



Youth Concern on Environment
and Development

The African Peoples' Just Transition, Climate and Development Declaration 2025.

Preamble.

On the 7th of September 2025, the Africa Peoples' Assembly on the margins of the 2nd Africa Climate Summit, led by Climate Action Network (CAN) Africa, the International Trade Union Confederation Africa (ITUC-Africa), and the Africa Movement of Movements, Youth Concern on Environment and Development (YCED-Ug) convened in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

We, the peoples of Africa, including social movements and civil society, trade unions, women, youth, people with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples, grassroots communities, farmers, faith-based groups, media, and academia, gathered to commit to this Declaration on Africa's climate and development priorities and demands.

This Peoples' Assembly was a space of collective power, where African voices defined what justice, sovereignty, and resilience must mean for our continent. We reject the business-as-usual model that reduces Africa to a pawn in the agendas of others, whether through Extractivism, debt traps, or false climate solutions imposed from outside.

This Declaration sets out what Africa must pursue, what we as peoples commit to fight for, and what we demand of our governments, regional bodies, and international institutions in spaces such as the Africa Climate Summit, or COP30 and beyond.

We recognize that if Africa does not plan and act for its own destiny, it will remain trapped in cycles of exploitation, resource theft, and recolonization

Realities

We Recognize, Africa is the least responsible for climate change (contributing less than 4% of annual greenhouse gas emissions currently and less than 1% of cumulative historical emissions), but is the most vulnerable to climate-induced loss and damage to its lands, its crops, its infrastructure, and its people.

Africa has faced centuries of oppression and violation of rights of its people, communities and destruction of our nature and livelihoods, much of which have been done with the motivation of resource theft and extraction.

Africa faces immense climate-induced challenges - we are already facing increased droughts, floods, famines, and crop failures. Hundreds of million Africans will face climate change induced displacement failing radical change - this will cause unmeasurable loss, suffering, conflict and ultimately societal breakdown.

We cannot secure climate justice within the boundaries of a broken system - the existing neoliberal, authoritarian, extractive, neo-colonial, racist, patriarchal systems and societies that close civic space and do not ensure the human rights of all people and communities, particularly those who defend these rights. The rise of right wing fascism across the Global North is a grave threat to global equity - international solidarity of progressive forces crucial to meet these challenges.

We need a reversal of global financial flows meaningfully addressing the climate crisis requires reparations and financing in the order of trillions, not the billions which are promised (and remain undelivered); net global financial flows (including all trade, aid, debt, etc.) see flows of over \$2 trillion going from Global South to Global North every year - this needs to be reversed as a requisite for real, meaningful, lasting change.

Principles We Stand By;

Systems change, not climate change - We do not see climate change as a problem in isolation, nor as a simple equation of particles in the atmosphere, but rather as the result of a fundamentally broken system of power, politics, and economics which has put elite interests ahead of the people's, and allowed the crossing of fundamental natural and social boundaries in the name of profit - this cannot be solved through technology changes alone but requires a fundamental systems change to our societies.

Radical change, not tranquilizing gradualism - We cannot afford baby steps and edits around the edges - the scale and speed of change needed is unprecedented and cannot be achieved through incremental changes to fundamentally flawed systems.

Equity and historical responsibility - Rich nations have historical responsibilities for the climate crisis and should fulfil their obligations and fair shares, as per enshrined principles of 'Common but Differentiated Rights and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC)', They must reduce their emissions to real zero, but must also provide poorer nations the scale of financial support needed to address the crisis. There needs to be a global convergence of per capita material and energy use to sufficiency levels and well-being for all.

Human rights and protection of defenders - There can be no climate justice without human rights, we must work to protect people whose rights are being infringed, especially those facing persecution by governments and companies for their defense of communities, lands, and environmental integrity.

Free media and freedom of speech and opposition - Free media and free speech play a critical role in providing the information, oversight, and accountability necessary to root out the injustices of the dominant system we cannot achieve system change without these fundamental freedoms being protected.

People power and community led solutions - Real solutions to climate change cannot be designed in boardrooms and ivory towers - they must come from genuine consultation with people and communities and must put people-centered (not profit-centered) goals at their core.

Equity, justice and equality within our societies, and in our own movements, as regards gender, race, age, abilities, sexual orientation and any other area that manifest discrimination and abuse.

False Solutions We Reject

We affirm that real climate solutions must be rooted in human rights and just transition principles, led by local communities, respecting indigenous peoples' rights.

We firmly reject:

- Fossil Fuels - coal, oil, and gas must remain in the ground. We demand an immediate stop of all expansion of fossil fuel extraction and rapid, equitable phasing out of existing production of oil, gas and coal everywhere. Frontline struggles against extraction must be supported everywhere.
- Carbon markets and offsets - we reject carbon colonialism in carbon markets, offsets, and other deceptive schemes. These instruments allow polluters license to continue destroying the environment and harming communities while undermining land rights and displacing small farming communities for the benefit of traders in financial markets
- Distant and hollow Net zero targets as distractions from immediate, transformative actions to Real Zero emissions and real solutions to the climate crisis. The Net-zero framing promotes business-as-usual through offsets and dangerous assumptions that non-existing, risky technologies will somehow come to rescue in the future.
- Geoengineering and solar radiation management are an existential threat to all Africans and all peoples of the world. We call for a ban on all geoengineering and solar radiation technologies and experiments. We stand by African governments' recent decisions to support the call for a global Non-Use Agreement on Solar Geoengineering.
- 'Green' Hydrogen for export - while some hydrogen will be needed in our future energy mix, we reject hydrogen developments for export where they focus Africa's resources on generating profits and serving foreign markets in place of delivering energy to local people.
- Export-led growth based on extractive industries and low value-added manufacturing which has deepened Africa's trade imbalance and technological dependence, and continues to fuel our external debt problems.
- Debt restructuring and incremental financial reforms are superficial band aid solutions that perpetuate the external debt trap. Access to loans with more favorable terms can be helpful, but if strategic investments are not channeled towards transformative sectors such as food sovereignty, agroecology, renewable energy sovereignty, and non-extractive high value-added industries, then loans will continue to fuel the external debt trap.

Real Solutions We Call For,

PAN-AFRICAN COLLABORATION & DEVELOPMENT.

- Redefine development from perpetual growth to genuine development - African People can and must champion models of development that effectively ensure life, dignity, ecosystem health, sufficiency and genuine well-being – discarding current

maldevelopment and narrow, economic growth-obsessed approaches imposed by both African and Global elites.

- Support endogenous African development that breaks dependencies and advances collective self-reliance
- Revive Pan-Africanism and Africa's proud tradition of independent action and thought that breaks with colonial mindsets and dependency. Africa's future lies in advancing visions grounded in African cultures, ecology, solidarity and pan-African unity and self-reliance.
- Dismantle the power of transnational corporations - African countries must counter the excessive power, extraction and undue political interference by transnational corporations through both domestic means, collective efforts and in advancing multilateral and UN regulations.
- Ensure public precautions and safeguards - public and people-led technology assessments must guide and control any introduction of new technologies before they are commercialized and imposed on societies.

II. JUST TRANSITION, JUSTICE, AND EQUITY.

- Affirm that just transitions must be context-led, with African solutions for Africa, people-centered, gender-responsive, and community-tailored.
- Recognize the central role of Africa's workers — including informal workers and especially women and youth, in shaping and benefiting from the transition.
- Commit to building sustainable African value chains powered by renewable energy, grounded in economic diversification and benefiting workers and local communities.
- Emphasize the need to strengthen skills development, training, and technology transfer, ensuring equitable access to resources across all communities.
- Demand adequate and predictable finance for just transition, grounded in dignity, distributive justice, reparatory justice, and equity principles.

III. CLIMATE FINANCE, DEBT, TAX, AND REPARATIONS.

- Demand quality finance that meets the needs of just transition on the ground, based on public finance that is gender-responsive, grounded in public ownership of the means of production, with skills and training, leaving no community behind.
- Insist on international provision of climate finance that is grant-based, non-debt-creating, and anchored in legal obligations under the UNFCCC and Paris Agreement, specifically Article 9.1.

- Reaffirm that African countries are owed a climate debt by the Global North, which must be quantified, and explicitly support African finance ministers' leadership and the call for a UN convention on sovereign debt to enable debt cancellation and a fairer international system.
- Champion Africa's leadership and ongoing efforts to push for a fairer international tax system as a key climate solution, notably through the UN Framework on International Tax Cooperation, addressing illicit financial flows, resisting unilateral taxes, and supporting African-led multilateral tax measures on high-emitting activities.
- Pursue compensation and reparations for African states and communities harmed by failures of non-African actors, in line with the International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion on the 'Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change'.

IV. RENEWABLE ENERGY, MINERALS, GREEN INDUSTRY, FOSSIL FUELS

- Support people-centered renewable energy and energy democracy - Africa is endowed with the world's most sun and wind potential, which can meet all African energy needs with renewable, socially and environmentally sound, people-centered renewable energy. This new 100% renewable energy system must be characterized by energy sovereignty and energy democracy with significant local and diverse ownership at the core.
- Support decentralized renewable energy generation and supply, to be reflected particularly in investment, through public ownership pathways that guarantee basic rights, avoiding the corporate concentration of past fossil fuel energy systems and ensuring respect for human, land and indigenous rights both in terms of deployment and extraction of critical minerals
- Prioritize the use of Africa's strategic minerals to add value, create horizontal linkages across the continent, manufacture and deploy the building blocks of its development (renewable energy, agriculture, transportation, health, sanitation, etc.).
- Support an African industrialization that works for the common good with workers, social and environmental rights at the core.
- Ensure safe working environments in the mining of green minerals, capturing value addition at local and regional levels, aligned with the African Continental Free Trade Area (ACFTA).
- Prioritize African technologies for green industrialization that resonate locally and establish harmonized regional contexts.
- Guarantee a just transition for workers and communities dependent on coal, oil, and gas, respecting timelines for Africa's fossil fuels phase out based on science, equity, and common but differentiated responsibilities.

V. ADAPTATION, LOSS & DAMAGE, RESILIENCE.

- Demand financing from the Global North to meet Africa's needs in adaptation, loss & damage, and resilience, centered on public finance via grants, not loans.
- Improve assessment of Africa's adaptation needs and loss & damage costs, paying attention to equity, gendered impacts, and increases in gender-based violence arising from climate impacts.
- Adopt just transition approaches in adaptation, integrating local and indigenous knowledge, women-led adaptation measures, open technology transfers, capacity building, social protection, and compensation for affected communities.
- Advance adaptation and resilient development together, establishing anticipatory action frameworks to build resilient infrastructure, urban systems, schools, and roads.

VI. FOOD SYSTEMS, AGRICULTURE AND LAND.

- Ensure sustainable, accessible, and affordable food for all Africans, based on African-controlled and locally owned food systems.
 - Reclaim African indigenous seeds and resist seed neo-colonialism in the monopoly ownership and control of the rights to use seeds.
 - Promote agroecological practices through organic and non-chemical-based farming systems, adopting African indigenous knowledge and practices.
 - Integrate food systems into NDCs and national policies to advance just transition, climate action, and food sovereignty.
 - Secure financing for just transition in food systems, supporting rural farmers, women, and youth.
 - Ensure ecosystem protection and restoration that preserves forests, wetlands, grazing lands, and other ecosystems on land, lakes and seas and that respects the rights of local populations.
 - Promote local stewardship, indigenous rights and Free and Prior Informed Consent which are key for protection of biodiversity and local livelihoods.
- ‘Nature-based solutions have become synonymous with commodification of nature and carbon offsets and must be effectively countered and exposed