice and community ownership matter:** At the centre of the debate is the question of who benefits from the energy transition. Mission 300 frequently emphasises consultation and participation, but critics argue consultation alone is not enough. A genuinely just transition requires equitable benefit sharing, fair compensation, local ownership opportunities, and meaningful community participation throughout project planning and implementation. Without these protections, renewable energy risks reproducing the same inequalities associated with older extractive industries. Communities may host major energy projects while receiving little economic benefit themselves. Advocates argue that principles such as Free, Prior and Informed Consent must be treated as fundamental rights rather than administrative obstacles. Kenya also faces deeper structural challenges, including delayed projects, fragmented planning, corruption concerns, and slow permitting systems. Some policies support decentralised renewable energy while others discourage investment in mini-grids and local energy systems. Ultimately, Mission 300 will be judged not only by how much electricity it delivers, but by whether the transition creates affordable, democratic, and locally owned energy systems for the people expected to depend on them.

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