



AFRICAN CSOS BIODIVERSITY ALLIANCE (ACBA) STATEMENT ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Prepared by ACBA for UNFCCC COP27

Nexus between Biodiversity, Climate Change & Livelihoods

The world recognizes the need to urgently act to address the climate and biodiversity loss crises concurrently including their impacts and relationships to human development and wellbeing. According to the Biodiversity and The 2030 Agenda For Sustainable Development, climate change is likely to become one of the most significant drivers of biodiversity loss by the end of the century. Current global warming is already affecting species and ecosystems around the world, particularly the most vulnerable ecosystems such as coral reefs, mountains and polar ecosystems (IPBES). On the other hand, aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems such as forests, rangelands, croplands, peatlands and wetlands represent globally significant carbon stores.

The dependence of Africa's national and local economies, urban and rural, on natural resources such as biodiversity, water supplies, agricultural and pastoral lands among others for wellbeing and trade, makes the continent even more vulnerable to climate induced impacts. ACBA supports the promotion of adaptation and mitigation initiatives that protect, restore and enhance biodiversity and its contribution to society in a fair and equitable manner.

Human societies and ecosystems do not exist separately. The communities that understand the complexity of managing biodiversity also know how best to sustainably manage biodiversity to deliver ecosystem services. Therefore, ACBA promotes conservation approaches that build from the bottom up, respect human rights, justice and the rights holders and their territories.



Financial flows are currently not addressing the root causes of the biodiversity and climate crises. We need to shift away from a focus on the challenges of the crises as this leads to false solutions couched as nature-based solutions (NBS). Ecosystem-based or true nature-based solutions provide essential foundations for resilience and adaptive capacity, particularly for low income communities and developing countries.

The root causes of biodiversity loss include land and sea-use change including food productions systems, unsustainable consumption patterns and climate change. The solution to global warming is reducing fossil fuel emissions. By promoting carbon offsetting projects, we delay real emissions reduction by enabling major GHG emitters to continue polluting. A delay in reducing emissions simply increases the global carbon debt exacerbating the impacts of extreme weather events and undermining the resilience of ecosystems and societies and violation of human rights.

The CBD and UNFCCC conventions need to avoid a siloed approach to funding if we are to address multiple crises. Funding for multiple crises requires an open discussion around issues like Africa's debt burden and special drawing rights.

For instance, in 2021 Africa paid about **US\$69 billion** in debt repayments, with another **US\$185 billion** due between 2022 and 2024. Such a heavy debt burden makes it difficult for African countries to finance biodiversity and climate action without debt cancellation or restructuring. Special drawing rights need to be considered as funding for climate and biodiversity as they are not debt and countries can opt to allocate these for environmental actions. Similarly, at the national level governments should not isolate biodiversity from climate change nor fragment the biodiversity and sustainability agendas through siloed planning and budgeting processes. The NDCs need to reflect the intersection between biodiversity and climate change.

Nature-based Solution COP27

Although they have been around for a few years, Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) remain mired in debates about what they are and whether they actually deliver environmental and social benefits related to mitigation and adaptation. A big question is ensuring that they address issues of equity and justice that are important for ACBA. What is critical is to avoid situations where elites use NBS projects as a mechanism for nature-enabled dispossession. ACBA is concerned about efforts to promote NBS as a policy panacea that also embraces carbon-off-setting by describing simple relationships such as nature absorbs carbon dioxide. We need to ask under what conditions, NBS as a policy tool, enables social justice. We should not overlook the negative social impacts certain types of NBS may have[1].

We are also concerned that the current narrative around NBS places more emphasis on how biodiversity can benefit climate and less on safeguarding biodiversity. Moreover, there are real concerns in how these NBS are defined and applied, where so-called NBS are not in fact "natural", such as mono-cultures involving exotic alien species being mis-labeled as NBS.



In view of the above we call upon all parties and concerned bodies to consider that whatever approach is adopted it must:

- Guarantee peoples' relationship with land and biodiversity, avoid land grabs and not use area-based conservation such as protected areas to alienate IPLCs from their territories and livelihoods. This is critical in the case of Africa where significant biodiversity lies in areas controlled and managed by IPLCs
- Ensure that all climate change related interventions (irrespective of what they are called/termed), do not harm biodiversity in the long-term and that they enable justice that prioritizes IPLCs
- Not assume that these approaches automatically deliver benefits. So, while landscape or forest restoration can improve ecosystem services, including climate mitigation and adaptation and soil erosion control, it must be done with full local participation and promoting native species appropriate to pre-existing (and emerging, driven by climate change) natural habitats.
- Promote regenerative initiatives with sustainable development pathways and that confront extra activism and unsustainable land use systems including infrastructural development.
- Promote community-driven restoration and sustainable resource use and management. Must avoid enabling land grabs.
- Demonstrate the true contribution of "green" projects to adaptation and mitigation and biodiversity conservation. Greenwashing must be prevented as it can lead to privatization of biodiversity for profit.
- Be inclusive and empowering so that local knowledge is visible and integrated into the design and implementation of projects and avoid elite capture.
- Recognize that central to the climate-biodiversity nexus is equity and justice and the need to have a long-term perspective to all interventions.

Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and Biodiversity

The Paris Agreement (Article 4, paragraph 2) requires each Party to prepare, communicate and maintain successive nationally determined contributions (NDCs) that it intends to achieve. Further, it states that Parties shall pursue domestic mitigation measures, with the aim of achieving the objectives of such contributions. However, a review of NDCs of most African countries reveals that biodiversity is under-represented in NDCs and yet climate change has serious impacts on biodiversity. Where biodiversity is addressed it is packaged as solutions to climate mitigation and adaptation and water provisioning.

Globally, there is an acceptance that the biodiversity and climate emergencies are intricately linked. Increasingly, it is further recognized that agriculture is also a significant contributor to climate change and biodiversity loss. In Africa, agriculture drives rural and national economies of most countries in terms of food production and employment. The agriculture, forestry and land use sector, is therefore a major contributor to Green House Gas (GHG) emissions and biodiversity loss. Given this ACBA believes the NDCs present an opportunity for countries to propose interventions that address the underlying causes of the biodiversity-climate crisis and secure resilient ecosystems and societies.

The majority of East Africa's NDCs[1] focus on nature as a solution to reducing emissions. They refer to sustainable forest management, sustainable forest biomass production and adoption of climate-smart agriculture and REDD+ projects as strategies for avoiding or enhancing carbon removals. There is no consideration of the potential harmful impacts on biodiversity. The NDCs need to tackle the root causes of the climate change crises. They must acknowledge that reducing emissions from deforestation requires investment in strong governance systems, a rights-based approach, empowering IPLCs and recognizing their rights.

Emerging Markets-based Solutions

ACBA should be concerned that Articles 6.2 and 6.4, promoting the carbon market undermines the spirit of the Paris Agreement. The Paris rulebook, in its entirety, takes a non-market approach with the exception of these two articles. A market-based approach is a convenient pathway for developed countries to avoid fulfilling their climate finance obligations and to block any further opportunity of climate financial flows through any of the Paris rulebooks or UNFCCC instruments - Articles 9.5 or 9.7 or Loss and Damage or Article 6.8. As long as they can work through the carbon market, they will not commit to any climate financial flows through the UNFCCC.

[1] <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s13280-022-01771-7>

[1] <https://www.fao.org/3/i8079e/i8079e.pdf>

Civil Society Organizations need to be concerned that operationalization of Articles 6.2 and 6.4 can deepen inequities in and within the global south, will not raise ambition levels in the NDCs, will likely lead to land grabs and violation of the rights of IPLCs and women, all this without reducing GHG emissions required before 2030 to keep the 1.5o C target alive. A market approach presents real risks of adoption of false solutions to emissions reduction such as monoculture tree plantations, “nature-based solutions” designed as solutions to climate change without safeguarding biodiversity and separating people from nature through creation of strict protected areas.

Without meaningful engagement on Article 6, we have a rush in developing countries for carbon trading projects outside the ambit of multilateral forum. The carbon market approach creates a perverse incentive for developing country parties to keep their NDC ambition low and offer marketing opportunities for rich countries to continue business as usual and still fulfil their NDCs commitments. In the long-term we are not actually reducing global GHG emissions and yet the consequences of global warming will be felt more acutely by developing countries who lack the means to cope with them because developed countries defiantly refuse to meet their financial obligations. This situation means developing countries will face costly domestic NDC options in the future, a situation that jeopardizes their development prospects.

The non-market approach (NMA) under Article 6.8 highlights the opportunity of defining and safeguarding international cooperation for just and joint resilience outcomes. It can lead to just solutions that make sense for people and the planet and that respect a rights-based approach to international climate mitigation and adaptation cooperation. For a COP being hosted in Africa, the non-market approach presents an opportunity to rebuild trust between the parties sway more donor countries to pay extra for the historical destruction they caused.



CSOs need to pay attention to the discussions related to the mitigation work programme and ensure that the work programme supports equitable access to atmospheric space using a fair and equitable approach. They should push for a fossil fuel phase-out especially in developed countries with a just transition for developing countries.

Loss and damage financial mechanism

The Warsaw International Mechanism on loss and damage was established at the UNFCCC COP 19 to promote “implementation of approaches to address loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change. Critically, while Warsaw recognized the synergies between loss and damage and adaptation, it acknowledged that loss and damage involves more than can be addressed by adaptation. Loss and damage took center stage again after the IPCC’s Fifth Assessment Report predicted increased warming and rising climate-induced impacts. In the end, loss and damage was treated separately from adaptation and included as a stand-alone article (Article 8) in the Paris Agreement. As part of the ‘deal’ for adopting Article 8, an ‘exclusion clause’ was included in Decision 1/CP.21, which indicates that Article 8 does not serve as a basis for any liability or compensation. This clause effectively absolved developed countries of their responsibility for historical GHG emissions that have and continue to contribute to global warming. Africa is the continent that will be most affected by climate induced impacts and yet its global contribution to GHG emissions is about 4%.

Since the Paris Agreement, vulnerable nations have been calling on developed countries to provide financial assistance that can help them address loss and damage.

The current focus of the Warsaw International Mechanism and Paris Agreement is on research and dialogue rather than liability or compensation. The UNFCCC COP 26 failed to agree on the establishment of a “Glasgow Facility for Financing Loss and Damage”. Instead they managed to downgrade the demand to a “Glasgow Dialogue on Finance for Loss and Damage”. The Glasgow Summit failed to commit any new funding for loss and damage and opted, yet again, to delay any action to address. Not only has there been a failure to provide funding for adaptation and loss and damage, but emissions have continued to rise and goals to deliver climate finance for mitigation and adaptation in developing countries have not been met. A recent brief[1] on why loss and damage should be on the COP 27 agenda points out that since COP 26, 119 extreme weather events occurred in developing countries while large corporations continued to make enough profits to cover the costs of extreme weather events in developing countries and still make profits.

The hosting of the UNFCCC COP27 in Africa (Egypt), should be used as an opportunity for making a case for addressing the needs of vulnerable countries on the issue of loss and damage. However, ACBA believes that given the urgency of loss and damage, developing countries need to explore options outside of the UNFCCC mechanism to enhance progress on this issue. One real option, using a human rights approach is to lobby the United Nations General Assembly to request the Secretary General to establish a committee to define a mechanism on a loss and damage fund.

CSOs should maintain a close watch on whether “loss and damage” is included on the COP 27 agenda and if the Santiago Network created in 2019 to advance the work on loss damage on loss and damage will become operational. The Santiago Network was created to connect vulnerable developing countries with providers of technical assistance, knowledge, resources they need to address climate risks comprehensively and addressing loss and damage.



[1] https://uploads-ssl.webflow.com/605869242b205050a0579e87/6355adbb4f3fdf583b15834b_L%26DC_THE_COST_OF_DELAY_.pdf