

Addis Ababa, April 21 2024

## 5th Africa Climate Talks

### CLIMATE CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA: A CRITICAL INQUIRY INTO THIRD GENERATION NDCs (NDC 3.0) AND JUST TRANSITIONS FOR AFRICA

Remarks by Dr. Mithika Mwenda, Executive Director, PACJA

- H.E. Mr. Seyoum Mekonnen, State Minister, Climate Change and Demography, Ministry of Planning and Development, Ethiopia
- Joyce Banda, our own Envoy on Loss and Damage, and Former President of Malawi
- Harsen Nyambe, Director, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment, African Union Commission (AUC)
- Joachim Beijmo, Head, Regional Development Cooperation in Africa, Swedish Embassy in Addis Ababa
- James Kinyangi, Coordinators, ClimDev-Africa Special Fund, African Development Bank (AfDB)
- UNECA (Tbc)
- Samuel Kifle, Interim President, University of Addis Ababa (Tbc)

#### Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me at the onset to acknowledge the foresight of institutions convening Africa Climate talks, all in the spirit of Climate for Development (CLimDev) in Africa Initiative; comprising the Africa Union Commission, Africa Development Bank, and the UN Economic Commission for Africa, together with PACJA, as we collectively seek to unify our voices and efforts in strategically positioning Africa global climate discourse process.

The bold theme of these talks ‘Climate change and development in Africa: a critical inquiry into third generation NDCs (NDC 3.0) and just transitions for Africa’ is not only timely but stimulating both in thought process and action.

Timely because we have the opportunity to interrogate what we have achieved so far in the NDCs implementation since the first generation, and stimulating because the discourse keeps evolving into conversations about our lives, our society, our economies, our planet, and overall, helping us to examine critical questions on how to live in interdependence with nature, and the inevitable transition to low-carbon, climate-resilient inclusive development pathways.

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I am optimistic that this inquiry process will yield practical recommendations that are responsive to our collective perspectives, realities, nuances, aspirations, and, more importantly, imperatives of climate justice.

In the spirit of opening this inquiry allow me to pose a reflective question on how African nations get it too fundamentally wrong to develop Nationally determined contributions (NDCs) that are mitigation-centric, yet NDCs are supposed to be non-binding national plans highlighting climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts. How did we so woofly disregard the adaptation imperative in our initial thoughts and in framing our NDCs? This question and others pertinent to Africa, including the vexing issue of climate finance, formed the basis for discussions during the side event we conducted last week, here in Addis Ababa. Clearly, even as we interrogate the NDC 3.0, many of us are concerned that the subsequent update process will remain just the same ritual, without any fundamental change, and the process will keep repeating itself on and on, on and on....

But we have an opportunity to change the trajectory.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

The NDCs are vehicles for the practical delivery of climate action in our countries, and so far we applaud the bold actions demonstrated by African countries to meet their commitments - to the extent of their abilities - whether in cutting on their emissions and/or building their resilience. And as NDCs are conditional, premised on the flow of financial support from developed countries to less developed countries consistent with the Paris Agreement, it will only be fair that successful implementation should be measured on the basis of the financial support each country has received from industrialised countries - this should be the baseline.

During our side event on Climate Finance, our partner, Development Initiatives, shared with us very strange, but obvious findings from a study they conducted about Africa's climate finance:

1. The growing increase in debt related to climate change
2. The China's niche in climate finance debt in Africa

This is one of the studies. We have another partner, ONE campaign whose findings were glaring - that rich countries keep enjoying and through double-counting, and sheer baptism of the already existing development finance, notably ODA, as climate finance.

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Tragically, we let it happen because we lack data. That's why we appreciate efforts being made by various partners, including AfDB, and the emerging platform bringing together climate finance focal points, the African Climate Funds National Designated Authorities Network (AFDAN), which will be instrumental in availing real-time data to enable us to track the progress in climate finance delivery.

But as we trace the money, we hope this inquiry would respond to one nagging concern: *did implementation of actions that were proposed in earlier NDCs have a direct impact on communities at the frontline of the climate crisis?* What concrete proposals should be at the forefront of NDC 3.0 to centre this imperative?

The conversation here, therefore, has the most profound task of not only exploring how we raise overall climate ambition, but more importantly, unifying ourselves as a continent, sectoral-thematic sectors and at all levels to build a critical mass capable of blowing a loud trumpet so that the North will hear our cries and honour their commitment, and stop shifting goalposts while transferring the burden of action to the victims of their actions.

As PACJA and several Non-State Actors generally, we have a firm belief that our political leaders should not relent, nor spare any arsenal in exerting pressure on the global community to ensure NDCs are not another false start since that is where we could be heading. We have a starting point – the Africa Climate Summit provided that impetus, but we should not let the momentum die. We hope that the outcomes, notably the Nairobi Leaders Declaration, will not end in the freezers like other decisions, Declarations and recommendations before it.

And am glad that among the convenors of this Dialogue is the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, the Chair of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), which is a crucial platform in the overall coordination of climate Action in Africa. Our desire as civil society is that we will see more coordinated conversations across the continent, where AMCEN doesn't speak at cross-purposes with AGN, and where the Committee of Heads of State and Governments on Climate Change (CAHOSCC) articulates true aspirations of Africa in consultation with AGN and AMCEN, and where all stakeholders, including us civil society, rally around an inclusively consultative position.

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### **Comrades,**

It is this Unity of Purpose that will enable us to make us relevant in negotiations. The choice is ours – whether to be on the table or part of the meal! It is this unity which will enable us to make a make in the debate about the bold pronouncement transitioning away from fossil fuels in Dubai that set the stage for more contestation on the pace and timelines of the meaning of the transition. What, for instance, does it mean In the context of Africa? This inquiry must reflect deeply on what a just (and graceful) transition means to the African people, societies and economies. How best should we advance these transitions without compromising our right to development, while avoiding providing opportunities for developed countries to escape accountability?

More so, and given the broad nature of transition conversations (and interpretations) and its wider implications on trade and transitional minerals, the enquiry should not shy from asking hard questions on how Africa should engage with other mechanisms, such as the controversial carbon border mechanisms of EU that have been developed with least inputs from Africa.

Certainly, Africa is blessed with vast deposits of critical minerals powering just transition technologies – solar panels, wind power and electric vehicles – and they bring both hopes and challenges. The promise of hope is that if extracted well, these minerals can be a source of climate finance while at the same time providing millions of green jobs to our youths. On the other hand, they could result in pain, just like the minerals driving the Industrial Revolution – as any conflict hotspot in Africa is associated with the discovery of mineral deposits. We have an opportunity to correct the mistakes of yesteryears, as frameworks on extraction should respect labour laws, rights of communities and, more importantly, environmental integrity.

### **Distinguished delegates,**

However, though we remain optimistic that we will learn from our mistakes of yesteryears, the signals we are seeing in parts of Africa are profoundly worrying. We gather here today when several African countries have already auctioned their prestigious natural ecosystems that ought to contribute to our global commitments through carbon credits.

Alone, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) plans to lease and potentially grab approximately 25 million hectares of land in countries like Zambia, Tanzania, Liberia, and Zimbabwe. These lands will purportedly be used to preserve existing forests and plant additional trees to absorb carbon dioxide, contributing to global efforts to slow down climate change. Data on land under carbon credits in Africa is scanty and has not been fully aggregated, yet this seems to be a financing mechanism that is not helping Africa to meet both its financing needs and emission reduction targets, nor helping in securing a firm commitment by the north to cut on its emissions.

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This enquiry must introspect in a deeper sense on the contribution of funding from the carbon credit programmes in the delivery of NDCs in Africa and further interrogate the broader question of whether Africa is conspiring against itself in framing the NDCs of developed countries.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

Rather than obsessing ourselves with Carbon markets, we urge that the next version of NDCs should be centred on adaptation, largely funded in the form of grants in the spirit of the Paris Agreement. If anything, and looking at previous NDCs, African countries have limited bandwidth for raising ambition given the high level of ambition in previous commitments, accountability for cutting on emissions must be recalibrated to the developed countries.

It's time Africa owned its development paradigm. As you are aware the current generation of NDCs was largely developed by external consultants, largely from Northern countries and therefore do not necessarily reflect our urgent priorities and modalities for responding to this. I call upon the UNECA with support from AUC to develop proto-type guidance and mobilize a pool of expertise from Africa to support African nations in the accelerated development of their next NDCs.

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The critical issues arising from these talks, outcomes of Global stock take, alongside other widely accepted recommendations from other African convenings should be the guiding rod.

**I thank you ALL!**