



For Immediate Release

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**THE PAN AFRICAN CLIMATE JUSTICE ALLIANCE (PACJA)
STATEMENT ON WEST POKOT LANDSLIDE**

The Pan African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA) has observed with great disappointment and sadness the state and plight of the many Kenyans suffering following the recent mudslides in West Pokot, Kenya.

That a bridge that could have enabled transportation of food and non-food items to the victims of the catastrophe caved in yesterday is an exacerbation of an already sorry state, but which needs to remind the government that more and urgent attention needs to be turned to that part of the country.

The residents, who relied on the Marich Bridge to leave or get back to the village since the disaster six days ago are now helpless.

But why would a people of a nation that wields immense wealth like Kenya not afford helicopters to deliver the very basics to the survivors of the calamity that claimed 43 lives?

Kenya can and should do better than it has in this tragedy that has hit some of the very poor in the country. For this village alone, 22 lives were lost in the mudslides. Some of the survivors have no shelter, as their houses and livestock, and crop in the farm, were swept away.

PACJA joins the West Pokot people, and others who have suffered such calamities in other parts of the country, the continent, and indeed the rest of the world, in calling for governments' immediate actions in forestalling and mitigating climate-related calamities.

We all know that mudslides are caused by excessive rainfall. And while the country is quick to dismiss this issue as a natural catastrophe,

PACJA, being a climate justice advocacy organisation, holds informed opinion that this occurrence is attributable to anthropogenic interference with the way the global climatic systems work. Weather experts have attributed the heavy rains to unusual warming of the Indian Ocean; a phenomenon referred to as Indian Ocean Dipole. This unusual phenomenon is of course an effect of climate change. The globe has been experiencing rise in temperatures and the 20 warmest years in history all occurred within the last 22 years.

A recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report indicates that exposure to multiple and compound climate-related risks will increase between 1.5°C and 2°C of global warming, with greater proportions of people both so exposed and susceptible to poverty in Africa.

The events unfolding in West Pokot are providing evidence that climate change and climate variability pose major threats to the environment, to economic growth and to sustainable development.

Africa is the continent least responsible for climate change, but it is the most vulnerable to the negative effects of climate change. The negative effects include reduced agricultural production, reduced food security, increased incidences of flooding and droughts, widespread disease epidemics, and increased risk of conflict over scarce land and water resources.

Africa's vulnerability is aggravated by the interaction of multiple stresses occurring at various levels, coupled with the continent's low adaptive capacity, which impact the continent's prospects for long-term economic growth and sustainability. Climate change impacts will interact in multiple and complex ways with other trends unfolding in the region.

The global community has a role to play in providing solutions to these crisis affecting the continent. There is urgent need to avert, minimise and address these impacts through comprehensive risk management approaches through early warning systems, measures to enhance recovery and rehabilitation and build back and forward better, social protection instruments, including social safety nets, and transformational approaches. The Warsaw International Mechanism on Loss and damage is relevant to Africa now more than ever before.

Even as the world troops to Madrid, Spain, for the COP25, we call upon the parties to United Nations Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to develop a clear means of implementation and operationalise the Warsaw International Mechanism on loss and damage and act with speed to deliver this at the earliest opportunity possible.

Back in Kenya, as we condole with families that have lost loved ones and property in the West Pokot landslide, and being cognisant of the fact that landslides are caused by both natural and anthropogenic factors, PACJA hereby notes the following:

Disaster preparedness capability of relevant agencies at national and county levels require beefing up with focus on adoption of mechanisms for effective prediction and, where possible, preventing disasters, mitigating their impact on vulnerable populations, and providing backup to victims to effectively cope with the consequences.

Since slope failure that leads to landslides is attributed to rock/soil structure as well as occurrence of heavy rainfall, it is critical to prioritise and devote significant resources to rangeland management with incentives and strict enforcement of policies and legislation governing management of Arid and Semi-Arid Landscapes (ASAL). The requirement to observe 10 per cent tree cover should be observed as trees and vegetation cover provide a critical service of binding and protecting soil from agents of erosion that predispose slopes to land slips.

Recognizing that de-vegetation and heavy rainfall associated with climate change are key factors that contribute to slope failure, we call upon leaders to step up climate action, with the immediate one being ensuring effective implementation of national and international commitments to combating climate change. Effective mechanisms, accompanied with sufficient financing, should be put in place to facilitate implementation of Kenya's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) at all levels.

At the international level follow-up needs to be made to ensure financing under the Paris Agreement is made available to finance adaptation actions aimed at strengthening resilience of vulnerable communities as well as compensating for the loss and damage under the Warsaw International Mechanism.

This is in recognition of the fact that the Paris Agreement reaffirmed the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage as the main vehicle under the UNFCCC process to avert, minimize and address loss and damage associated with climate change impacts, including extreme weather events and slow onset events.

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