

Special Initiatives Division at the Conference of African Ministers of Finance: Climate Change and the Green Economy in Africa

Report



The Special Initiatives Division convened three side events during the AU-ECA Conference of Ministers (COM), and co-hosted a fourth event with UNEP. The focus of the SID side events was on Climate change and the structural transformation to Green economies. Key issues that were explored during the discussions included how Africa can sustain the recent high economic growth experienced in recent years within the context of climate change; what opportunities exist for Africa from climate change and how African countries can tap in those opportunities to transform their economies; issues of adaptation and mitigation for Africa, especially given the priority of adaptation for African countries. The discussions also focused on the construction of the climate narrative and

the role of Africa in shaping climate science and contributing to this narrative. The side events also sought to contribute to Africa's preparations for COP 21.

The events were:

- The IPCC 5th Assessment Report, What it means for Africa.
- Africa in the post Kyoto Climate Governance Framework,
- Financing Africa's Transition to the Green Economy

The intention of these convenings was to take advantage of the presence of a wide array of experts from government, the private sectors, academia and the media to discuss climate change in the context of the discourse on economic development in Africa. The events were very well attended, and characterized by vibrant and wide ranging discussions. Panelists raised many issues highlighting the relationships between climate change and development, pointing out the challenges that climate change posed for the development process, identifying opportunities for Africa's economic transformation in this context of climate change, and contributing towards the identification of solutions to the pressing challenges of finance and technology transfer.

Across all the events, there was agreement that the climate-development nexus is one of the most pressing challenges facing the African continent today, and that more needs to be done to understand the linkages between climate and development, and to develop African solutions. Key issues raised included:

- African economies are by and large green. The contribution of Africa to global warming is negligible, in the larger scheme of things. Further, an increase of global temperature of 2 C by 2050 is going to be already catastrophic for Africa. There is therefore need for the

international community to act against global warming based on the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities. There is no good pollution, and all pollution is damaging to the global environment and human well-being. Despite the fact that Africa has contributed very little to global warming, its impact is disproportionately felt. Consequently, Africa needs new and additional resources to develop and adapt to climate change

- Emissions in Africa include those that come from the activities of multi-national investments. There is a danger that these could increase if not properly managed. Accounting in the INDCs should develop mechanism of relating emissions to the beneficiaries, regardless of the location of the emitting activities, as a way of avoiding the export of emissions through inappropriate technologies
- While the Kyoto Protocol will not be carried forward in the new protocol/agreement/accord in its entirety, there is still no agreement on which elements of the KP go into the new agreement. What is clear already though is that whatever will be carried forward will not be enough to reduce GHG to the level needed. For Africa, it is important to maintain, in legally binding form, those elements of the KP that commit parties to certain levels of emissions reductions.
- On climate finance, there was a lot of debate about the structure, value and governance of the Green Climate Fund (GCF). The GCF is an important funding mechanism for Africa. There have been additional commitments recently (Japan and the US, USD 4.5 billion each), but only \$15 million has actually been disbursed, and 88 million is available cash at hand. This is a drop in the ocean. By some estimates, Africa require USD 20-30 billion/year for adaptation. But even this figure was contested, with suggestions that we need more comprehensive methodologies of assessing climate cost and the cost of adaptation.
- The narrative of climate change is constructed on the basis of scientific contributions from outside the continent. African scientists and scholars are grossly under-represented in the IPCC process, although the IPCC assessment reports are hugely important for the continent.
- The need for an inclusive cross-sectoral (water, agriculture, health, energy, transport, etc.) solution that takes into account contributions from the private sector, civil society, researcher and policy-makers in the designing and implementation of adaptation programs.
- Social issues (gender, poverty, health, education, etc.) should be part of an integrated African response
- The weather and climate observation networks across the continent are grossly inadequate and need be enhanced in addition to the creation of innovative platforms to bring scientific evidences to the communities and practitioners. This requires appropriate capacity building and technologies for climate smart development.
- The use of the market to drive the climate response presents several challenges. There is a need to promote market mechanisms that are favorable to African countries, for example the carbon price is mostly determined by developed countries that are the buyers of carbon. Consequently the markets have been unstable and unresponsive to African needs.