



African Civil Society Statement to the 36th African Union Summit

Addis Ababa, 15 and 16 February 2023

At the invitation of the Pan-African Climate Justice Alliance¹, over 100 stakeholders representing civil society, indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs), faith movements, academia, youth and women's movements participated in multistakeholder reflections on COP27 outcomes and consultations on the stakes, challenges, and opportunities of the 28th UN Climate Change Conference (COP28) coming up in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates later this year.

The consultations took place on 15 and 16 February 2023 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on the sidelines of the 36th Summit of Heads of States and Governments of the African Union. They aimed to draw lessons from COP27, develop key messages in the evolving geopolitical context of global climate dialogues and devise strategies to secure COP 28 outcomes that are ambitious and at par with Africa's urgent needs and aspirations.

The consultations built on earlier reflections and analyses that started in Kigali, Rwanda, and numerous other efforts scattered across the continent. These efforts have attempted to inspire the ambition and trust needed to address the deteriorating climate crisis that has threatened the livelihoods of millions of Africans in precariously unjust yet avoidable suffering.

OBSERVATIONS

After two days marked by high-level political remarks, key-note presentations, panel discussions, plenary discussions and small group reflections, participants observe as follows:

¹ Founded in July 2008 in South Africa, PACJA is Africa's leading climate justice advocacy movement comprised on more than 1000 organizations in 51 African countries. The Alliance aims to advance just, people-centered, locally led and Africa responsive solutions to climatic and environmental challenges. To know more about our work, visit www.pacja.org or email info@pacja.org

1. Two decades of international climate change negotiations and dialogues are yet to lead to the bold actions needed to address the climate crisis and avert the worst impacts of climate change. Most analyses, including those of the Secretariate of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), show a widening mitigation and adaptation gap. Climate finance, technology transfer and capacity building needed to drive robust climate action in developing countries remain insignificant and inadequate. Consequently, the targets of the Paris Agreement, notably limiting global warming between 1.5 and 2 degrees Celsius and supporting adaptation and resilience building in developing countries, have remained out of reach. Meanwhile, millions in Africa face the devastating impacts of inaction, despite contributing little to nothing to the climate crisis.
2. A “complex and difficult” global geopolitical context, marked by the lingering effects of COVID-19, the Russia-Ukraine crisis, a worsening debt crisis in Africa, high cost of living and unprecedented levels of hunger, has strong potential to derail, delay and reverse urgent climate action. Several industrialised countries responsible for the bulk of global greenhouse gas emissions have reopened coal plants and extended their search for new fossil fuels. Discoveries and the promise for new investments and markets from the North undermine our collective gains in encouraging African leaders to shift from fossil fuels. If allowed to prevail, the current context could render the goal of a graceful just energy transition and transformation further off reach.
3. Despite advancing the most science-informed positions on climate action, laced with the imperatives of climate justice, the international climate agenda has put off African priorities for many years. This omission (especially in discussing Africa’s unique circumstances as contained in the UNFCCC) prevents global climate policies and actions that reflect the continent’s needs and aspirations. Among other consequences, adaptation finance remains insufficient, inadequate, and inaccessible. Conditional pledges to cut emissions in African countries’ NDCs remain vastly underfunded. Instead, the global community has “forced” Africa to take on the burden of addressing the climate crises, which is disproportionate to its responsibilities and means. Failure to at least consider these issues for discussion during successive COPs suggests a lack of global solidarity and raises questions about the utility of African nations’ continued involvement in UNFCCC processes.
4. Inward-looking political and economic interests (orchestrated by the emerging far-right movement in developed countries) overshadow the scientific basis and climate justice imperative for collective climate action. Multilateral processes and the mechanisms for accountability built in them are being abandoned in favour of bilateral arrangements that weaken collaborative effort and strengthen the advancement of “false solutions”. The growing appeal of dealmaking outside the multilateral UNFCCC processes prevents bold actions to cut emissions and protect those affected by extreme weather and related climate phenomena.

5. Even before negotiations begin in earnest, COP28 faces a severe trust crisis that indicates the unabated departure of the global community from the goal of the UNFCCC. The appointment of an oil executive to lead climate negotiations in 2023 will prop oil lobbies that have tried to derail global climate action for decades. We now seriously doubt that the Emirati authorities will be able to deliver a successful COP and move the world closer to addressing the climate catastrophe than we currently are.
6. The loss and damage finance facility under development is a welcome milestone for the global community. But there are no guarantees that the Fund will ease the suffering of the African masses. The international architecture for climate finance does not inspire hope. Industrialised countries have failed to honour their commitment to raising and deploying climate finance and ensured that the little that exists is inaccessible or dedicated to non-priority areas.

CALLS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Having so observed, participants:

1. Call on the African Union to rise to the urgency of the climate crisis in Africa and put the plight of millions losing their livelihoods and lives above personal, national and international political and economic considerations. Acting on behalf of the African people involves listening to everyone without political, class-based, or gender-based discrimination.
2. Recommend the convening of an African Peoples' Summit on Climate Action at the instance of the AU, the African Group of Negotiators, the Civil Society and other Non-State Actors to reassess the utility of the UNFCCC process to Africa after two decades. Such a Summit's aims should include developing homegrown strategies for tackling the impacts of climate change, announcing actions to force big polluters to take responsibility for their emissions and the effect of their pollution on African communities, and adopting a regional masterplan for accelerating a just transition of the continent's development, industrialisation and overall economic transformation.
3. Recommend the creation of a task force of African negotiators and advocates to develop African inputs into the newly created facility for the financing of loss and damage and provide technical support to AGN representatives in the fund establishment process. The task force's mandate should include assessing existing climate finance facilities and recommending strategies for an Africa-led reform initiative to make climate finance responsive to Africa's unique circumstances.
4. Call on African Presidents and Heads of State through the AUC to send a strong message to their Northern counterparts that they cannot use the current geopolitical context as a pretext for delaying badly needed climate action and advancing false solutions. Recommend that the AU convenes a "global emergency Summit" to discuss the potential impact of the Russia-Ukraine crisis and other global challenges on climate action and develop strategies to maintain momentum irrespective of the situation.

5. Call on African Heads of State to scale up investment in the international dialogue on climate change. As an essential dimension of procedural justice, steps to strengthen the effectiveness of African negotiations should include: increasing the numeric, technical and resource capacities of national negotiation teams, insulating negotiators from political and economic influences, strengthening the role of young negotiators to ensure continuity, and increasing funding for climate research and analyses to support negotiation positions.
6. Urge the AUC to strengthen the continent's climate research capacities and capabilities to provide the evidence basis for position building and policy development at national, regional, and global scales. Therefore, recommend strengthening and capitalising on the Climate Research for Development (CR4D), bringing together national research and academic institutions, advocacy organisations, think tanks and other practitioners. Such a Council should, among others, aim to support climate research and technological innovation through an African Climate Research Fund.
7. Urge the AU, the United Nations and other bodies to join the African civil society in rejecting the appointment of Sultan al-Jaber, head of oil giant Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC), as the President-designate of COP28. Reiterate that addressing the climate crisis requires deep cuts in the production and use of fossil fuels. That course of action is squarely at variance with al-Jaber's business interests. It is hard to see al-Jaber leading objective, science-backed negotiations in the interest of the most vulnerable.

Addis Ababa, 16 February 2023