# The implication of the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement on Africa's green infrastructure policy and the way forward

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## Introduction

The Trump administration's recent decision to withdraw from the Paris Climate Agreement during its second term has reignited concerns about the future of global climate policy. The Paris Agreement, which was adopted in December 2015, provides a crucial framework for tackling global climate change by limiting global warming to less than 2°C above pre-industrial levels, with the aim of limiting it to 1.5°C. Africa, one of the continent's most vulnerable countries to climate change, is highly dependent on global cooperation and financing to advance its green infrastructure efforts. The renewed US withdrawal upsets this fragile balance and raises critical questions about the future of climate resilience and sustainable development on the continent.

## The implication of the recent US withdrawal

One of the most immediate impacts of the US withdrawal is the expected reduction in financial resources available for climate change adaptation and mitigation. As a major contributor to the Green Climate Fund (GCF), the US pledged $3 billion during the Paris Agreement but has only provided $2 billion in the past, leaving a $1 billion shortfall. In contrast, other leading donors such as Germany have kept their contributions steady, with Germany pledging 2 billion euros (about $2.2 billion). As of July 2020, the GCF had received $10.3 billion from 49 countries, regions and cities, highlighting the disparity in global contributions. The renewed withdrawal of the US has halted further pledges, creating a significant funding gap. For African countries, where access to finance for green infrastructure projects is already limited, this exacerbates existing challenges. Critical projects such as renewable energy facilities and climate-resilient agricultural systems are now at risk of delay or cancellation.

The renewed US withdrawal weakens the global consensus on climate protection and could encourage other nations to scale back their commitments. This undermines the collective momentum needed to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement. It also isolates the US from the global community of action and leaves other nations such as China and European countries in the driving seat. These regions are now in a position to close the leadership gap, shape global climate policy and drive technological and financial co-operation without the involvement of

the US. For Africa, this shift represents both a challenge and an opportunity to build new alliances and influence global climate policy. For Africa, the loss of global leadership means that it has fewer opportunities to address the continent's unique climate challenges such as desertification, sea level rise and extreme weather events. African nations, many of which have limited influence in international negotiations, rely on strong alliances with industrialised countries such as the US to advance their interests on the global stage.

Withdrawal also affects technology transfer, which is crucial for the development of green infrastructure in Africa. The Paris Agreement encourages industrialised countries to share clean energy technologies with developing countries to facilitate the transition to a low-carbon economy. Projects such as the Lake Turkana Wind Power Project in Kenya, which benefited from advanced wind turbine technology and financial support, are an example of the role of international co-operation. The Scaling Solar initiative in Zambia, supported by technology partnerships and funding from global donors, has also made great strides in providing affordable solar energy. The renewed US withdrawal disrupts the deployment of such technologies and hinders the progress of African countries that want to deploy renewable energy solutions such as solar, wind and geothermal power.

The withdrawal undermines trust between industrialised and developing countries regarding their climate commitments. African countries have contributed the least to global greenhouse gas emissions in the past but bear a disproportionate burden of the impacts of climate change. The US withdrawal signals a lack of accountability and solidarity and fuels scepticism about the reliability of international climate agreements. This loss of trust has been exacerbated by the recent US withdrawal from the World Health Organisation (WHO), where African countries were among the main beneficiaries (US withdrawal from WHO). The combination of these measures undermines confidence in the US's long-term commitment to multilateral partnerships and makes future engagements in critical areas such as health and climate resilience more difficult. This makes it more difficult to build coherent partnerships for green infrastructure projects and other development initiatives in Africa.

**Africa's policy challenges in the field of green infrastructure**

Africa's green infrastructure policy is characterised by both significant opportunities and daunting challenges. The continent has vast renewable energy resources, including abundant sunlight and wind, and holds immense potential for sustainable urbanisation and climate-resilient agriculture. However, the challenges are complex. The financing gap for climate

projects remains one of the biggest obstacles. The African Development Bank (AfDB) estimates that the continent will need $3 trillion by 2030 to realise its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). Many African countries also lack a sound policy framework and regulatory environment to attract private investment in green infrastructure. In addition, insufficient technical expertise and institutional capacity limit the ability to design, implement and monitor green infrastructure projects.

**The way forward for Africa**

To overcome these challenges and mitigate the impact of global uncertainties such as the renewed US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, Africa must take a multi-pronged approach to advancing its green infrastructure policies.

Regional cooperation is crucial to strengthen Africa's negotiating power in international climate negotiations. Institutions such as the African Union (AU) and the AfDB must play a central role in coordinating climate action across the continent. Initiatives such as the African Green Stimulus Programme and the African Renewable Energy Initiative (AREI) can serve as platforms for pooling resources, sharing best practises and promoting innovation.

Africa needs to reduce its dependence on external donors by diversifying its sources of funding. For example, Public-private partnerships (PPPs) offer a viable mechanism to mobilise private sector investment in green infrastructure. In addition, African governments should explore innovative financing instruments such as green bonds, carbon credits and blended finance models. The development of domestic capital markets can also attract local and international investors to finance sustainable projects.

To attract investment, African countries need to create clear and stable policy frameworks that incentivise the development of green infrastructure. This includes tax breaks, subsidies and other financial incentives for renewable energy projects. Harmonising regulations across borders can facilitate regional projects such as transnational solar power grids and water management systems.

Capacity building is essential for the effective implementation of green infrastructure projects. Governments should invest in training programmes for policy makers, engineers and financial experts to strengthen their expertise in climate finance and project management. Collaborations with international organisations and academic institutions can provide access to cutting-edge research and technology.

Africa must prioritise research and development (R&D) to drive innovation in green technologies. Partnerships with leading global technology companies can facilitate the transfer of clean energy solutions tailored to Africa's specific needs. The establishment of regional innovation centres can also promote knowledge sharing and entrepreneurship in the green economy.

Green infrastructure projects should be designed with a focus on climate resilience to reduce the continent's vulnerability to extreme weather events. This includes investments in sustainable agriculture, reforestation and climate-resilient urban planning. Strengthening early warning systems and disaster risk reduction mechanisms can further increase resilience.

Africa must actively engage the global community to advocate for its climate priorities. This includes pushing for reforms to international climate finance mechanisms to ensure greater accessibility and equity. The continent should also utilise platforms such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Conference of the Parties (COP) to make its voice heard.

**Conclusion**

The recent withdrawal of the US from the Paris Agreement highlights the fragility of global climate agreements and emphasises the need for Africa to strengthen its green infrastructure policies. While the global climate situation remains uncertain, Africa needs to reduce its dependence on external actors and adopt a more self-reliant approach to climate action. By strengthening regional cooperation, diversifying funding sources, improving policy frameworks and fostering innovation, Africa can build a resilient and sustainable green economy.

Africa's path to developing green infrastructure is not only a necessity for the continent, but also an important part of the global fight against climate change. As the world moves towards a low-carbon future, Africa could lead by example and demonstrate the power of collective action and sustainable development.

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