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Revisiting international climate negotiations from an African perspective

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Abstract

2020 is an important year for the international climate agenda despite a general loss of momentum and resurgence of the divide between traditional polluters, emerging polluters, and the most vulnerable countries. While African countries only contribute to 4% of global GHG emissions, their capacity to adapt to climate change's devastating impact on societies, livelihoods, economies, and ecosystems is limited. This paper provides a synthesis of the existing literature and recent developments related to Africa's position in international climate negotiations. It also provides policy recommendations for African countries to claim a stronger voice and ensure that their priorities (climate finance, technology transfer and capacity building) are better reflected in the international climate regime.

Revisiting international climate negotiations from an African perspective-

2020 is an important year for the international climate agenda: it marks an opportunity to assess the implementation of the Paris Agreement signed in 2015 and to ratchet up the fight against global warming. Countries are expected to scale-up their national objectives[1] and communicate their long-term low greenhouse gas emission development strategies (LT-LEDS). But the new decade has opened against a bleak backdrop for international cooperation on climate change and a general loss of momentum. A leadership vacuum is increasingly widening in global climate governance, with the United States pulling out of the Paris Agreement, Brazil withdrawing its candidacy to host the 2019 Conference of the Parties (COP), Chile unable to host the conference because of social unrest, and "foot-dragging" within the EU on the new Green Deal[2]. Rich countries also set 2020 as their deadline that rich to provide at least $100 billion a year to help developing nations cope with the impacts of climate change and transition to a low carbon economy. Nonetheless, as could be expected, COP25 in Madrid ended in widespread frustration over deadlocks on long-standing contentious issues, including carbon markets, climate-induced loss and damage[3] and financing for adaptation. Regrettably, the discussions were also characterized by an undermining of the positive spirit that had led to the Paris Agreement and a resurgence of the divide between traditional polluters, emerging polluters, and the most vulnerable countries. In such conditions, how is the collective effort evolving and what is at stake for the African continent?

This question is important because climate change will have profound ramifications for millions of people in Africa. The continent is one of the most exposed to the impacts of climate change and amongst the least responsible for its occurrence (African countries contribute to 4% of the global GHG emissions). But the capacity of African countries to adapt to its impact on societies, livelihoods, economies, and ecosystems is limited. The situation will be exacerbated by the fact that Africa's population is set to double in the next three decades, which is likely to trigger a massive upsurge in energy demand and will cause further environmental pressures.

This policy brief examines the existing literature on Africa's position in international climate negotiations. It is organized as follows: Section 1 provides an overview of the theoretical debate on international climate negotiations. Section 2 explores the broader context of Africa's exposure and vulnerability to climate-related risks. Lastly, Section 3 discusses some of the key issues underpinning the latest climate conference and their implications for the African continent.

Section 1 : Theorizing international climate cooperation: Multilateralism in crisis

It is important to understand the theoretical framework of power relations underpinning international climate negotiations. Environmental issues have had a significant impact on global policymaking and have been studied through the lens of critical international relations theories. While Environmentalists have usually accepted the frameworks designed by existing political and normative structures and

1 Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) are submitted once every five years

2 Adam Tooze, "The Fierce Urgency of COP26," International Politics and Society, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, January 23, 2020, Accessed January 30, 2020

3 At COP19 in 2013, the Warsaw International Mechanism for loss and damage was created to provide mutual assistance in the face of the "impacts of climate change."

have sought to pursue environmental action within those structures, Greens, on the other hand, have tended to view them as responsible for current environmental crises and rejected the states-system[4]. Two conventional theories of international relations provide further insights into the intricacies of climate negotiations. According to realists, states are the primary actors in an anarchic international system. Cooperation among them is highly unlikely and depends on each actor's power capabilities and resources. In contrast, neoliberals point to the benefits of multilateralism and cooperation in terms of increasing absolute power for all players (rather than relative power), on the basis of building trust and creating disincentives for cheating. While liberalism best explains international efforts to regulate climate change, realism raises significant concerns about states' readiness to fully implement costly emission reduction targets. The growing and unpredictable competition between major polluters and the rise of nationalist governments prioritizing "self-interest only" in several parts of the world might explain why the current response to climate change is not up to the challenge, despite increasing public pressure, from climate marches, petitions, and school strikes. In a multipolar world order driven by competition, climate change continues to be perceived as a "zero-sum game" that imposes an immediate cost (e.g. GHG emissions reductions), in return for the diffuse and long-term benefits of a public good (better environment conditions). The confrontation between these theoretical frameworks exemplifies the ongoing attempt to undermine multilateral instruments, which, in turn, amplifies the pressures posed by global threats, which can only be addressed through multilateral processes.

However, self-interest is not always apparent and remains, ultimately, biased. Decision-makers' (public and private) perceptions of self-interest depend to a great extent on the dominant narrative in the public discourse. As such, media framing is playing a crucial role in shaping public attitudes and raising awareness about the threat of climate change. For example, a recent study by Stecula and Merkley (2019)[5] examined media- framing in American news coverage that influenced public attitudes towards climate change, identifying uncertainty and risk surrounding climate change, economic costs and benefits associated with climate mitigation, and appeals to conservative ideology as the main frames. Communication around these features can either limit or increase the predisposition of people to support climate action.

By and large, tensions in climate cooperation are triggered by the double necessity to assign responsibility in order to drive action, while simultaneously ensuring fairness and equity. Discussions about 'historical responsibility'[6] for emissions have been characterized by longstanding disputes between developing countries and developed countries – which are the predominant source of pollution to date.

International climate negotiations take place within the context of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), where decisions are taken by consensus and Parties are each represented by national delegations, in addition to being clustered into regional groupings. Although each country has an equally weighted vote within key international platforms, international climate governance involved inherently asymmetrical relationships exemplified by the persistent North-South divide over "burden-sharing", the ongoing redefinition of the role and responsibilities of emerging powers, and the broader "free-rider" dilemma. Increasingly, countries are organizing themselves into

4 Matthew Paterson, "Green Politics," in Theories of International Relations, 3rd ed., ed. Scott Burchill et al. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 235-257

5 Sominik Stecula and Eric Merkley, "Framing Climate Change: Economics, Ideology, and Uncertainty in American News Media Content From 1988 to 2014," Frontiers in Communication, February 26, 2019, Accessed January 30, 2020

6 The concept 'historical responsibility' wasn't officially recognized until 2010 in Cancun

smaller negotiating blocs, which has led to homogenizing preferences, but has also introduced further complexity and uncertainty over legally binding commitments with strong enforcement mechanisms. For example, the Like-Minded Developing Countries is a group that contains major oil-producing states pushing for a strict division between developing and developed countries. Certainly, as highlighted in an article published by Carbon Brief (2015), "UN climate talks are more about realpolitik than they first appear [...] every country is out to further their own domestic interests, with weaker political forces banding together to have a chance of being heard against the more dominant players".[7]

In an attempt to resolve these issues, the UN has adopted the Rio Principles during the 1992 Earth Summit, aimed at balancing worldwide environmental concerns with consideration of the specific challenges faced by "the Global South"[8]. Key components included the "polluter-pays principle" and the principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR)[9], which recognizes that countries differ both in their levels of responsibility for climate change and in their capacities to cope with it. However, developed countries have often been blamed for their efforts to "weaken the relevance of such principles. In the previous Kyoto Protocol, only industrialized countries had national commitments, which had to be expressed in a common format. After COP 15 in Copenhagen, a substantial shift occurred in favor of a "bottom-up" and more flexible system of emission reduction pledges.[10] In order to avert future tensions and inspire more ambitious climate action, it was decided that the Paris Agreement would apply to all Parties, with no differentiation between developed and developing countries, and would be built on voluntary pledges. However, despite a number of legally binding obligations,[11] such as the preparation and communication of nationally determined contributions (NDCs), Parties are not legally compelled to implement them. This is why the issues relating to measurement, monitoring and reporting verification (MRV) remain at the top of the agenda and continue to stir up divisions.

Section 2: State of the climate

The science is resoundingly clear: the average global temperature has already increased by more than 1°C compared to pre-industrial levels. In 2019, GHG emissions continued to rise, in spite of evidence stressing the urgency to cut them. In fact, GHG emissions have increased at a rate of 1.5% per year throughout the last decade, only briefly stabilizing between 2014 and 2016. In November 2018, the world's leading climate scientists at the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published a report comparing the impacts of global warming of 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels with the impacts of a 2°C warming. Findings corroborate the fact that significant irreversible climate impacts will already occur at 1.5˚C, hitting hardest the poorest and most vulnerable populations, and that such risks are substantially lower than those expected for 2˚C increase scenario. The same report also found that at current emissions rate, global warming will already reach 1.5°C between 2030 and 2052. Major changes are also expected in regional climate characteristics, causing increases in average temperature in most land and ocean regions (high confidence), hot extremes in most inhabited regions (high confidence), heavy precipitations in several regions (medium confidence), and the probability of drought and precipitation deficits in some regions (medium confidence). In two

7 "The UNFCCC negotiating alliances," Carbon Brief, November 27, 2015, Accessed January 31, 2020.
8 Martin Khor, "The South Facing a New Era of Unilateralism and Protectionism," South Centre, April 17, 2018, Accessed January 31, 2020.
9 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and United Nations General Assembly, Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, "Principle 7," 1992, Accessed February, 3, 2020.
10 David Ciplet, J. Timmons Roberts and Mizan Khan, "The Politics of International Climate Adaptation Funding: Justice and Divisions in the Greenhouse," Glob Environ Polit. 13, no. 1 (2013): 49-68.
11 Maha Skah, "De la COP21 à la COP24: bilan d'étape," OCP Policy Center, December 2018, Accessed February 3, 2020.

other reports[12] published in 2019, the IPCC provided further scientific evidence to underscore the importance of meeting the temperature goals set out in the Paris Agreement.

There is a large gap between the estimated total global emissions by 2030 under current NDC scenarios and pathways that would limit warming to below 2°C and 1.5°C.[13] If current unconditional NDCs are fully implemented, there is a 66% chance that warming will be limited to 3.2°C by the end of the century. It is particularly critical to draw attention to this scientific evidence, given countries' plans to produce about 50% more fossil fuels by 2030 than would be consistent with a 2°C pathway and 120% more than would be consistent with a 1.5°C pathway.[14]

The United Nations Secretary-General organized the Global Climate Action Summit in September 2019 to encourage more climate action and secure countries' commitments to enhance their NDCs by 2020. Over 65 countries communicated their intentions to increase their ambitions, although the G20 economies remained "visibly absent".[15] According to a joint UNDP and UNFCCC anlaysis, 75 out of the 112 countries revising their climate pledges are leading by example, and almost all of them are developing nations.[16] The latest 2019 climate conference was for the first time held under the theme 'Blue COP', building on another IPCCC report that outlines the impacts of a changing climate on the ocean and the resulting implications for low-lying areas and coastal communities.[17]

But even as countries are not doing enough, cities, regions, and businesses are gradually getting more involved in climate diplomacy and are defying the wait-and-see attitudes of national governments. Awareness is increasing on the potential for local governments and the private sector to help countries meet current national targets and even ramp up their efforts. Likewise, technological innovation is already reducing the cost of mitigation and leading the way to solutions that decarbonize our energy systems. The International Energy Agency (IEA) recently reported that the global economy has grown by 23% in the past six years, while energy-related CO2 emissions have only grown by 3%.[18] This was made possible by a significant decrease in emissions from electricity generation in advanced economies, because of the expansion of renewable sources (mainly wind and solar), fuel switching from coal to natural gas, and higher levels of nuclear power generation.

12 Priyadarshi R. Shukla et al. (eds.) "Summary for Policymakers," in Climate Change and Land: an IPCC Special Report on Climate Change, Desertification, Land Degradation, Sustainable Land Management, Food Security, and Greenhouse Gas Fluxes in Terrestrial Ecosystems (IPCC, 2019).

13 UNEP, "Executive Summary," in Emissions Gap Report 2019 (Nairobi: United Nations Environment Programme, 2019).

14 SEI, IISD, ODI, Climate Analytics, CICERO, and UNEP, "The Production Gap: The discrepancy between countries' planned fossil fuel production and global production levels consistent with limiting warming to 1.5°C or 2°C," 2019. Accessed January 31, 2020.

15 UNEP, "Executive Summary," in Emissions Gap Report 2019 (Nairobi: United Nations Environment Programme, 2019).

16 UNFCC, UNDP, The Heat Is On: Taking Stock on Global Climate Ambition (UNDF, UNFCC, 2019), Accessed January 31, 2020.

17 H.-O. Pörtner et al. "Summary for Policymakers," In: IPCC Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate," Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2019)

18 "Defying expectations of a rise, global carbon dioxide emissions flatlined in 2019," International Energy Agency, February 11, 2020, Accessed February 17, 2020.

Figure 1: Major conclusions related to Africa from previous assessments of the IPCC (Niang et al, 2019)[19]

Report	Major conclusions	Reference
Special Report on the Regional Impacts of Climate Change	• Sensitivity of water resources and coastal zones to climatic parameters • Identification of climate change as an additional burden on an already stressful situation • Major challenges for Africa: lack of data on energy sources; uncertainties linked to climate change scenarios (mainly for precipitation); need for integrated studies; and the necessary links between science and decision makers	Zinyowera et al. (1997)
Third Assessment Report	• Impacts of climate change on and vulnerability of six sectors: water resources; food security; natural resources and biodiversity management; health; human settlements and infrastructure; desertification • Adaptation strategies for each of the sectors • Threats of desertification and droughts to the economy of the continent • Suggestion of adaptation options: mainly linked with better resource management • Identification of research gaps and needs: capacity building; data needs; development of integrated analysis; consideration of literature in other languages	Desanker et al. (2001)

Fourth Assessment Report	• Vulnerability of Africa due mainly to its low adaptive capacity
	• Sources of vulnerability mainly socioeconomic causes (demographic growth, governance, conflicts, etc.)
	• Impacts of climate change on various sectors: energy, tourism, and coastal zones considered separately
	• Potential impacts of extreme weather events (droughts and floods)
	• Adaptation costs
	• Need for mainstreaming climate change adaptation into national development policies
	• Two case studies:
	  • Food security: Climate change could affect the three main components of food security.
	  • Traditional knowledge: African communities have prior experience with climate variability, although this knowledge will not be sufficient to face climate change impacts.
	• Research needs: better knowledge of climate variability; more studies on the impacts of climate change on water resources, energy, biodiversity, tourism, and health; the links between different sectors (e.g., between agriculture, land availability, and biofuels); developing links with the disaster reduction community; increasing interdisciplinary analysis of climate change; and strengthening institutional capacities
		Boko et al. (2007)

Due its geographic location, high reliance on rain-fed agriculture[20] and limited adaptive capacity[21], no place on earth will be as disproportionately affected by climate change as the African continent.[22] Among the world's ten most vulnerable countries, seven are located in Africa: Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Nigeria, Chad, Ethiopia, the Central African Republic, and Eritrea.[23] This exposure and vulnerability poses serious concerns for the continent's food[24] and water security, human health,[25] and overall prospects for economic, social and environmental development.[26]

While predictions of future precipitation patterns vary widely, predictions of future temperatures tend to be more consistent. Temperature rise in sub-Saharan Africa is projected to be higher than the global average temperature increase. At 2°C above preindustrial levels, temperatures are expected to rise twice as fast in Southern Africa in comparison to the rest of the world.[27] Under a high-emission pathway, the IPCC foresees a global warming of 4°C by 2100, with warming in parts of western and southern Africa could reaching as much as 6°C.

19 Isabelle Niang et al. "Africa," in Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Part B: Regional Aspects. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2014): 1199-1265.

20 Only 6% of Africa's cultivated land benefits from irrigation. Karen Frenken, "L'irrigation en Afrique en chiffres" (Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization, 2005), Accessed January 29, 2020.

21 Paul Collier, Gordon Conway and Anthony Venables, "Climate change and Africa," Oxford Review of Economic Policy 24, no. 2 (Summer 2008): 337-353.

22 Isabelle Niang et al. "Africa," in Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Part B: Regional Aspects. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2014): 1199-1265.

23 Russell Bishop, "African leadership in a time of climate risk," in Foresight Africa Top Priorities for the Continent in 2017, Africa Growth Initiative at Brookings, Accessed February 5, 2020.

24 Africa is the region with the highest prevalence of undernourishment, at almost 20%. FAO et al. "The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2019: Safeguarding Against Economic Slowdowns and Downturns" (Rome: Food and Agricultural Organization, 2019), Accessed January 30, 2020.

25 A warmer climate could lead to approximately 250 000 additional deaths per year due from malnutrition, malaria, diarrhea and heat stress. "Climate Change and Health," World Health Organization, February 1, 2018, Accessed January 29, 2020.

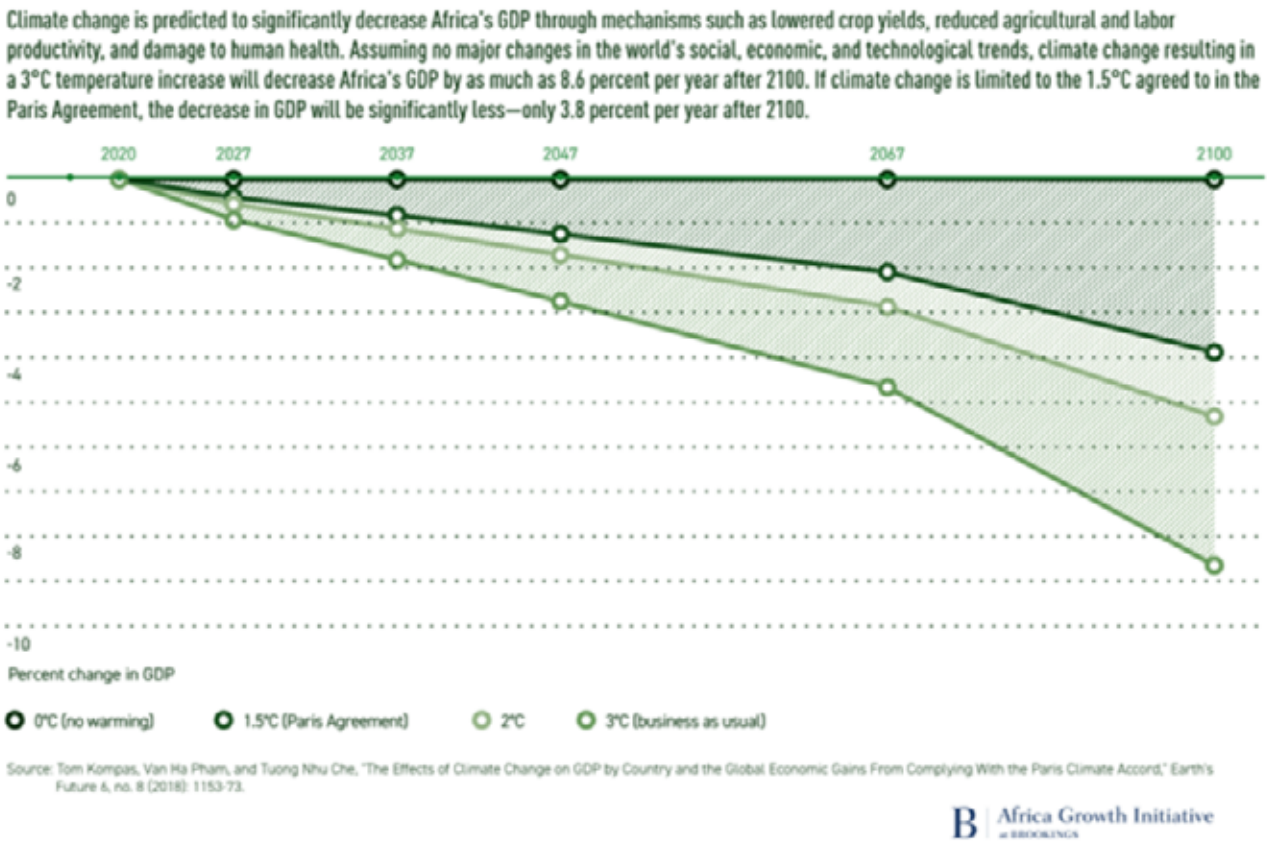
26 "Climate Change," Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA), Accessed January 31, 2020.

27 Dan Shepard, "Global warming: severe consequences for Africa," Africa Renewal, March 2019, Accessed January 31, 2020.

Africa has experienced more than 2,000 natural disasters since 1970. Almost half have occurred in the last decade.[28] Extreme weather events, including droughts, floods, and heat waves are also likely to become more intense in the future. These findings come at the heels of a particularly devastating year for the continent, with extreme events causing the death of at least 1,200 people in Mozambique, Somalia, Kenya, Sudan and Malawi.[29]

Climate change also has significant economic implications for the continent. The adaptation cost is staggering. If the global temperature increase is kept within 2°C above preindustrial levels, adaptation costs in Africa could reach $50 billion a year by 2050.[30] Projections further estimate that damages from climate change relative to population and GDP will be higher in Africa than in any other region in the world.[31] In fact, almost half of Africa's GDP could be exposed to extreme climate patterns by 2023. [32]

Figure 2: Predicted effects of climate change on sub-Saharan Africa's GDP (Kompas et al, 2018)[33]



28 "This Is What It's All About: Building Resilience and Adapting to Climate Change in Africa," World Bank Group, March 7, 2019, Accessed February 5, 2020.

29 "2019: Climate Shocks Claim More Than 1200 Lives across East and Southern Africa," Save the Children International, December 2, 2019, Accessed January 29, 2020.

30 African Development Bank, "Climate Change in Africa," Accessed January 31, 2020.

31 African Development Bank, "The Cost of Adaptation to Climate Change in Africa," October 2011, Accessed January 29, 2020.

32 Abdi Latif Dahir, "Africa's Fastest-Growing Cities Are the Most Vulnerable to Climate Change Globally," World Economic Forum, December 21, 2018, Accessed January 30, 2020.

33 Tom Kompas, Van Ha Pham and Tuong Nhu Che, "The Effects of Climate Change on GDP by Country and the Global Economic Gains From Complying With the Paris Climate Accord," Earth's Future 6, no. 8 (2018): 1153-73, quoted in Brahima S. Coulibaly (ed.), Foresight Africa: Top Priorities for the Continent 2020-2030, Brookings, January 8, 2020, Accessed January 30, 2020.

Most of the African continent is prone to extreme variations in rainfall.[34] Predicted changes to rainfall patterns indicate that Northern and Southern Africa will become drier, and Eastern and Western Africa will become wetter, with adverse effects on agriculture and significant implications for food security. Agricultural yield losses could reach 22 % across sub-Saharan Africa, whilst estimates expect 75% of Africans could be at risk of hunger by 2080.[35] This will be particularly problematic for the poorest fringes of African societies, which rely heavily on subsistence agriculture.

Numerous reports have also highlighted the linkages between climate change and conflict. A research paper, presented to the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, attempted to demonstrate how temperature rise in sub-Saharan Africa has "coincided with significant increases in the likelihood of armed conflict", arguing for "a large direct role of temperature in shaping conflict risk in Africa".[36]

Where conditions are already fragile, such as in the Sahel region,[37] desertification and land degradation, drought, and loss of biodiversity are already deepening economic marginalization, increasing tensions and providing fertile ground for terrorist group recruitment. Climate change is also labelled as a "threat multiplier" that interacts with other drivers of vulnerability. It can lead to new conflicts by fueling tensions and can trigger mass forced migration. A 2018 World Bank report warns that almost 250 million climate refugees could be expected by 2050.[38] On 30 January 2018, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) had recognized the nexus between climate change and violent conflicts in West Africa and the Sahel. The linkages between climate change and security were further underscored during the latest 33rd AU Summit.

This bleak picture contrasts, however, with a more encouraging one. Nearly all African countries have signed and ratified[39] the Paris Agreement and have made ambitious commitments in their NDCs to cut emissions.[40] African countries perform comparatively well in terms of sustainable production and consumption and climate action (Sustainable Development Goals 12 and 13).[41] A number of African countries are winning international praise for their contributions to the global effort of meeting the goals set out in the Paris Agreement. The Climate Change Performance Index,[42] which tracks countries' efforts to combat climate change, ranks Morocco within the group of high-performing countries thanks to its concentrated solar power plant and bold goal of achieving a 52% share of renewable in its energy mix by 2030. According to Climate Action Tracker[43], other champions in Africa also include Gambia and Kenya. The latter has one of the most successful electrification programs in sub-Saharan

34 Sharon E. Nicholson, and Andreas H.Finkd, "Rainfall over the African continent from the 19th through the 21st century," Global and Planetary Change vol. 165 (June 2018): 114-127, Accessed January 30, 2020.
35 "Climate Change," Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA), Accessed January 31, 2020.
36 Marshall Burke et al. "Warming increases the risk of civil war in Africa." National Academy of Sciences 106, 2009. Accessed February 5, 2020.
37 The western Sahel region will experience the strongest drying, with a significant increase in the maximum length of dry spells.
38 Kanta Kumari Rigaud et al. Groundswell: preparing for internal climate migration (Washington, D.C. : World Bank Group, 2018)
39 Angola, Libya, Eritrea and South Sudan signed but did not ratify the Paris Agreement. "Status of Ratification," United Nations Climate Change, August 7, 2018. Accessed 31, January 2020.
40 Every African country other than Libya has submitted a pledge internationally. Russell Bishop, "African leadership in a time of climate risk," in Foresight Africa Top Priorities for the Continent in 2017, Africa Growth Initiative at Brookings, Accessed February 5, 2020.
41 Eve de la Mothe Karoubi et al. 2019 Africa SDG Index and Dashboards Report (Kigali and New York: SDG Center for Africa and Sustainable Development Solutions Network, 2019).
42 The CCPI is published annually by Germanwatch, the NewClimate Institute and the Climate Action Network.
43 "Rating System," Climate Action Tracker, Accessed January 31, 2020.

Africa and derives about three-quarters of its electricity from renewable sources.[44] In Ethiopia, 90% of electricity comes from renewables and the country is building Africa's largest hydroelectric dam on the Nile.[45] South Africa, Rwanda and Nigeria have all adopted strategies to decouple GHG emissions from economic growth.[46]

Africa faces a daunting challenge: balancing ways to cope with these climate-related disasters with the trade-offs of economic development, while minimizing GHG emissions. Yet, despite Africa's dedicated efforts and high vulnerability to climate risks, African countries have reaped little benefits from the international climate change regime. For example, under the Kyoto Protocol, Africa's participation in market-based mechanisms such as the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM)[47] has been nearly insignificant, and less than in other regions.[48] Similarly REDD+, which refers to countries' efforts to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries, has not been particularly effective in Africa, partly because of the complexity and high administrative costs of the project development phase.[49] Furthermore, the international climate regime has not fulfilled its promise of channeling adequate finance to Africa. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), climate finance to Africa only reached $ 18,6 billion in 2017, corresponding to 26% of the total amount mobilized by developed countries.[50]

Successful and predictable deployment of this international finance continent would be a critical step in helping African countries adapt to climate change and move onto a low carbon development pathway. There is, however, an ongoing debate about whether climate finance should be counted as official development assistance (ODA) or earmarked separately. The former raises concerns because it would allow developed nations to meet both their climate mitigation and their development assistance obligations (0.7% of GNI) with the same funding.

High debt levels further exacerbate the impacts of climate shocks in Africa by squeezing the resources available for building resilience and low-carbon development. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has identified climate as an emerging structural issue in 2015. As of April 2019, half of African Low Income Countries (LICs) were either in debt distress or at high risk of being so.[51] Africa also faces another dilemma. The continent is endowed with abundant natural resources, including oil, gas, and coal – which are highly emitting industries –, but is asked not to use these resources. Several African economies are also highly dependent on their extractive sectors and are therefore understandably reluctant to embark on a costly low-carbon energy transition at the risk of compromising their development potential. This is particularly the case for countries, where hydrocarbon exports account for a dominant share of their economies and state budget revenues. However, this situation must also be viewed in light of the continent's vast and increasingly competitive opportunities to develop

44 Ibid.
45 Ajit Niranjan, "Green growth: Africa chooses between renewables and fossil fuels," Die Welt, December 6, 2019, Accessed January 31, 2020.
46 Ibid.
47 Under the Kyoto Protocol, the CDM allows countries to gain GHG emission reduction credits by investing in projects to protect the environment in other countries.
48 Sandra Greiner, Stephan Hoch, Andrew Howard, Mandy Rambharos, and El Hadji Mbaye Diagne, "Prospects for Africa's CDM activities under the Paris Agreement," Perspectives Climate Change, n.d. Accessed January 31, 2020.
49 "Submissions to the Talanoa Dialogue from the African Climate Talks", United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, March 2018, Accessed January 31, 2020.
50 OECD, "Climate Finance Provided and Mobilised by Developed Countries in 2013-17" (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2019), Accessed January 30, 2020.
51 Jaime Atenza, "Is Africa facing its second debt crisis? What are the solutions?," Oxfam Blogs, July 16, 2019. Accessed January 31, 2020.

clean energy. According to the African Development Bank (2018), "Africa has an almost unlimited potential of solar capacity (10 TW), abundant hydro (350 GW), wind (110 GW), and geothermal energy sources"[52].

Section 3 : Climate diplomacy in Africa

A number of provisions mandate the African Union to address climate change at the international level[53] and African states have become gradually more organized in international fora.[54] African institutional cooperation on climate issues started in 1985, with the first meeting of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) in Cairo. The 13th AU Assembly established the creation of a Committee of African Heads of State on Climate Change (CAHOSCC)[55] in 2009, tasked with putting forward a concerted African position on climate issues, in order to ensure that the continent would speak with a common voice during global climate change negotiations.[56] Among other things, it was tasked with charting strategies for Africa's participation and raising Africa's profile in climate negotiations. The 2014 "Common African Position on the Post-2015 Development Agenda"[57] was a key opportunity for Africa to articulate its priorities, among which figured "Environmental sustainability, natural resources management and disaster risk management". During the 2015 AU Summit, AMCEN was asked to develop, together with the African Group of Negotiators (AGN), a proposal to support Africa on adaptation. This led to the launch of the African Adaptation Initiative (AAI) the following year. The AU also sought to strengthen its negotiating structure by establishing the Bureau of the African Group of Technical Negotiators in Nairobi.[58] Throughout the years, African leaders have made much progress in developing a common position, urging developed countries to provide sufficient and predictable financing, along with the transfer of technologies and capacity building. In the margins of COP22 in Marrakech, an African Summit for Action was held, marking the launch of the Triple A initiative and announcing the Congo Basin Blue Fund. COP22 in Marrakech also signaled strong political leadership by African Heads of State, and led to the creation of three climate Commissions: the Congo Basin Commission, the Commission for the Sahel Region, and the Africa Island States Climate Commission.

In accordance with UN tradition, Parties to the UNFCCC are organized into regional groups[59], namely: African States, Asian States, Eastern European States, Latin American and the Caribbean States, and Western European. Developing countries generally work through the Group of 77 and China (comprising 135 countries) in order to establish common negotiating positions. The African Group of Climate Change Negotiators (AGN), established in 1995, is the technical structure that represents

52 "Why Africa is the next renewable powerhouse," African Development Bank, December 7, 2018, Accessed January 31, 2020.
53 The Constitutive Act of the African Commission mentions environmental protection, humanitarian action and disaster response and relief and includes the promotion and defense of common positions on issues of interest to the continent and its people.
54 Ademola Oluborode Jegede, "Climate Change in the Work of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights," Speculum Juris 31, no. 2 (2017).
55 The CAHOSCC represent Africa's five continental regions as well as leaders from countries chairing the AU, AMCEN, the AGN, as well as the Chairperson of the AU. The chairmanship of the CAHOSCC is rotational and for two-year periods since 2013. It has been decided that the country chairing AMCEN shall be also the Chair of the CAHOSSC. "Structure and Membership of the AGN," African Group of Negotiators, n.d, Accessed January 30, 2020.
56 African Union, "Draft African Union Strategy on Climate Change," May 2014, Accessed January 30, 2020.
57 African Union, "Common African Position on the Post-2015 Development Agenda;" March 2014, Accessed January 29, 2020.
58 Jean-Christophe Hoste and Andrew Anderson, "African Dynamics at the climate change negotiations," Egmont Institute, The Royal Institute for International Relations, November 2011, Accessed February 5, 2020.
59 "Party Groupings," United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, n.d., Accessed January 29, 2020.

African countries' interests during international climate change negotiations. It is responsible for drafting texts and common positions for adoption during the COPs.

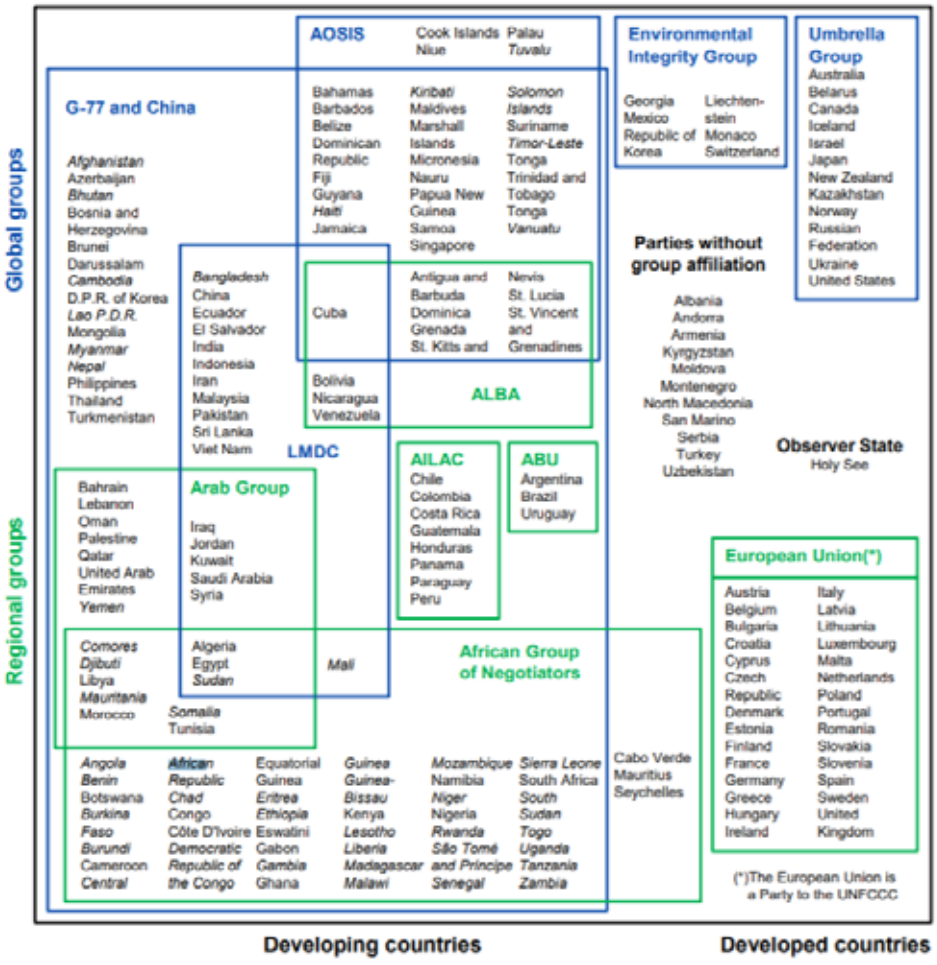
The AGN has played a key role in building a cohesive stance on issues of particular significance to the African continent. For example, it has been a strong advocate for the right of developing countries to develop and for the equal treatment between adaptation and mitigation efforts in the Paris Agreement, despite prior divisions on whether developing countries should play any role at all in mitigation. In fact, Africa's positions in climate negotiations have historically been fixated on adaptation, given the continent's low contribution to global GHG emissions and its exclusion from any quantified mitigation commitments under the Kyoto Protocol. One of the AGN's key highlights was the inclusion of a Global Goal for Adaptation (GGA) in the Paris Agreement (Article 7).[60] This global goal for adaptation shall be assessed through a global stock take every five years, starting in 2023. It has been argued that the consensus reached in Paris on mitigation has enabled African leaders to "begin turning their attention to an issue-area where agreement has been easier: securing funds" for adaptation.[61] As such, much of the AGN's recent efforts have focused on attracting increased financing to build Africa's adaptive capacity.

However, negotiators for the African continent are confronted with the difficulty of unifying the competing interests of a large number of countries with varying socio-economic realities and priorities. As expressed by Emmanuel Dlamini, the former AGN Chair from Eswatini, Emmanuel Dlamini: "Preparations were challenging due to regional diversity in development, language, culture, geography and relative vulnerability to climate change"[62]. Furthermore, in comparison to other major negotiating blocks such as the EU, the AGN lacks sufficient financial and technical resources[63]. In addition to the G77 and China – which has increasingly come to represent subgroups with diverging interests –, African states also participate in other coalitions, including Least Developed Countries (LDCs), the Arab Group, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, the BASIC countries (Brazil, South Africa, India and China), and the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS).

For example, South Africa often finds itself in a position where it needs to balance the interests of the African Group and the agenda of other emerging countries outside the AGN, namely the BASIC group.[64] South Africa is the only G20 member on the African continent and the world's 14th largest emitter of GHGs, largely due to a heavy reliance on coal.[65]

60 "New elements and dimensions of adaptation under the Paris Agreement," United Nations Climate Change, n.d. Accessed January 31, 2020.
61 Michael Nelson, "Africa's Approach to Climate Change Negotiation," April 16, 2019, Oxford Research Group, Accessed 30 January, 2020.
62 "Former AGN Chair reflects on representing a strong African voice in climate negotiations," Climate and Development Knowledge Network, January 10, 2014. Accessed February 3, 2020.
63 "Advancing Africa's Common Position on Climate Change to the UNFCCC," One World Group, n.d. Accessed February 3, 2020.
64 Michael Nelson, "Africa's Approach to Climate Change Negotiation," April 16, 2019, Oxford Research Group, Accessed 30 January, 2020.
65 Robert McSweeney and Jocelyn Timperley, "The Carbon Profile: South Africa," Carbon Brief, October 15, 2018, Accessed January 30, 2020.

Figure 3: Group affiliation of UNFCCC Parties (Moosmann et al, 2019)[66]



While some authors (Waruru, 2018) have argued that Africa should stop negotiating as a single bloc and rather split into groups in order to take advantage of the strengths of each individual country[67], fragmentation in African countries' respective negotiating positions is believed to have often weakened the position of the AGN (Tsega, 2016).

Other entities and institutions providing key technical support to the AGN include the Climate for Development in Africa Program (ClimDev-Africa), the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the African Development Bank (AfDB), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the African Climate Policy Centre (ACPC).[68]

Specific issues at COP25

COP25, held in Madrid under the Chilean Presidency in December 2019, was the longest on record – extended by almost two days. The negotiations involved a high level of detailed technical discussions

66 Lorenz Moosmann et al. "Issues at Stake in View of the COP25 UN Climate Change Conference in Madrid," (Luxembourg: European Parliament, 2019), Accessed January 30, 2020.
67 Maina Waruru, "Are Africa's Climate Negotiators Ready for COP24?," Equal Times, September 4, 2018, Accessed January 29, 2020.
68 Anwar Hassen Tsega, "Africa in Global Climate Change Governance: Analyzing Its Position and Challenges," International Journal of African Development 4, no. 1 (Fall 2016): 5-18.

on a variety of issues. African delegates continued to push for more climate finance beyond voluntary donor pledges, but saw no tangible progress and "expressed disappointment that no decision was reached"[69]. One of the priorities of the African Group was to raise the level of ambition for NDCs as the implementation phase approached. In particular, African countries that are also members of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and the Least Developed Countries (LDC) groups pushed for harsher and faster mitigation commitments.

The Global Goal on Adaptation was also controversial.[70] Discussions continued around the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture, which aims to ensure that agricultural development safeguards both food security in the face of climate change and does not prevent emissions reductions. The AGN, along with other developing countries, called for more money to support adaptation measures for their farmers.[71] In 2020, at COP26, agriculture is expected to be a more central role, as Parties make recommendations for climate action in agriculture.

Article 6

In 2018 in Poland, the "Rulebook" or implementation guidelines of the 2015 Paris Agreement was agreed on – except for Article 6, which should enable countries with low emissions to sell their surplus allowance to larger emitters, with an overall cap of GHG emissions. Supply and demand for emissions allowances is expected to lead to an overall net reduction of GHG emissions and the establishment of a global price on carbon paid for by the polluters – thereby making them bear the costs of global warming in case they exceed their NDCs. These carbon-trading mechanisms are important for how countries plan to meet their climate goals. During the negotiations, the African Group said it would only accept a text with a mandatory adaptation tax and stressed the need to "give equal importance to other agenda items", in particular those relating to finance and adaptation.[72][73] The Group further called for language on operationalizing the Global Goal on Adaptation. [74]

A group of big polluters, including the US, Saudi Arabia, Russia, China and India were blamed for obstructing the negotiations, while Brazil and Australia[75] were criticized for trying to use "leftover" credits from the previous periods of the Kyoto Protocol to satisfy current obligations. On this issue, the AGN underscored the need to ensure confidence and trust, including among those who have already made investments in emission reductions[76]. About 100 countries tried to ban the use of accounting loopholes to meet reduction targets. Nonetheless, some emerging countries (including China, India, Brazil and Saudi Arabia) sided with Australia in opposing the ban, in part because it would enable them

69 "Summary of the Chile/Madrid Climate Change Conference," Earth Negotiating Bulletin, IISD Reporting Services, Vol. 12 No. 775, December 18, 2020. Accessed January 30, 2020.
70 Axel Michaelowa, "Markets, ambition and finance COP 25: too much on the plate," Perspectives Climate Group, December 19, 2019, Accessed January 30, 2020.
71 "COP25: Key outcomes agreed at the UN climate talks in Madrid," Carbon Brief, December 15, 2019, Accessed January 30, 2020.
72 "Summary of the Chile/Madrid Climate Change Conference," Earth Negotiating Bulletin, IISD Reporting Services, Vol. 12 No. 775, December 18, 2020. Accessed January 30, 2020.
73 Axel Michaelowa, "Markets, ambition and finance COP 25: too much on the plate," Perspectives Climate Group, December 19, 2019, Accessed January 30, 2020.
74 "Summary of the Chile/Madrid Climate Change Conference," Earth Negotiating Bulletin, IISD Reporting Services, Vol. 12 No. 775, December 18, 2020. Accessed January 30, 2020.
75 Under the Paris Agreement, Australia has voluntarily agreed to reduce its cumulative emissions to 26-28% below 2005 levels by 2030. If the country is allowed to use its leftover credits under the Kyoto-era for the Paris Agreement, it will take only a 15% reduction on 2005 levels to successfully meet its commitment. Alan Pears and Tim Baxter, "Carry-over credits and carbon offsets are hot topics this election – but what do they actually mean ?," The Conversation, May 9, 2019, Accessed January 30, 2020.
76 "Summary of the Chile/Madrid Climate Change Conference," Earth Negotiating Bulletin, IISD Reporting Services, Vol. 12 No. 775, December 18, 2020. Accessed January 30, 2020.

to sell their Kyoto protocol-era offsets to developed nations instead of reducing their own pollution. Furthermore, negotiations were also particularly difficult on how to "avoid double-counting" of emissions reductions. Parties ended up postponing an agreement on rules for international carbon trading until COP26. Pressure is expected to grow over the next year for a more ambitious system that will only count new carbon credits.

Loss and damage

COP25 was considered to be "another lost opportunity" to make progress on how developing countries that have suffered from climate-related events will be compensated.[77] One of the main sticking points and priority issue for African countries was setting up a finance arm under the Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM) for loss and damage (Article 8). Long negotiations resulted in a general acknowledgement of the need to help poor countries cope with climate disasters. However, an agreement on funding failed over the question of whether major polluters could be held liable for climate damages in the future. In particular, the USA insisted on the use of language protecting it from liability claims, blocking progress in the loss and damage talks. The US also tried to push for a proposal under which all countries – including those not party to the Paris Agreement – would be eligible to serve on the executive committee governing loss and damage. This would allow the USA to continue to exert influence after leaving the Agreement next year. Developing countries fear that this position could make it easier for rich countries to refuse to provide funding to help recovery from climate impacts.

Climate finance and adaptation

African negotiators at COP25 pressed for more funds to adapt to the impact of climate change while demanding that major carbon emitters make significant cuts in their emissions to prevent dangerous warming. They denounced the fact that they are not receiving the climate finance promised by developed countries, and that whatever has been made available through international bodies is very difficult to access. Despite the reiteration of the commitment made by developed countries in 2009 to mobilize by 2020 $ 100 billion per year to support the fight against climate change and ecological transition in developing countries, this pledge remains unmet. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), a maximum of $ 71.2 billion was reached in 2017.[78] While developing countries have welcomed the replenishment of the Green Climate Fund[79] (at $ 9.7 billion) to support adaptation and mitigation projects in developing countries, they expressed concerns about its sustainability and underscored that it still fell short of developing countries' needs. The AGN also called for the definition of a new post-2020 target and stressed the importance of grant-based resources to avoid increasing the debt burden of developing countries.[80]

Implications for Policy and Conclusion

The outcomes of COP25 in Madrid were overall disappointing and delayed a number of key sticking points until this year's COP26 in Glasgow. However, despite suffering from the severe blow of US withdrawal and increasing polarization, the international climate regime is still functioning. There is

77 Rajeesh Kumar, "COP25 Another Lost Opportunity – Analysis," Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), January 19, 2020, Accessed January 30, 2020.
78 OECD, "Climate Finance Provided and Mobilised by Developed Countries in 2013-17" (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2019), Accessed January 30, 2020.
79 Since COP21, the Green Climate Fund has been considered as "the real financing arm" of the Paris Agreement.
80 "Summary of the Chile/Madrid Climate Change Conference," Earth Negotiating Bulletin, IISD Reporting Services, Vol. 12 No. 775, December 18, 2020. Accessed January 30, 2020.

a growing recognition of the gap between the slow pace of negotiations and the global cooperation and boldness required to address global warming at the speed and scale needed. For Africans in particular, who are already experiencing the disruptive consequences of global warming, action can no longer be delayed until more adapted institutions and procedures are designed. African countries must find ways to work better with the system as it is, while debunking false narratives, reconciling the complexity of the issues at hand with the multiplicity of interests, and putting the right amount of pressure by pulling key levers.

COP26 will take place right after the US presidential election, with deep implications for the country's participation in global climate action. This, in turn, is increasing the pressure on the EU, the UK (as hosts), and on the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases – China – to commit to new and more ambitious climate goals. Another country that will play a pivotal role is Germany, which will hold the EU Council presidency in the second half of the year and will host an EU-China summit in Leipzig in September 2020. While a joint EU-China announcement – similar to the US-China announcement in 2014 – would help inject momentum into the global climate negotiations and inspire other countries to strive for higher climate ambitions, Africa should make sure it participates fully in the global rule and policy-making efforts on climate change.

- Beyond stepping up their advocacy and awareness-raising work, African countries should further develop their capacities to carry-out tailored research and data collection that improves the understanding of the connections between a warmer planet and their dangerous impacts on the African continent. One way to increase Africa's contribution to the climate change narrative could be to deepen partnerships with supportive research institutions whose work that could provide useful and timely inputs to the climate change negotiations.
- More thorough studies are also needed to examine the expected trade-offs involved in decarbonized growth for African economies, and how they can avoid becoming locked-in to carbon-intensive technologies and infrastructures. This will be paramount to the success of a well-articulated and coordinated strategy to request more financial support and accelerate resource mobilization for climate-resilient and low-carbon initiatives on the continent.
- Such findings should be disseminated as widely as possible to exert more pressure and promote more effectively a fairer burden-sharing of the transition to a fossil-free economy, and to continue advancing adaptation efforts based on Africa's "special needs and circumstances". This includes, among other things, securing commitments and concessions to increase food security in Africa through crop diversification, helping the continent meet its energy needs thanks to renewable energy solutions, and ensuring that large-scale infrastructure projects are designed to withstand the current and future impacts of climate change.
- Africans also need to steer away from the North-South rhetoric, invest in constructing a solid negotiation strategy, and ensure that their priorities (climate finance, technology transfer and capacity building) are included and accounted for. This might involve going beyond the automatic alignment with the developing countries' coalition (G77 and China), claiming a stronger voice during climate negotiations and setting their own priority items in a transparent way.
- Climate change measures should become integrated into various policy areas at the AU level. The AU Commission should increase domestic resources to support the AGN and reduce its reliance on foreign donors. The appointment of an AU Special Envoy for Climate Change and Security would also help foster more coordination among member states, strengthen the continent's response to climate-related risks, and support integrated approaches to boost resilience – as

previously requested by the AU Council on 19 February 2019.[81]

- Experienced and skilled negotiators are also needed to make use of and benefit from processes under the UNFCCC. This involves showcasing African leadership and providing the right incentives to improve climate resilience on the continent.
- Finally, African countries need to strengthen their continental, regional, and national institutional capacities to develop long-term climate-resilient development strategies across sectors. Having access to pertinent data, information and decision-making tools will be critical to reduce the potential damages from climate change.

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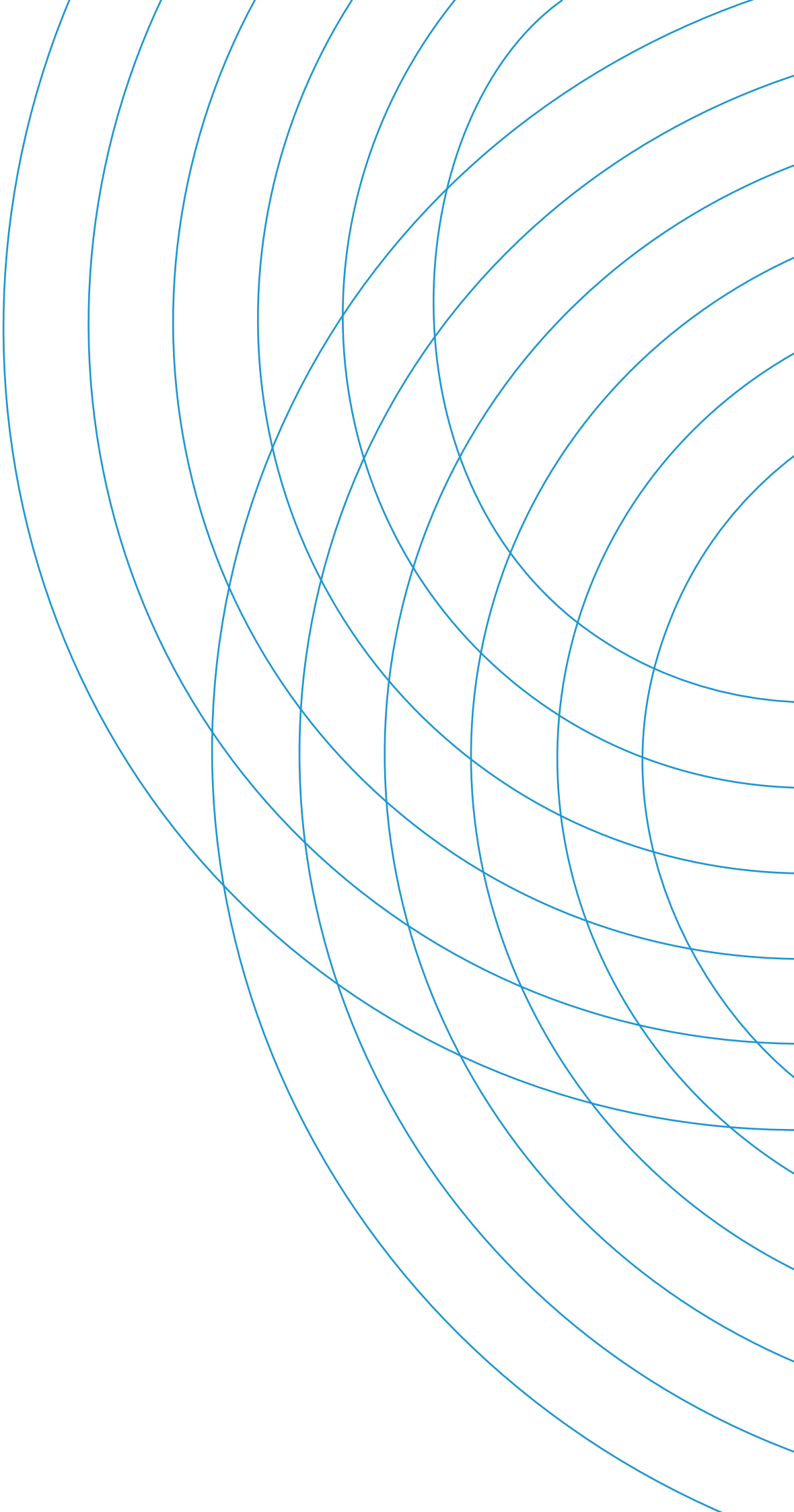

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