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African Centre for the Study of the United States

EMPOWERING AFRICA: ADVANCING CLIMATE RESILIENCE AND SUSTAINABILITY ON THE CONTINENT

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Introduction

This policy brief provides a comprehensive overview of some key issues and strategies concerning climate action in Africa. It aims to address the multifaceted challenges posed by climate change on the continent, and Africa's agency in that regard through policy recommendations. The policy brief addresses:

- **Tax windfall profits from fossil fuel industries to fund climate adaption and the establishment of the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA):** The delayed finalisation of the GGA framework at COP28 poses challenges for African nations reliant on global funding for adaptation efforts.
- **Opportunities and Challenges of Critical Minerals and Metals:** Sub-Saharan Africa's abundant reserves of critical minerals and metals offer potential for economic development and clean energy transition. However, questions arise regarding African agency in resource management and development.
- **Urgency of Climate Finance and Investment:** Africa's vulnerability to climate change necessitates a significant scale-up of climate finance and investment. This policy brief calls for urgent action and unity among African nations to accelerate climate resilience and mitigation efforts.
- **Importance of Initiatives like the Great Green Wall:** Despite challenges, initiatives like the Great Green Wall demonstrate the potential for combating desertification and promoting sustainable development in the Sahel region.

Through comprehensive analysis and actionable recommendations, this policy brief aims to empower policymakers and stakeholders in advancing climate resilience and sustainability across the African continent.

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1.0. Tax windfall profits from fossil fuel industries to fund climate adaptation in Africa

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Summary

Africa is facing a colossal climate change crisis, manifesting itself in the form of droughts, storms, fires and food insecurity, among others. To respond to the crisis, the continent's countries, through the African Group of Negotiators (AGN), proposed the establishment of the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA), to serve as a unifying framework to drive political action and finance for adaptation, on the same scale as mitigation. The proposal was made in 2013 and it took until 2015 for the GGA to be established. Even worse, there is still no framework for this mechanism. The Conference of the Parties 28 (COP28) in Dubai, last year, postponed the finalisation of the framework to 2025. The delays in adopting the framework should be of concern to African governments because any global funding can only come after the adoption of the framework. This article proposes that African countries should tax windfall profits from fossil fuel industries to fund climate adaptation, and not wait for the sluggish process of establishing the framework.

Introduction

Climate change and its impacts are no longer a matter of scientific prediction, but a reality unfolding before our eyes. Droughts, storms, floods, fires, and other extreme weather events, caused by global warming, have been felt in many parts of the world, more so on the African continent; thus, highlighting the need for the continent to prioritise climate change adaptation.

An analysis conducted by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) has revealed that seven of the 10 countries most impacted by climate change disasters are in Africa[1]. Making matters worse, is the fact that climate disasters in Africa tend to cause more damage compared to other parts of the world, because of the continent's underdeveloped infrastructure. The following were the climate disasters in Africa, in 2023, and the damage they caused:

- South Africa heatwave, in January: The temperature reached 40º in the semi-arid Northern Cape province, resulting in eight deaths.
- Cyclone Freddy struck Mozambique, Mauritius, Reunion, Malawi, and Zimbabwe, in February and March: Over 1 000 people were killed, and tens of thousands displaced, with over 500 000 people affected and massive damage to infrastructure.
- Drought across the Horn of Africa, in March: Hundreds of thousands of people were impacted by food insecurity and disease outbreaks in large areas of Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia.
- Floods in DR Congo and Rwanda, in April, May and June: The death toll was over 570, and thousands of people were displaced, with 5 000 homes destroyed.
- Wildfires in Algeria, in July and August: The wildfires were triggered by heatwaves, killing 34 people, and destroying homes and other infrastructure.
- Floods in Nigeria: Up to 33 000 people were affected, with 7 353 displaced and thousands of hectares of farmland submerged.
- Deadly earthquake in Morocco, in September: Although the link between earthquakes and climate change has not been conclusively established, nearly 3 000 people died from this earthquake, 5 000 were injured, and 50 000 homes were destroyed.

- Devastating Storm Daniel in Libya, in September: More than 6 000 people were killed, with tens of thousands injured, 40 000 displaced and massive infrastructures destroyed.
- Destructive floods in Cameroon, in October: More than 100 people were killed, with dozens injured and over 30 homes destroyed.
- La Niña caused heavy rains and flash floods in Somalia and Kenya, in November: La Niña and El Niño are a weather phenomenon that is said to be exacerbated by climate change: Dozens of people were killed, leaving over 300 000 displaced.
- Flash floods in South Africa, in December: More than 20 deaths were recorded, with thousands of people displaced and massive infrastructure destroyed.

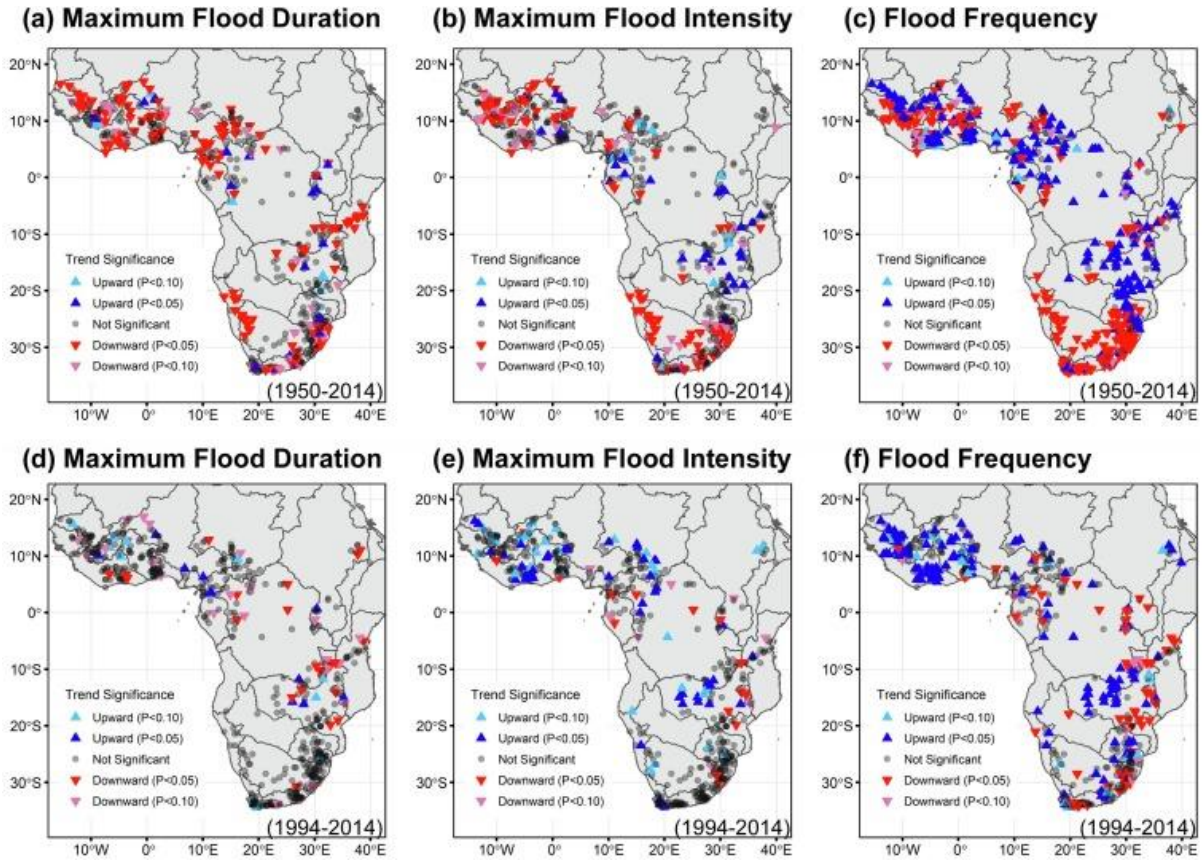

Figure 1: Map of Sub-Saharan Africa indicating changes in the duration, intensity and frequency of floods from 1950 to 2014. Source: Ekolu et al., 2022[2]

As shown in Figure 1, the frequency of droughts and floods in Sub-Saharan Africa has significantly increased from 1950 to 2014[3]. Scientists have warned that climate disasters will increase in frequency and intensity in the coming years[4]. Apart from climate disasters, the human health situation on the continent will deteriorate as a result of climate change. The World Health Organisation (WHO) Africa Region reported that climate change affected social and environmental determinants of health such as clean air, safe drinking water, sufficient food and secure shelter[5]. It added that waterborne diseases, which are prevalent in Africa, would increase as a result of storms that are exacerbated by climate change.

The difficulty with climate change is that even if we were to achieve net zero carbon emissions today, the carbon already in the atmosphere would be sufficient to continue to induce global warming. The Sixth Assessment Report of the Independent Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) stated: *"If global net*

negative CO_2 emissions were to be achieved and be sustained, the global CO_2-induced surface temperature increase would be gradually reversed, but other climate changes would continue in their current direction for decades to millennia. For instance, it would take several centuries to millennia for global mean sea level to reverse course, even under large net negative CO_2 emissions."[6]

These assertions suggest that mitigation efforts, though vital, will not help in the short to medium term. This means that countries in Africa should put in place plans and resources to build resilience to avert calamitous consequences. At the global level, there is the GGA which is a commitment under Article 7.1 of the Paris Agreement aimed at *"enhancing (the world's) adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change"*. The GGA was proposed by the AGN in 2013 and established in 2015 to serve as a unifying framework to drive political action and finance for adaptation on the same scale as mitigation[7]. Clearly, African countries proposed the GGA mindful of the fact that they were impacted the most by the effects of global warming.

However, despite having been established in 2015, the intentions of the GGA remain mere wishes with no action. Between 2022 and 2023, a strong push was made to set the GGA targets through the Glasgow-Sharm El Sheik work programme (GlaSS), established at COP26. This exercise helped inform aspects of the final framework which was adopted at COP28 in 2023, such as the policy cycle for strengthening adaptation action. Regrettably, the exercise failed to produce key components of the framework and referred the work to another forum, the UAE-Belém work programme, which was launched at COP28 to fill the remaining gaps, and will conclude its work at COP30 in 2025. The fact of the matter is that these are lengthy processes often led by policymakers and experts from developed countries who might not appreciate the urgency of adaptation in Africa. This calls for Africans to take the lead and accelerate the finalisation and implementation of the measures, to save lives and property in their backyard. If this cannot be done, African countries should look at their own measures.

Climate change adaptation is a matter of life and death, particularly in African countries. UN secretary-general, Antonio Guterres, recently remarked that *"we are in an adaptation emergency. We must act like it"*[8]. Of course, the elephant in the room is that developing countries, including African nations, expect funding for adaptation to come from developed countries. However, as Mantlana[9] put it: *"There is no commitment by developed countries to provide financial support to developing countries for the implementation of the activities of the framework of the global goal on adaptation"*. Thus, the hope that developed countries will provide adaptation funding is hope against hope. Mantlane remarked that the agreed text at COP28 *"is full of principles"* on climate finance and *"contains feeble language"* in reference to action on climate finance. For example, he added, the agreed outcome notes the obvious, *"that the current provision of climate finance for adaptation remains insufficient"* and *"goes on to use inconsequential language that merely 'urges developed country Parties' to urgently provide climate finance, technology transfer and capacity-building for adaptation"*. He took issue with a paragraph that appears in all four in-session documents, which he said read more as a *"resignation than a threat"*, as it pointed out that the degree of implementation of the framework by developing countries depends on the extent to which developed countries provide support. Mantlana's concerns are understandable; developed countries have failed to deliver on the commitment they made at COP15 to mobilise USD 100 billion a year by 2020 for climate action in the developing world. What guarantee is there that they will pay towards the GGA?

Guterres has offered a solution, suggesting that governments should tax the windfall profits of the fossil fuel industry, to help the most vulnerable nations finance climate adaptation. Otherwise, he

argued, climate change will continue to negatively affect billions of people around the globe, with worsening repercussions for every rising degree of global warming. The estimated annual cost of Africa's climate adaptation by 2050 is calculated at USD 50 billion, while the continent currently receives a mere USD 19.5 billion per year in total climate finance[10].

Taxing the fossil fuel industries should not be a difficult task for any nation. At the Climate Summit in Nairobi, Kenya, in September 2023, African countries already proposed that "global carbon taxes" be used to fight climate change[11]. The suggestion was made at the Climate Summit in Nairobi, Kenya, in September 2023. Nevertheless, asking for funding from "global" carbon taxes will easily take us back to the sluggish UAE-Belém work programme. Developing countries might not be so keen to release their money for developing countries, as we have already seen in several instances. Individual African countries should rather take upon themselves the task of raising climate adaptation finance. Should the GGA funding materialise, it would add to the funds African countries would be raising. The thesis is that African countries cannot wait for the UAE-Belém process to run its course while the climate devastation takes its toll on its people and infrastructure.

The risk of corruption, where the money from such taxes could end up being stolen is a strong possibility and has been raised in the case of South Africa's envisaged climate response fund[12], for instance. This could be mitigated by ensuring that the management of the funds is transparent, hence the suggestion not to deposit the tax money in the coffers of the national treasuries, where it will be difficult to be accounted for. Administrators of the fund should be accountable to forums of climate stakeholders, and not to governments.

Recommendations

The climate change adaptation emergency in Africa is obvious. Therefore, the following is recommended:

- African countries should tax windfall profits from fossil fuel companies within their countries and use the money for climate change adaptation.
- The money from the tax should be run separately from the countries' budgets.
- The administrators of the money should account to forums of climate change organisations, and not governments, to avoid corruption and ensure transparency and accountability.
- Any other money that will result from the UAE-Belém process should be added to this initiative.

Conclusion

Africa can no longer leave the fight against climate change to be guided by the perspectives of developing countries. While climate change is a global phenomenon, its impacts are felt locally, in countries, regions and villages. Therefore, action in response to the effects of the climate crisis should start there. The concerns and priorities of developing countries about climate change are not exactly like those of African countries. Developed countries have most of the infrastructure to withstand the effects of climate change, we in Africa, do not. The WHO Africa Region, for instance, suggested that *"although global warming may bring some localized benefits, such as fewer winter deaths in temperate climates and increased food production in certain areas, the overall health effects of a*

changing climate are likely to be overwhelmingly negative". Clearly, the said *"localised benefits"* would be in cooler regions in the Northern Hemisphere. Warmer regions in Africa would accrue no benefits, whatsoever. The continent should follow the proposed measures to survive the impacts of climate change in the present.

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2.0. Why Africa should not drop its guard when negotiating critical and strategic minerals deals with the global powers?

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Summary

The idea that the transition to clean energy is impossible without sub-Saharan African critical minerals and metals is now watertight. About 30% of the proven global reserves of critical and strategic minerals and metals are found in sub-Saharan Africa, and it is estimated that, with proper exploration, more could be found in this region as delineated in Table 1. Zimbabwe alone is potentially capable of supplying 20% of the world's lithium when the extraction of the ore is at its optimal capacity, while DRC accounts for 70% of the global cobalt output and 50% of the world's known reserves; Zimbabwe and South Africa account for over 80% of platinum reserves; South Africa, Gabon and Ghana account for more than 60% of the world's manganese production – with South Africa being the world's largest, yet only 2% of the ore is locally processed; and Zambia holds 70% of the world's copper.

Mineral	Clean energy technology	Share of global reserves in Africa	African countries with reserves
Platinum group metals	Green hydrogen	92%	South Africa, Zimbabwe
Cobalt	EVs	56%	DRC, South Africa, Zambia, Madagascar
Manganese	EVs, wind	54%	Gabon, South Africa, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana
Chromium	Geothermal, solar, wind	36%	South Africa
Bauxite	Wind, solar	24%	Guinea
Graphite	EVs	22%	Madagascar, Mozambique, Tanzania
Zirconium (ores and concentrates)	Green hydrogen	15%	South Africa, Senegal, Mozambique
Vanadium	Steel, batteries	13%	South Africa
Copper	EVs, wind, solar	6%	DRC, Zambia
Lithium	Batteries	4%	DRC, Zimbabwe, Mali
Nickel	EVs, wind	4%	Madagascar, South Africa
Tellurium	Solar	3%	South Africa
Rare earth	Wind	1%	Tanzania, South Africa, Madagascar, Burundi

Table 1: Critical mineral reserves in Sub-Saharan Africa, with the reserve distribution and end-product applications in clean energy technology. Source: Zero Carbon Analytics, 2024.[1]

However, the idea that the extraction, processing and trading of these minerals and metals will improve African economies is still contested. In many sub-Saharan African countries, both the means

and factors of production, finance, distribution, processing and shipment of these minerals and metals are 100% (or in large part) owned, controlled and managed by non-African transnational corporations (or by African-headquartered transnational corporations with the dual listing, of course, whose main purpose is to supply raw ores to the economies located elsewhere). This dire situation raises critical questions about whether Resource Nationalism (i.e., either nationalisation or indigenisation of the critical minerals subsector) will ensure that Africa this time around does not miss this opportunity, or whether Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in its current form should be Africa's preferred strategic policy pathway to develop and catch up with the rest of the world. The goal of this policy brief is to (1) unpack the implications of all this in either facilitating or combating accumulation by decarbonisation and energy colonialism, on the one hand; or encouraging or discouraging socioeconomic development and industrialisation, on the other, and (2) to provide policy recommendations that seek to increase African agency, voice and influence in shaping the global energy transition. The research question that underpins this study is: *Who profits from (Southern) Africa's critical and strategic minerals and metals deals?*

Introduction

With the realisation that the green energy transition is impossible without African critical minerals and megaprojects, a New Scramble for Africa between the West and East heightened. This is evidenced by the raging global geopolitical competition between the two blocks; in Southern Africa, manifesting as localised tugs-of-war for control, management and ownership of both means and factors of production, distribution, processing and exportation of these minerals, metals and megaprojects.[2]

On the one hand, (Southern) Africa has witnessed increased and massive Chinese investments in critical minerals and renewable energy megaprojects subsectors — many of which are borne out of buying out Western companies.[3] Cases in point here are Zimbabwe (Africa's largest lithium reserves and the world's fifth or sixth), with four of its biggest lithium mines and their processing plants wholly or in large part owned by Chinese companies. To further put this into perspective, the following are Zimbabwe's four biggest lithium projects and China's stake in them: Arcadia Lithium Mine in Marondera district, which is 100% owned by China's Zhejiang Huayou Cobalt; Bikita Minerals Lithium Mine (BMLM) in Bikita district, which is 87% owned by China's Sinomine Resource Group; the Mapinga Mine to Energy Industrial Project which is going to be 100% owned by two Chinese companies — Pacific Goal Investment and Eagle Canyon International Group Limited; and Sabi Star Lithium Tantalum Mine in Buhera district which is 50% owned by the Chengxin Lithium Group of China.[4] The processing plants on site of all the four big lithium companies in Zimbabwe process lithium ore into first-stage concentrates (save for BMLM's, which now processes the ore into second-stage concentrates), and the rest is done in China. A stark contrast can be drawn with the Indonesian case, where its partnership with China prioritised local processing for higher economic returns.[5]

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Chinese companies own and control 41% of cobalt production, 61% of lithium production and 28% of copper production in both the DRC and Zambia. In South Africa, Ghana and Namibia, "Chinese companies are present, they mainly control junior mines, and their total production is limited in comparison with the national mine production."[6] The rest still owned and controlled by First Quantum (25%), Barrick and Glencore (20%), Barrick (22%).[7] It is important to note that the revised agreement of the 2008 infrastructure for minerals deal signed in March 2024 maintained the previous agreement's uneven ownership structure of the Sicomines cobalt and copper joint venture in which a 68% shareholding is owned by the Chinese partners

(Sinohydro Corp and China Railway Group) while 32% is owned by Gecamine, DRC's state miner.[8] That Sicomines will be exempted from paying tax till 2040[9] attests to the continued colonial relations where extractivist models are used to exploit and expropriate the resources of the lower-ranking communities to benefit the metropolis located elsewhere. To put this into perspective, "*the Democratic Republic of the Congo, accounting for 74 percent of global cobalt mining, sends 97 percent of its cobalt exports, mostly unprocessed, to China*".[10]

On the other hand, the West is renewing its relations with (Southern) Africa in complex and strategic ways, to counter the emerging Chinese hegemony in the region's extractive industries in general.[11] Several strategic partnerships between (Southern) African countries and the West serve as evidence of this. For example, the US-EU-Angola-DRC-Zambia MoU on refurbishing the 1300km Lobito railroad corridor that connects the Port of Lobito in Angola with southern DRC and north-western Zambia. Leveraging on the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment initiative (PGII), the US and EU are committed to inject over US$1 billion into refurbishing the railroad to easily ship out critical minerals from both Zambia and the DRC to Europe and the US.[12] This MoU is also augmented by several strategic partnerships signed between the EU and Zambia, Rwanda and the DRC, and between the US and Zambia and the DRC. For example, the US-Zambia-DRC Agreement on centralising electrical vehicle battery manufacturing in DRC and Zambia.[13] Moreover, there is also the European Union Commission's two strategic partnerships on Critical Raw Materials (CRM) value chains — one with Zambia and the other with the DRC.[14]

In an apparent move about wanting a share of Zimbabwe's lithium bounty, Britain is now considering thawing the decades-long hostile relations with Zimbabwe.[15] The following submissions made during the parliamentary debates by two British Members of Parliament are illuminating:

> **Lord St John of Bletso**: "*My Lords, does the Minister agree that the existing sanctions in Zimbabwe have not curbed President Mnangagwa's repressive regime and left a vacuum for the Chinese and the Russians, who are occupied in mining strategic minerals? Is it not time to convene an all-party parliamentary conference in Zimbabwe to help pave the way for the incumbent Government to be more inclusive and address the reduction of poverty for millions of long-suffering Zimbabweans*?".[16]
>
> **Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** *"My Lords, I assure the noble Lord that part of our approach on sanctions is one element of that: using the levers that we have, in working with key partners, to ensure that the current Government adopt that inclusive approach. The noble Lord is correct: looking at what Africa and particularly Zimbabwe provide, their critical mineral resources are a major opportunity. Zimbabwe is the biggest provider of lithium, along with the DRC. There are opportunities ahead, but it needs a Government who are inclusive and protect the rights not just of those coming in but of their citizens".*[17]

To counter these strategic developments by the West and entrench its grip in the Southern Africa extractive industries, China is moving forward with the plans to inject US$ 1 billion to upgrade the dilapidated Tazara railway line — an eastern railway corridor that links Zambia with the Dar es Salam port in Tanzania.[18] The railway line is vital in moving the critical and strategic minerals and metals from Zambia and the DRC to China via the Indian Ocean. All said, the competition to control the Central African Copperbelt, looms large in these localised global geopolitical competitions between the West and the East - with Africa yet again being the pawn on the chessboard of the global superpowers.

Policy Recommendations for African countries

From the above analysis, the following policy recommendations can be deduced:

- It is the opportune time for Africa to step up and stand out as a powerful and strategic player in the emerging multipolar global governance architecture. Having possession of over 50% of the world's proven critical minerals, it is either now or never; by leveraging this strategic, comparative and competitive advantage, Africa should immediately assume the role of a "rule-maker" and stop being a "rule-taker".
- Thus, to avoid the strategic blunder of missing out on the opportunity to benefit from, and shape the course and outcomes of, the 4th Industrial Revolution, Africa must immediately stop the "from the pit-to-port" extractivist and colonial approach to mining. By actioning the 2009 African Mining Vision (AMV), Africa should stop the "from the pit-to-port" extractive and colonial approach to mining. All stages of the value chain should be done in Africa.
- Striking a balancing act between resource nationalism and the need to attract the much-needed foreign direct investment; For Africa to not to lose this opportunity once again, a certain level of protectionist laws and policies governing the critical and strategic minerals and metals subsectors are necessary.
- There is a need for a nuanced analysis of the approaches of these global superpowers to decipher their strategic objectives and interests. This should be done from a Southern perspective in general and African methodology and epistemology in particular.
- Africa needs a team of experts to negotiate these crucial deals to underscore continental, regional and national strategic investments that align with the African Mining Vision and Africa's Agenda 2063.
- The need to adopt the China-Indonesia model for processing these critical and strategic minerals and metals as this model "*prioritised mineral processing for higher economic returns*".[19]

Conclusion

The analysis of this brief underscores the need for Africa to be vigilant when negotiating with superpowers on deals for critical and strategic minerals and metals. This is against the background of a similar script of colonial and extractivist models of resource extraction by both the Western and Eastern superpowers. This policy brief analysed how the raging global geopolitical tectonic shifts are manifesting locally in the exploration, extraction, transportation and processing of (Southern) African critical and strategic minerals and metals, in ways reminiscent of the Scramble for Africa when superpowers competed to own, control, exploit and expropriate African resources. This situation, therefore, underscores the need for Africa to remain vigilant when negotiating with these superpowers on deals for critical and strategic minerals.

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3.0. Improving climate finance and investment to accelerate climate action in Africa.

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Summary

Africa is the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change despite contributing the least to global emissions. To meet this challenge and achieve ambitious climate targets, the continent needs to significantly scale up climate finance and investment. This policy paper calls on African countries and the African Union to prioritise urgency and unity in addressing climate finance and investment challenges to accelerate climate action in Africa. By implementing the recommendations contained herein, policy makers can move Africa towards a low-carbon and climate-resilient future.

Introduction

Africa suffers disproportionately from the impacts of climate change, including extreme weather events and threats to food security, despite accounting for less than 4% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Limited resources and weak infrastructure exacerbate the continent's vulnerability, hindering effective action to combat climate change. The current shortfall in climate finance hinders adaptation and mitigation strategies and requires urgent action to close the gap and empower African nations.

The African Development Bank estimates that Africa needs about $1.3 trillion annually to achieve its sustainable development goals as set out in the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) by 2030[1]. The private sector's contribution is crucial, but it currently provides only USD 4.2 billion, which is only 14% of the total climate finance of USD 29.5 billion. However, to achieve the NDCs, private finance needs to increase significantly and overcome challenges such as regulatory gaps and perceived investment risks.

Despite these challenges, Africa offers numerous investment opportunities in the areas of climate action and green growth such as renewable energy, energy-efficient buildings, and climate-resilient infrastructure. According to AfDB (2018), climate change in Africa offers an opportunity of USD 30 trillion by 2030, with 75% of investment expected to come from the private sector. To capitalise on these opportunities, robust regulatory and institutional frameworks need to be put in place.

Key findings from the literature

- A**frica's minimal contribution to global climate change:** The continent's vulnerability to the severe impacts of climate change stems from its development deficit and energy poverty[2]. The majority of African emissions come from land-use change, forestry, and the energy sector. Worryingly, prolonged extreme weather conditions have a direct impact on food production, food prices and food security. Africa's economies are highly dependent on agriculture, which is largely fuelled by rainwater. Subsistence farmers, most of whom are women, are the most affected.
- **Insufficient inflows of climate finance:** The inflow of climate finance to Africa has fallen well short of demand, as indicated in Figure 2. According to conservative estimates, the continent needs USD 2.5 trillion, equivalent to 74% of its 2021 gross domestic product (GDP), or USD 250 billion annually from 2020 to 2030, to fulfil the NDCs under the Paris Climate Agreement. Current annual climate finance for Africa is reportedly US$30 billion, which is only 12% of the amount required. The Climate Policy Initiative has found that 86% of this comes from public

funds, mainly from multilateral development finance institutions, while the private sector contributes only 14%.

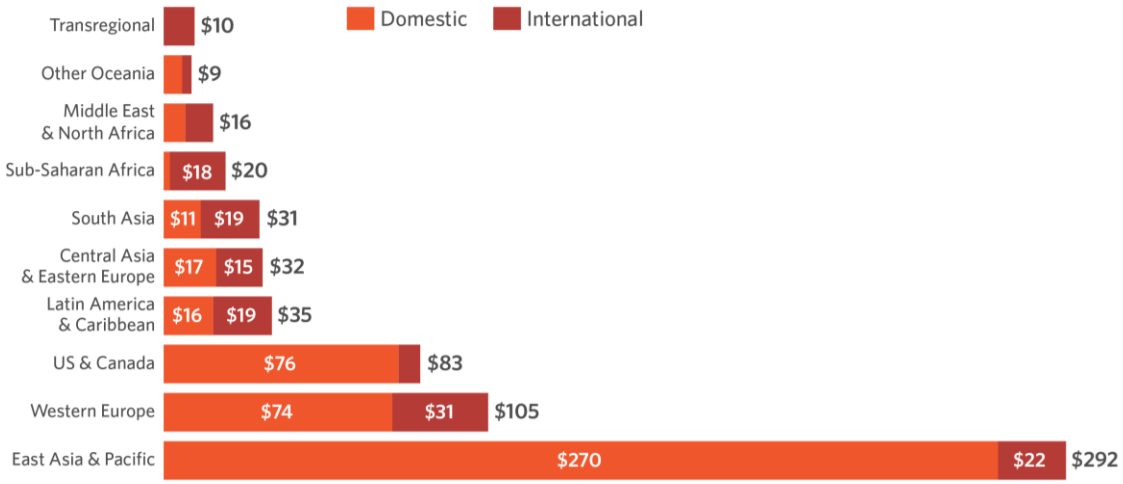

Figure 2: Regional climate finance flows from domestic and international sources in 2019/2020 financial year. Source: Climate Policy Initiative, 2021.[3]

To increase private finance in Africa, existing constraints need to be effectively addressed. In fact, several industrialised countries have not yet contributed to the pledge to provide $100 billion annually by 2020 to help poor countries reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the impacts of the climate crisis. This pledge was originally made in 2009 at the climate summit in Copenhagen (COP 15). In 2021, the total climate finance provided and mobilised by developed countries for developing countries amounted to USD 89.6 billion, a remarkable increase of 7.6% compared to the previous year. This inadequacy is hampering Africa's ability to effectively tackle climate change[4].

- **Limited access to concessional finance:** African countries struggle to access concessional finance for climate action, which hampers their ability to implement resilience measures without incurring heavy debt. Concessional financing for climate action is critical as it enables low or no cost financing that allows for the implementation of resilience measures without burdening countries with high debt, especially in vulnerable regions such as Africa.
- **Insufficient investment in innovative financing mechanisms:** The lack of investment in innovative financing mechanisms such as the sale of carbon credits and community-led initiatives is limiting revenue generation for climate action in Africa.
- **Debt burden and lack of debt relief:** African countries are struggling with high levels of debt that are diverting resources away from climate initiatives[5]. The lack of debt cancellation mechanisms prevents funds that are freed up from being used for climate projects.

Policy Implications and Recommendations

Inadequate climate finance is a major obstacle to sustainable development in Africa and jeopardises food security, economic growth, and regional stability. There is an urgent need for action to close the climate finance gap and enable African nations to adapt to and mitigate climate change. The following recommendations are proposed:

- **Increase public climate finance:** Industrialised countries must deliver on their commitment to provide $100 billion annually in climate finance to developing countries and allocate a significant portion of this to Africa. African countries should proactively encourage industrialised countries to deliver on this commitment. Given the historical emissions of industrialised countries, it is important to emphasise their commitments to developing countries. The missed $100 billion target by 2020 underscores the urgency of honouring previous commitments to support climate action in Africa. African governments must engage diplomatically in international forums such as the United Nations Climate Change Conferences (COP) and work with other developing countries to strengthen their negotiating power for more climate finance.
- **Promote concessional finance:** African countries and the AU should respond confidently to global powers on concessional finance for climate action. It is important that African countries push for more concessional finance, emphasising the continent's limited resources and vulnerability to climate impacts. They should argue that such financing fulfils the moral obligation of industrialised countries to support vulnerable regions and promotes equity in climate action. By focussing investment on low-carbon energy and forestry, these efforts are in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, promoting green job creation and economic growth. Through diplomatic channels and international forums, African countries and the AU must assert the critical role of concessional finance in addressing the immediate and long-term challenges of climate change and pave the way for a resilient and sustainable future in Africa.
- **Innovative financing mechanisms:** African countries and the AU should actively seek innovative financing mechanisms to tackle climate change. They need to emphasise the importance of combining adaptation-focused public funding with private investment, especially at the community level. Initiatives such as the sale of carbon credits should be encouraged as they have the potential to generate significant revenues for climate action. In Laikipia County, Kenya, for example, the Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT)[6] has successfully worked with local communities and international investors to establish a community-led protected area model. By utilising climate change mitigation projects and wildlife conservation efforts, the NRT has not only generated revenue for climate change mitigation but has also supported sustainable livelihoods for local communities. This approach is an example of the effectiveness of community-led initiatives to promote climate change mitigation in Africa and emphasises the need for further research and implementation of such strategies.
- **Debt cancellation for climate action:** African countries and the AU should strongly advocate for debt cancellation as a strategic means of supporting climate action. This approach involves industrialised countries and multilateral institutions cancelling the debts of African countries in return for a commitment to use the funds released for climate initiatives. The aim is to harmonise debt relief with climate targets and sustainable development goals. In October 2006, the US government cancelled Botswana's bilateral debt amounting to 8.3 million dollars. In return, Botswana[7] undertook to use the funds saved to finance grants for its tropical forests. This debt-for-climate swap shows how such initiatives can mobilise resources for important environmental projects while reducing the financial burden on developing countries. Through diplomatic channels and international forums, African countries and the AU can push for a wider application of debt cancellation mechanisms to promote climate action and support sustainable development efforts.

Conclusion

Closing the climate finance gap is critical for Africa's sustainable development, food security and regional stability. Urgent action is needed to close this gap and enable African nations to adapt to and effectively mitigate climate change. By scaling up public climate finance, promoting concessional finance, exploring innovative financing mechanisms, and cancelling debt for climate action, policymakers can pave the way for a low-carbon and climate-resilient future in Africa.

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4.0. Africa's Great Green Wall: Not Yet an Impossible Dream Africa's Great Green Wall: Not Yet an Impossible Dream

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Summary

The *Great Green Wall* initiative is a monumental endeavour aimed at combating desertification, restoring degraded lands, and promoting sustainable development across Africa's Sahel region[1]. Despite facing challenges and setbacks, this project remains not only feasible but also crucial for the environmental, social, and economic well-being of the region. This brief outlines why the *Great Green Wall* is still a viable project, emphasising the need for increased support and investment from the Sahel nations, the rest of the African continent and beyond. It will also highlight the success story of Burkina Faso in avoiding severe deforestation due to this project and discuss the impact of political instability in the Sahel.

Introduction

The *Great Green Wall* is a pan-African initiative, proposed by the African Union in 2007 as a response to severe environmental challenges in the Sahel region. These challenges include desertification, deforestation, droughts, and food insecurity. The primary goal of the *Great Green Wall is* to create a mosaic of green and productive landscapes by planting a belt of trees and vegetation, extending approximately 8,000 kilometres in length and fifteen kilometres in width by 2030. Deforestation in the Sahel is primarily driven by a combination of factors, including population pressure, unsustainable land use practices, climate change impacts and weak governance. Rapid population growth has led to increased demand for agricultural land and fuelwood, resulting in extensive clearing of forests and woodlands. Unsustainable agricultural practices, such as slash-and-burn farming and overgrazing by livestock, contribute to soil erosion and land degradation, exacerbating deforestation[2].

The impacts of deforestation in the Sahel are far-reaching and significant. Soil erosion reduces soil fertility and agricultural productivity, leading to food insecurity and poverty among communities dependent on agriculture. Biodiversity loss, diminished forests, and habitat destruction, affect ecosystem resilience and the survival of plant and animal species and contributes to water scarcity. Several factors influence deforestation trends in the Sahel, including poverty, weak governance, and climate variability[5]. Poverty drives communities to rely on unsustainable practices for survival, while inadequate land management and enforcement of environmental regulations contribute to unchecked deforestation. Climate variability, including droughts and desertification, stresses ecosystems and natural resources, increasing pressure on forests as communities seek alternative resources for sustenance.

Addressing deforestation in the Sahel requires a multi-faceted approach. This includes promoting sustainable land management practices, addressing poverty and food insecurity, strengthening governance and law enforcement, and enhancing resilience to climate change impacts. Sustainable development initiatives that empower communities, promote conservation efforts, and integrate environmental considerations into decision-making processes, are essential for preserving biodiversity, ecosystem services, and livelihoods dependent on healthy forests in the Sahel[3]. The *Great*

Green Wall also offers an opportunity to explore and engage in ecocentric and anthropocentric approaches to climate change adaptation and mitigation, which challenge the predominant technocentric solutions to climate change, which are often expensive and experimental, whilst also emitting significant amounts of greenhouse gas emissions within their product life cycles[4]. Anthropocentric and ecocentric approaches often place a high level of focus on holistic sustainability, collective action, as well as developing people-led best practices.

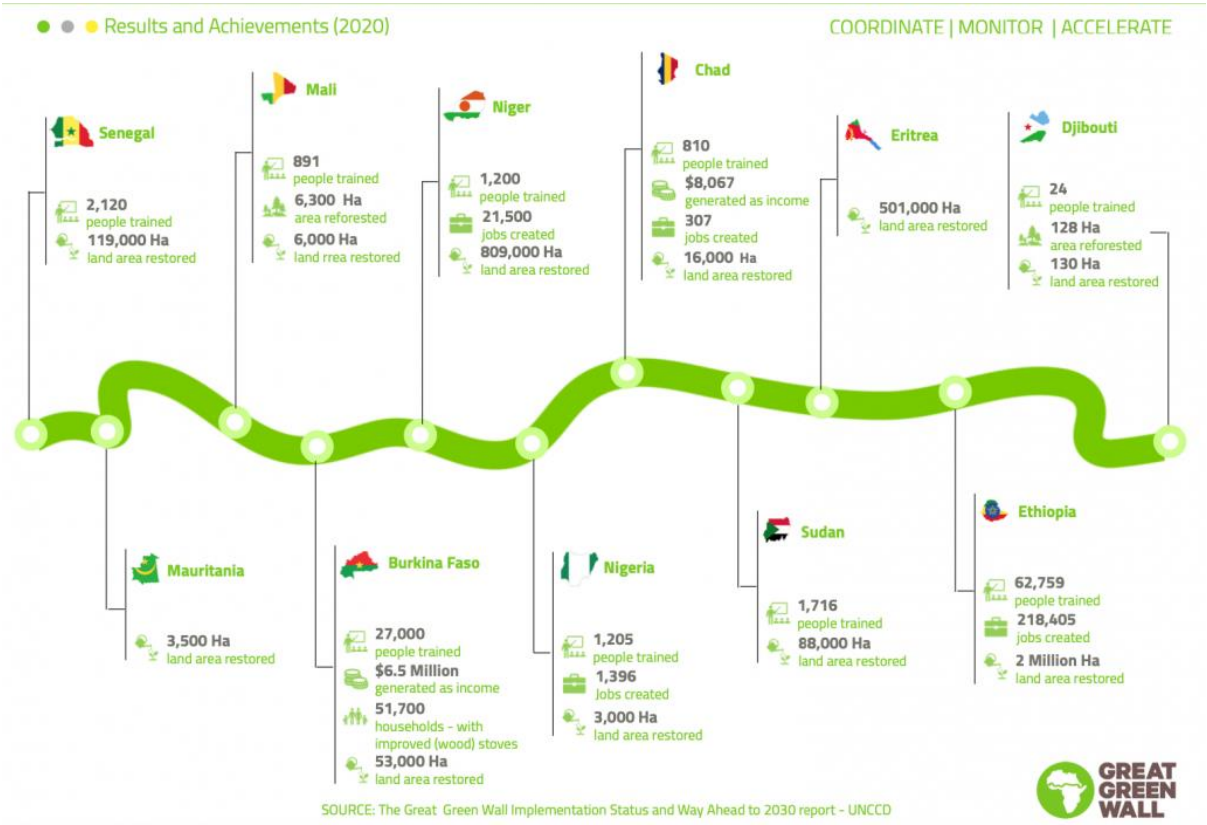

Figure 3: An image showing the current outcomes of the project, displaying individual countries' progress of the Great Green Wall as of 2020. Source: UNCCD, 2020[5]

Significant strides have been made in the *Great Green Wall* initiative since its inception, as shown in Figure 3. However, progress varies across countries and regions, due to factors such as funding availability, political commitment, community engagement, and environmental conditions. Some areas have seen notable achievements in reforestation, soil conservation, and agroforestry practices, while others continue to face challenges in implementation and coordination[6]. Financial investments in the *Great Green Wall* have come from various sources, including governments, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the African Development Bank, and private sector partners[6]. These funds are allocated towards tree planting, capacity-building programs, research and development, infrastructure improvements, and community empowerment initiatives. However, it has been estimated that only US$2,5 billion has been spent on the implementation of this project, which has slowed down progress[6].

While the *Great Green Wall* initiative represents a significant and ambitious effort to address environmental challenges in the Sahel, it has encountered several shortcomings and flaws that merit

consideration. One notable concern is the slow progress and uneven implementation of the project across different countries and regions. Factors such as inadequate funding, limited technical capacity, and logistical challenges have hindered the effective implementation of reforestation and land restoration activities. This has led to gaps in achieving the intended scale and impact of the *Great Green Wall,* highlighting the need for enhanced coordination and resource allocation.

Another issue relates to the sustainability and long-term viability of reforestation efforts under the *Great Green Wall* project. Planting trees alone may not suffice to ensure ecosystem restoration and resilience, especially in arid and semi-arid regions prone to climate variability and droughts[7]. Without robust soil conservation measures, water management strategies, and community engagement in sustainable land management practices, the reforestation gains may be undermined by environmental stresses and competing land use pressures. Thus, a more integrated and holistic approach is essential in addressing the root causes of environmental degradation and promoting ecosystem health. Political instability and insecurity in the Sahel region also poses significant challenges to the implementation of the *Great Green Wall*. Conflicts, displacement, and resource competition can disrupt conservation efforts, hinder community engagement, and exacerbate environmental degradation.

The *Great Green Wall* initiative has furthermore faced criticism and opposition on various fronts. Environmental concerns have been raised regarding the potential impacts of large-scale afforestation on local ecosystems, including alterations to biodiversity, soil composition, and water dynamics. Questions about land tenure, community rights, and equitable benefits from the initiative remain unresolved in many areas, leading to tensions and conflicts over land use and resource access[8]. Addressing these failings and flaws requires a nuanced understanding of local contexts, participatory decision-making processes, and adaptive management strategies that prioritise environmental sustainability and social equity.

The Feasibility of the Great Green Wall

- **Furthering Sustainable Development:** The Sahel region faces severe environmental challenges, including desertification, land degradation, and the impact of climate change. The *Great Green Wall* addresses these issues by promoting reforestation, sustainable land management practices, and biodiversity conservation. The project offers significant social and economic benefits. It creates employment opportunities, particularly for youth and women, in sectors such as agroforestry, land restoration, and eco-tourism. Moreover, it enhances food security, reduces migration pressures, and fosters community resilience to climate shocks[9].
- **International Support and Commitment:** The *Great Green Wall* has already garnered substantial international support and commitments from organisations as the African Union, the United Nations, the World Bank, and various donor countries[10]. This demonstrates a collective recognition of its importance and feasibility and reignites a need for urgent action to avoid wasted resources and opportunities.

- **Technological Advancements:** Advances in technology, such as remote sensing, GIS mapping, and climate-smart agricultural practices, as well as the potential to adopt and integrate these resources enhance the feasibility and effectiveness of the *Great Green Wall*. These tools aid in monitoring land use changes, identifying restoration priorities, and implementing adaptive management strategies[11].
- **Community Engagement and Ownership:** Successful implementation of the *Great Green Wall* requires active involvement and ownership at the community level. Initiatives that empower local communities, respect Indigenous knowledge, and promote participatory decision-making are integral to its feasibility and long-term sustainability[12].

Need for Increased Support and Investment

- **Financial Resources:** Adequate funding is essential for scaling up the *Great Green Wall* initiative. Increased investments are needed to support reforestation efforts, sustainable land management practices, capacity-building programs, and livelihood diversification initiatives.
- **Policy Alignment:** Aligning national policies and regulatory frameworks with the objectives of the *Great Green Wall* is necessary in creating an environment for sustainable land management, conservation initiative, and private sector engagement. The existing collaborations and agreements of policy and practice within Sahelian nations must be reaffirmed and can be strengthened to make the Great Green Wall a reality.
- **Cross-Sectoral Collaboration Partnerships and Knowledge Sharing**: Building partnerships among governments, civil society organisations, academia, and the private sector, facilitates knowledge sharing, technology transfer, and the mobilisation of resources for the *Great Green Wall*. The acceleration of the project presents an opportunity to develop organisational and institutional resilience within the Sahel, which can prove to be useful in the era of extreme climate crisis.

Success Story: Burkina Faso and Deforestation

Burkina Faso, a small country in the Sahel region, has made significant strides in avoiding deforestation and promoting sustainable land management practices, through its participation in the *Great Green Wall* initiative[13].

- **Agroforestry Practices and Policy Support:** Burkina Faso has embraced agroforestry as a key strategy within the *Great Green Wall* framework. By integrating trees into agricultural landscapes, farmers not only enhance soil fertility and crop yields, but also contribute to reforestation efforts and carbon sequestration. These policies provide a framework for aligning local actions with regional and global environmental goals.
- **Community Involvement:** Local communities in Burkina Faso actively participate in reforestation campaigns, land rehabilitation projects, and conservation initiatives[14]. This sense of ownership and engagement is fundamental to the success of the *Great Green Wall* at the grassroots level.
- **International Collaboration:** Burkina Faso benefits from international collaboration and partnerships through the *Great Green Wall* initiative. This includes technical assistance, financial support, knowledge exchange, and capacity-building initiatives that strengthen its efforts in combating deforestation and land degradation[15].

Conclusion

The *Great Green Wall* remains a feasible and vital initiative for addressing environmental challenges, promoting sustainable development, and building resilience in Africa's Sahel region. Increased support, collaboration, and investment are necessary to scale up efforts, engage communities, strengthen partnerships, and overcome obstacles. Success stories like Burkina Faso demonstrate the tangible benefits of the Great Green Wall in combating deforestation and advancing sustainable land management practices. By prioritising environmental sustainability, fostering cooperation, and investing in community well-being, the Great Green Wall can realise its vision of a greener, more resilient Sahel.[16]

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