



## Is global climate change governance working for Africa?

COP21 in Paris will gather nations to negotiate a new global agreement aimed at reducing carbon emissions to hold global temperatures at levels safe enough to prevent dangerous and irreversible climate change.

Africa has contributed only a tiny fraction to overall greenhouse gasses but with fewer resources to adapt to rising temperatures, stands to lose the most. Climate change threatens Africa's food and water security, limits energy access and hinders the continent's social development and economic growth.

In the lead up to COP21, Africa's negotiators, scientists, policymakers and public will gather at **CCDA-V** organised by the **Climate for Development in Africa (ClimDev-Africa) Programme** to debate the structure and content of the agreement. High hopes are pinned on COP21 to get a deal that is right for Africa. This briefing pinpoints key issues for the continent and examines what's at stake in Paris.

### Ambitious targets

"Two degrees is not enough - we should be thinking of 1.5°C. If we are not headed to 1.5 °C we are in big, big trouble," warned Christiana Figueres, Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC. Many of the world's leading scientists echo that the global temperature rise must be limited to 1.5 °C to avoid catastrophic effects of climate change.

However, recent discourse has set out 2°C as the threshold which would have major implications for Africa. Ambient temperatures are much higher than anywhere else on the globe (23°C) and the impacts of even a marginal temperature increase would be amplified in Africa. Thus, the target of 1.5°C is too high for Africa and other tropical countries.



## Major impacts

Rising temperatures make Africa ever more vulnerable to extreme weather events including storms, heatwaves, droughts and floods. Erratic climate events damage agricultural systems, leading to food and water insecurity.

Climate change also threatens Africa's development. Over the past decade, many African countries have seen rapid growth but much of the continent's infrastructure - such as roads, telecommunications and energy systems - remain fragile. More frequent and intense flooding and other extreme climate events rupture infrastructure in both urban and rural areas and hinder Africa's development.

Further temperature increases would deepen problems for Africa's people and environment, and have dire consequences for economic growth. The African Group of Negotiators are calling for emissions targets in Paris to remain ambitious and will be looking for a strong global commitment to keep the average temperatures rise below 1.5 °C.

## Shift to voluntary pledges

Previous attempts to secure global compliance with legally binding targets to reduce emissions, as set out in the Kyoto Protocol, have had mixed results. Some countries, including many of most influential polluting economies, oppose key aspects of the treaty. The Paris approach is seeking to draw from voluntary emission reduction targets through so-called Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs). But is the voluntary nature of these climate pledges flawed? As COP21 approaches Africa asks, will these voluntary contributions be able to bring global warming under control?



### Africa to join centre stage

The global climate response to date has been largely dominated by the global north and previous COPs have tended to side-line the interests of developing countries. Furthermore, Africa's role in shaping the content of past

agreements has been limited with divergent approaches from different countries complicating a unified African position on many issues.

But the creation of a new global agreement in Paris coincides with Africa's increasing influence and confidence in the international negotiating arena. National economies are growing, investment flows have increased and most African governments now have policy and legal frameworks to guide their own national climate responses helping to streamline Africa's participation in the process. As COP21 approaches, it is imperative for African negotiators, scientists, policymakers and the public to come together and join centre stage in the negotiations.

## Vital principles

Previous COPs have called for developed countries, as the heaviest emitters of carbon, to pay for climate damage. Africa will look to the new climate agreement to draw on the Common but Differentiated Responsibility (CBDR) and Polluter Pays (PPP) principles. These put the responsibility on developed countries as the heaviest polluting economies to curb their emissions, and foot the bill as developing countries grapple to deal with the impact of these emissions.

But these principles are heavily contested. Different interpretations determined by national self-interest have led to tensions between developed and developing countries. Africa will pay close attention to how the new framework captures these important principles. Climate finance remains a thorny issue in the lead up to Paris.



## Strong financial support

Africa needs ever more funding to adapt to the impacts of climate change such as investments in water storage and climate-resistant crops, or improved construction to withstand more extreme weather events. There are also significant opportunities in Africa's energy sector through an abundance of renewable energy resources including solar, geothermal and wind power. With Means of implementation (MoI) – including financial resources, technology development and transfer, and capacity-building - Africa has the opportunity to leapfrog the dirty development pathway of heavily industrialised countries and fast forward towards a low-carbon future.

But as the costs of adaptation and mitigation rise, the funding gap grows. Latest figures from UNEP suggest Africa's climate change adaptation costs will rise to US\$50 billion per year by 2050, even if global warming is kept below 2°C.

Accessing and distributing funds is also complex and time-consuming, and it is often unclear what finance is available and where. This has been a major barrier for Africa.

Various climate funds have been established to help developing countries cut their own greenhouse gas emissions and plan for future climate change. Initiatives such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF) have made some progress but the finance gap remains huge. Africa wants a commitment to populate the GCF and other climate funds to be high on the agenda at COP21.

# Climate science and policy

Scientific knowledge of climate change advances our understanding of the climate system; more accurate predictions of climate variability can help develop solutions to adapt to changing temperatures.

Across Africa, climate science can be deployed to boost agricultural production and help manage water resources. Yet generation of climate information is low, and access to this information is limited. Researchers, policymakers and practitioners do not consistently incorporate science-based climate information into decision making.

It is crucial that African governments and relevant organisations work together to improve access to climate science and data and build the capacity of African people - from decision makers to farmers - to apply it in policy and practice. Quality information and the capacity to use it are crucial ingredients in shaping an effective response to climate change.

Robust climate knowledge is the basis for smart policymaking at national, regional and global level. It must be central to decision making across Africa; it must also guide the new international climate agreement to be finalised at COP21 in Paris as this will shape the future of climate policy and action.

## About ClimDev-Africa

*The ClimDev-Africa Programme is an initiative of the African Union Commission (AUC), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the African Development Bank (AfDB). It is mandated at the highest level by African leaders (AU Summit of Heads of State and Government). The Programme was established to create a solid foundation for Africa's response to climate change and works closely with other African and non-African institutions and partners specialised in climate and development.*

### For more information, contact:

Africa Climate Policy center  
United Nations Economic Commission for Africa  
Menelik II Road, PO Box 3001  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
info@climdev-africa.org  
www.climdev-africa.org

### Supported by:

