

THE AFRICAN CLIMATE POLICY CENTRE

The African Climate Policy Centre retools to strengthen the implementation of the Paris Agreement for Africa's transformation.



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Africa's development agenda is framed by the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the continent's wider development blueprint – Agenda 2063. Attaining the development objectives captured in these agenda cannot be done without responding appropriately to the challenges and opportunities posed by climate change; a new climate economy approach is required – i.e. one in which economic growth and sustainability are seen as two sides of the same coin.

The Paris Agreement on climate change represents a pipeline of hope for Africa in particular, and developing countries in general. It signaled a new dawn – a political endorsement of a development model that is not achieved at the expense of resource efficiency and growth. In short, the Paris Agreement was a political triumph to nudge solidarity from nation states through the recognition that the magnitude of the problem warrants greater urgency and a collective responsibility for global leaders to recalibrate economies to a temperature guardrail of below 2 degrees. A key outcome of the 2015 Paris Agreement was the adoption of the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) as the mechanism by which all signatories to the agreement would address climate change mitigation and adaptation actions. But African countries will need analytical, policy and investment support to implement their NDCs within the context their national development plans.

The African Climate Policy Centre (ACPC) of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) serves as the secretariat and the analytical arm of the Climate

for Development in Africa (ClimDec-Africa) initiative – a joint programme of the African Union Commission (AUC), the ECA and the African Development Bank (AfDB), mandated by African Heads of State and Government to provide a solid foundation for Africa's response to climate change impacts. The ACPC has capitalised on experiences garnered from the implementation of the first phase of the ClimDev-Africa initiative to retool and frame its new 5-year programme strategy (2017-2021) in ways that enhance the implementation of the Paris Agreement in Africa on the one hand, and; on the other hand facilitate the development and implementation of responses to the impacts of climate change on the continent. As a dedicated climate centre within the ECA aimed at integrating climate change into the structural transformation agenda of the Commission in support of its social and economic development mandate, the ACPC has a strategic and unique position both in terms of convening power and its pool of intellectual and scientific base to effectively support the transition of Africa's economies towards climate-resilient development.

In retooling itself as the centre for knowledge generation and brokering for climate-resilient development policies in Africa, the ACPC has followed three basic verities. First, the need to place infrastructure at the centre of climate action, thus allowing African countries to switch gears and become global leaders in climate-smart infrastructure. Second, demonstrating that climate action that recognizes the centrality of climate information services (CIS) as a poverty alleviation tool will also bridge the gap between CIS and critical development sectors. Third, that the ambition level in the NDCs of African countries will have successful implementation rates only if fully aligned with national development priorities.

Smart Infrastructure for Climate Action

Many African countries have included development of infrastructure in key sectors such as ecosystems, energy, transport, water, sanitation, and urban areas in their NDCs. Closing the infrastructure gap in these and other sectors in Africa requires substantial investments in the order of USD 100 billion a year, mostly in long-lived

infrastructure that are also vulnerable to climate and weather changes and uncertainties. It is therefore essential to ensure that infrastructure investment decisions made today are such that the infrastructure will perform in both today's and tomorrow's climate. In this regard the ACPC, the World Bank, the AUC and the AfDB have teamed up to operationalize the Africa Climate Resilient Investment Facility (AFRI-RES), with initial funding from the Nordic Development Fund. AFRI-RES aims to support African institutions and the private sector to strengthen their capacity to plan, design, and implement infrastructure investments that are resilient to climate variability and change in selected sectors.

Minding the Gap: closing the knowledge and communications deficit between CIS and critical development sectors

Central to successful implementation of NDCs is the application of weather and climate information services. Such information services are essential to addressing key hindrances to climate-resilient and inclusive development in Africa, and can provide early warning

systems and also contribute to better longer-term climate prediction. In this regard, ACPC in collaboration with DFID and the UK Met Office is implementing the Weather and Climate Information Services for Africa (WISER) programme, with the ACPC focusing on the pan-Africa component aimed at strengthening the enabling environment for the generation, uptake and use of weather and climate services to support sustainable development, and promoting intellectual leadership in climate science in Africa, built through innovative evidence generation and learning. Furthermore, ACPC's promotion of the uptake and use of CIS for development planning is also being achieved through its Climate Research for Development (CR4D) and its flagship annual Climate Change and Development in Africa conference (CCDA).

Transitioning for the African transformation: staying the NDC course

While emissions from economic activity in Africa remains extremely low, by signing up to the Paris Agreement and submitting NDCs, African countries have sent a clear signal of their commitment to achieve climate-resilient and low-carbon development while contributing to global climate actions. However, many of the continent's NDCs are currently in need of significant re-elaboration as it has become clear that they were initially rushed to meet submission deadlines for the COP 21. Nevertheless, African nations remain committed to the achievement of climate-resilient and low-carbon development through their NDCs. ACPC will continue to respond to on-going requests from Member States to assist them with the refinement and implementation of NDCs. As such ACPC will ensure that policymakers, private sector and development practitioners are using climate-informed analyses to design adaptation, mitigation and risk reduction programmes elaborated in their NDCs.

Going forward, ACPC is equipped and ready to support sustainable, inclusive and climate resilient development in Africa by influencing, strengthening and enabling the transition to climate-resilient development through responsive policies, plans and programmes that lead towards transformed economies, healthy ecosystems and human wellbeing. ■