



THE CLIMATE CRISIS, ENERGY SYSTEMS, AND JUST TRANSITION IN AFRICA

This policy document by Friends of the Earth Africa highlights how vulnerable Africa is to the climate crisis despite its low emissions, it cites some cases of climate-induced disasters and defines urgent policy actions that can help address increased temperature while making a proposal for climate financing. Basically, it examines the challenge(s) of the energy transition and makes a proposal on how the transition should be.

Climate Crisis in Africa

Africa, home to about one-fifth of the world's population, contributes about 3% of the global carbon dioxide (CO₂), representing the lowest emissions per capita when compared with other regions. Human-made climate changes affect the whole planet but gravely hit Africa disproportionately.

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic and the invasion of Ukraine by Russia have

pushed up food prices, increased the cost of goods and services, and affected the energy supply across the continent. We have also seen widespread adverse climate impacts, related economic and non-economic losses, and damages to nature and people that are unequally distributed across systems, regions, and sectors.

In 2022, many Nigerian citizens, especially those living in low-lying coastal areas experienced climate-induced flooding that ravaged their livelihood sources, homes, health, and food systems, with adverse effects on gender and social equity. In March 2019, the people of Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Malawi were adversely hit by Cyclone Idai, with many lives lost and properties destroyed.

These kinds of disasters serve as a wake-up call for African countries to take drastic policy actions to address the root systemic

issues while limiting the rise in global average temperature. It calls on us to demand payment of the climate debt owed by those nations with historical responsibilities for the huge amount of CO2 and greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Such funds would support our mitigative and adaptive actions against the impacts of climate change.

Africa's Climate Crisis and Energy Dilemma

The current global climate and energy crisis demands swift and equitable action, where community ownership, environment, and clean renewable energy systems are prioritized.

Africa's energy transition discussion is crucial, considering widespread electricity and clean cooking access gaps. However, the recent energy deficiency in Europe due to reduced gas supply from Russia has turned its gaze towards exploiting African oil and gas. Such investments risk perpetuating poverty, continued carbon dependency, and climate change, hindering Paris Agreement goals and exacerbating global warming effects on Africa.

As we approach the Africa Climate Summit, we urge African leaders to embrace real climate solutions and just energy transition and reject false solutions such as carbon trading mechanisms. We are urging the African leaders to suspend new oil and gas projects and give priority to development initiatives focused on Africa and not exports while demanding from the global North the repayment of climate debt.

We therefore make these demands to our African Governments:

1. Should prioritize the rapid transition to clean and affordable renewable energy sources to meet energy demands and address the climate crisis.
2. Invest in energy access by allocating resources in a way that ensures universal access to electricity, clean cooking, and heating systems, particularly in under-served communities, to improve quality of life and economic prospects.
3. Should reject investments in new coal, oil,

and gas infrastructure to prevent further entrenchment of carbon dependency and to align with global climate commitments.

4. Should develop and enforce policies that are consistent with the urgent need to combat climate change, focusing on clean energy transition and reducing reliance on fossil fuels.
5. Should involve local communities, especially those directly affected by energy projects, in decision-making processes to ensure that their perspectives and needs are considered.

How just is the transition?

Africa possesses significant renewable energy potential, with the capability to provide 60% of global solar and wind resources. By 2030, solar and wind power could supply 27% of the continent's electricity, alleviating energy poverty and fostering economic growth.

However, the energy transition progress has not been equitable or sustainable. This has led activists to resist new gas developments in South Africa and Mozambique owing to the decades of environmental and social impacts.

Mining for strategic minerals, like cobalt and lithium, required for renewable technologies is encroaching on conservation areas in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), impacting the water supply and almost paralleling the extractive exploitation in the Niger Delta region.

Despite energy shortages, disparities persist, with traditional fuel sources like fuel wood still being used for cooking, while gas that should have been used is flared in many oil fields, and external pressures push for gas exports of the continent labeling it a "transition fuel".

With global temperatures almost exceeding the 1.5°C limit, extracting the vast gas reserves in Africa could contribute to catastrophic warming. Even if Africa's cumulative emissions only amount to 3.5% emission per capita, the impact will be profound for both the continent and the world.

The urgency of the climate crisis demands a just and sustainable transition that safeguards ecosystems, livelihoods, and communities.

We demand that African governments:

1. Should prioritize the well-being of their citizens and the protection of ecosystems in their energy transition efforts. The transition should not come at the expense of local communities' livelihoods or the environment.
2. Ensure a just transition to renewable energy by providing support and alternatives for communities and workers currently dependent on fossil fuel industries. This includes retraining and creating job opportunities in the renewable energy sector.
3. Address energy poverty by expanding access to clean and affordable energy for all citizens. This includes promoting decentralized renewable energy solutions for rural and under-served areas.
4. Implement responsible resource management practices to prevent the exploitation of critical natural areas and resources for renewable energy production. Conservation and protected areas should be safeguarded.

Also calling on the Governments of the Global North to:

1. Provide increased climate finance to support the transition to renewable energy in African countries. This funding should prioritize sustainable and community-driven projects.
2. Phase out subsidies for fossil fuel industries and redirect these resources toward renewable energy and social development projects in Africa.
3. Facilitate the transfer of clean energy technology and expertise from the global north to African countries, promoting knowledge sharing and capacity building.
4. Encourage responsible business practices among global north companies operating

in Africa. Ensure that their activities align with local community needs and environmental protection.

5. Commit to more ambitious carbon emission reduction targets in the global north to mitigate the demand for fossil fuels and contribute to a global reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.
6. Respect the sovereignty of African nations in making decisions about their energy future and avoid pressuring them into resource extraction that could harm their people and environment.

“ The urgency of the climate crisis demands a just and sustainable transition that safeguards ecosystems, livelihoods, and communities ”

The Africa Climate Week is for whose Interest?

The Africa Climate Week and Summit should empower African leaders to adopt equitable strategies that prioritize both people and the environment in climate actions.

True African climate objectives must empower communities with control over their energy resources. It must reject misleading narratives that promote gas as a transition fuel. Instead, it must support Africa's renewable energy transition which will uplift its people and avoid exploitation by the Global North.

For effective climate adaptation and mitigation plans, clear and focused approaches are essential. Vague statements like the one from Dr. Al Jaber, COP28 president, at the 7th Ministerial on Climate

Action in Belgium, where he said:
“...We will promote all initiatives that enhance biodiversity and natural carbon sinks”
can give room for false solutions like Geoengineering, carbon capture, and sequestration, “nature-based solution” etc., that are costly, unproven, untested, and put our communities and ecosystems at risk while providing a smokescreen for big polluters’ inaction.

The summit must emphasize the necessity for fair access to clean energy resources by the people with a rapid shift away from fossil fuels. This approach prioritizes low-impact energy sources, respects Indigenous and local rights, and avoids ecological harm. It must push for universal energy access that ensures a dignified life for all, is clean, renewable, democratic, and actually serves the people.

Our recommendations are as follows:

1. African governments should firmly reject all false solutions such as geoengineering processes, unproven technologies, and so-called ‘nature-based solutions’ that could lead to land grabbing and ecosystem exploitation. Prioritize proven, sustainable approaches that genuinely contribute to emissions reduction and ecological preservation.
2. African governments must prioritize a just energy transition to 100% renewable energy. Commit to a rapid phase-out of fossil fuels and ban new dirty energy projects.
3. They must develop policies and strategies that promote clean and climate-safe energy sources with low social and environmental impacts, while respecting Indigenous and local community rights.
4. Advocate for the repayment of historical climate and ecological debt owed to the continent.
5. Push for funds to be directed into the Loss and Damage finance mechanisms agreed upon at COP27, without relying on loans or insurance that could further in-debt the region. Explore sources like funds from tax havens to support the energy revolution.
6. Implement an immediate halt on investments in oil and gas projects and redirect financial resources towards clean, renewable energy initiatives that align with the continent’s sustainable development goals and commitments to emissions reduction.
7. Promote African-Centered development strategies that are tailored to Africa’s unique needs and pace.
8. Embrace policies that prioritize the well-being of people and the environment over external pressures and interests.
9. Engage actively in international climate discussions and negotiations to advocate for just climate policies that center the needs and rights of African nations.
10. Collaborate with like-minded African countries to collectively push for equitable solutions on the continent, while fostering our ancient culture of knowledge sharing and collaboration across the continent.
11. Should allocate resources to research and innovation in renewable energy technologies, agroecology, and climate adaptation strategies that are specifically designed for African conditions.

FRIENDS OF THE EARTH AFRICA (FoEA) is a collective of sovereign organizations working with grassroots communities on environmental and rights-based struggles in the African region. We seek to contribute to the strengthening of national groups in Africa by developing collective strategies to understand, expose and dismantle the root causes of the overlapping crises we are facing in the region. Through continent-wide coordination, FoEA works to build people power towards a common African agenda for environmental, economic, gender, and social justice.

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