

3rd Africa Climate Talks

Climate Change and Development in Africa: African perspectives on climate resilient recovery from COVID-19

2nd Session

**COVID-19, climate change and development in Africa and its
SIDS – from vulnerability to building resilience**

17-18 May 2021, 10am – 12pm (Praia time, GMT-1)

Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has wrought havoc on economies, communities and ecosystems across the world. It has been described as a revelatory crisis, enabling us to see more clearly crises that already were unfolding before the pandemic. One of these is the climate change crisis that causes more frequent and intense extreme weather events (including flooding, droughts, and heatwaves), shifts in ecosystems, and sea level rise, increasing acidification of oceans, among others.

According to the World Health Organization, Covid-19 is a zoonotic disease caused by a pathogen that has made the leap from wildlife to humans, possibly through an intermediate species. There are clear links between health, the environment, and the economy. Biodiversity loss and ecosystem shifts bring proximity to wildlife, thereby increasing the risk of zoonotic diseases. Research suggests that the emergence of new human diseases is closely linked to loss and degradation of ecosystems and habitats, which in turn is driven by climate change, resource extraction, urban and agricultural expansion and pollution. As such, climate change has been linked with changes in the range of malarial mosquitoes, and the spread of malaria, Dengue and Zika virus. Likewise, low quality of water and air is linked to serious diseases. These health challenges arising from climate change impacts are thus just a harbinger of things to come in the absence of urgent and meaningful concerted global action on climate change.

Africa accounts for 17% of global population but contributes to less than 4% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Yet, the continent is already bearing the brunt of the impacts of climate change, with governments spending between 2 and 9% of their GDP in unplanned responses to climate change impacts, while economies are losing 2-5% of GDP per year as a result of the climate crisis. The continent's Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and coastal regions, depend very much on tourism for their economies are even more vulnerable to the combined impacts of the climate and Covid-19 crises: the tourism sector has collapsed for most of these countries and a result of Covid-19 travel restrictions; ocean acidification is causing coral bleaching; and sea level rise can readily put some island communities out of existence.

The vulnerabilities to climate change are reflections of wider developmental issues, including poverty; massive infrastructure gaps in energy, water, agriculture, transport, ocean related facilities and other sectors; and low institutional development and overwhelming capacity constraints. The Covid-19 crisis is an inflection point to the climate crisis. This is reflected in the categorical calls by citizens, civil society, the private sector, and other stakeholders for a better post Covid-19 world that is more resilient to such shocks.

A post pandemic world should recognise the crises and challenges that existed before and their linkages with the pandemic, devise solutions, and build a better, more equitable, resilient and sustainable dispensation. Governments worldwide, but mainly developed countries, have invested more than US\$12 trillion in COVID-19 crisis relief stimulus packages. Most of the stimulus packages coming on stream do not sufficiently incorporate climate resilience and ecosystem sustainability into their recovery plans. Furthermore, developing countries – particularly those most vulnerable to climate change impacts such as African SIDS – have fiscal deficit and liquidity challenges to implement meaningful stimulus packages, while developed countries have very little consideration for these vulnerable countries in their stimulus packages. Furthermore, the US\$100 billion per year of climate finance commitment by developed countries since the 15th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Copenhagen in 2009 has never materialised.

A recent report by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) on “Building Forward for an African Green Recovery¹” shows that governments can seize the moment of the narrowing window of opportunity to build a more climate resilient world by targeting stimulus investments and interventions on green recovery options. In so doing, countries can ride the triple storm of Covid-19 (health), climate change, and economic devastation to build more resilient economies with better jobs and economic growth while meeting the goal of the Paris Agreement.

There are many similarities between the Covid-19 pandemic and climate change crises, as well as significant divergences. Both crises pose an existential threat to Africa and are suffering the consequences of disinformation and “infodemics”. How can the

¹ <https://www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/com/2021/E2100302-Building-Forward-African-Green-Recovery.pdf>

lessons and experiences of dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic be harnessed to promote green and blue resilient recovery and climate informed post pandemic reconstruction through concerted global partnerships, solidarity, and a strong multilateral framework? This is the question for discussion at the 3rd Africa Climate Talks (ACT!)² as part of a webinar series by the African Climate Policy Centre (ACPC) of the ECA on “Climate Change and Development in Africa: African perspectives on climate resilient recovery from COVID-19”³”.

The Africa Climate Talks is a series of events to engage Africans from all spheres of life in a stimulating and wide-ranging discourse informed by the emerging African common positions on a range of pertinent issues affecting the continent’s development agenda within the context of an evolving and complex global geopolitical setting. The Africa Climate Talks create platforms for the discussion of African perspectives on key issues in the linkages between climate change and Africa’s transformative development trajectories. The Africa Climate Talks seek to drive multilevel climate action by enhancing public awareness of the implications of climate change, its challenges and opportunities for Africa.

The 3rd Africa Climate Talks is co-organized in partnership with the University of Cabo Verde.

Objective

The objective of the 3rd Africa Climate Talks is to explore the convergence of the COVID-19 and climate crises and what this means for vulnerable communities and global climate governance and action during and beyond the pandemic. Specifically, the 3rd Africa Climate Talks will bring together Africa’s academia, civil society, private sector, regional institutions and development partners to stimulate a pan-African discourse aimed at contributing to the emergence of an African, particularly African SIDS’, narrative on how to better respond to climate change in the era of COVID-19 and beyond by building resilient economies through green/blue economy, and how to realize and ensure the means of implementation, built on the firm foundation of the common but differentiated responsibilities of the UNFCCC and respective capabilities of countries.

Specific objectives – Key issues

To ensure that there is adequate discourse and engagement on the foregoing regional climate change challenges, the event deliberations will be organized under the following discussion sessions:

- Riding the triple climate, Covid-19 and economic storm: regional and global perspectives;

² Launched in 2015, the Africa Climate Talks (ACTs!) is an all of society initiative that seeks to democratize the climate change and development narrative in Africa through engaging all the stakeholders from the local, national, to sub-regional and regional in totally inclusive discourses to catalyse organic African perspectives on climate change and development which contribute to the realization of Agenda 2063 and the SDGs through climate resilience.

³ Available at <https://repository.uneca.org/handle/10855/43764>

- First climate change. Now Covid-19. The north-south divide continues. What then for Africa? What expectations from COP26?
- From vulnerability to resilience through green/blue economy. What will it take? Challenges and opportunities for Africa, especially for African SIDS and coastal economies.

Five break-out groups on the topics listed below will facilitate consolidation of key messages coming out of the 2nd Session of the 3rd Africa Climate Talks:

- What Africa should seek to leverage from COP 26, and how this can be done?
- Africa's voice and agency in the global climate governance and geopolitical landscape – lessons from Africa's journey in the UNFCCC process for the COVID-19 era and beyond;
- Building resilience: innovative ideas for African solutions to Africa's climate and recovery challenges;
- One for all, all for one. What constitutes climate justice and a just recovery/transition for Africa?
- Tapping the green/blue economy for African SIDS and coastal economies: challenges and opportunities beyond COVID-19.

Expected outputs/outcomes

- Enhanced Africa's voice and agency in the global climate governance and resulting geopolitical landscape in the era of COVID-19 and beyond;
- Better understanding on how to leverage the linkages between climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting economic crisis to build forward for an African green and resilient future beyond the pandemic;
- Strengthened regional strategies and global frameworks for a just transition towards resilient economies and attainment of the goals of the Paris Agreement.

Targeted audience

The primary target audience of the Africa Climate Talks is African non-state actors (civil society, academia, private sector, youth and other marginalized groups) in the context of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, as well as policy makers, regional and sub-regional institutions, and development partners.

Venue and date

The second session of the 3rd Africa Climate Talks will be a virtual event hosted by the ECA in collaboration with the University of Cabo Verde. It will take place on the 17-18 May 2021.

Contacts

James Murombedzi
African Climate Policy Centre
Economic Commission for Africa

Menelik II Road, PO Box 3001
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
murombedzi@un.org



Supported by:

