



REPORT



**The African Union
bloc climate agenda
for and beyond
COP28:
Achieving aims and
reaching goals in
partnership.**

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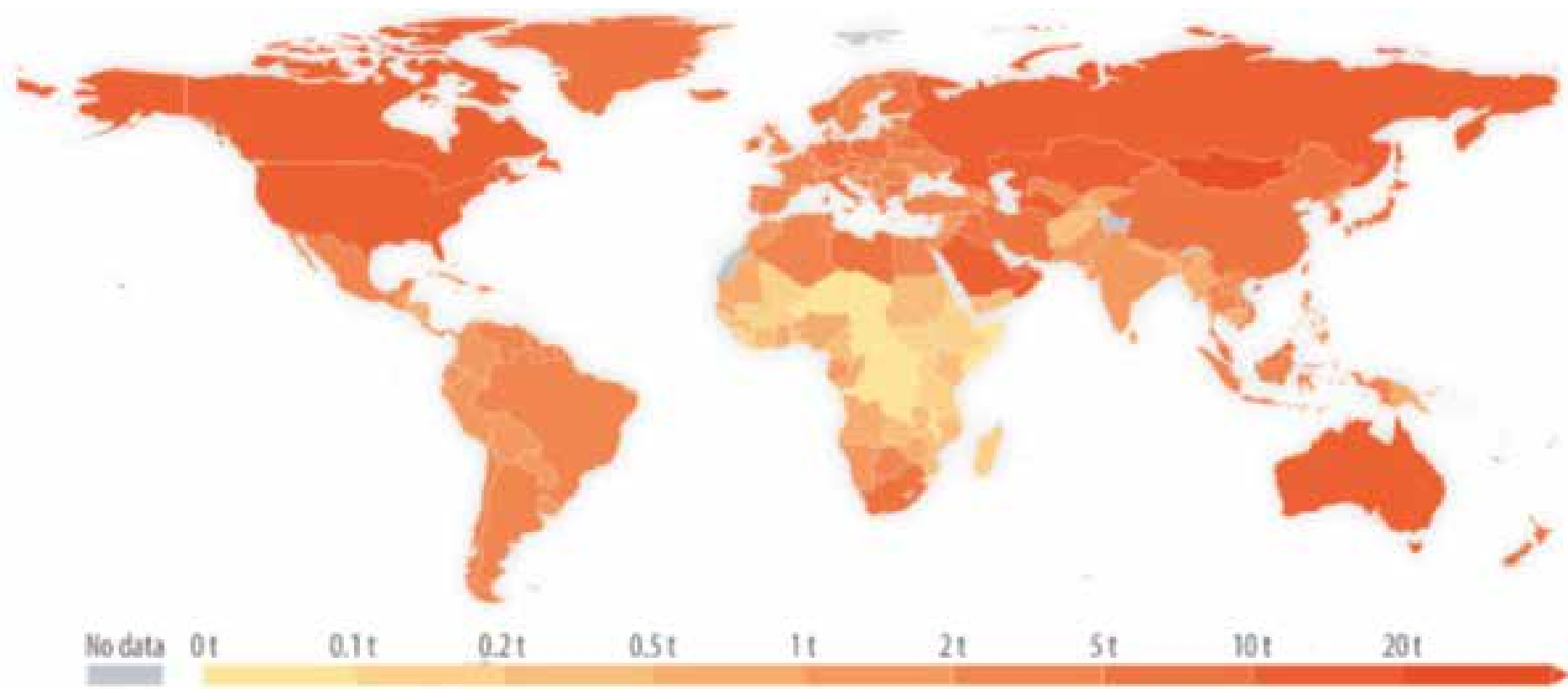
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The year's Conference of Parties (COP28),¹ as with others before it, is aimed at advancing collaborative efforts on climate change and sustainable development by bringing together a wide range of stakeholders from all levels of government, youth, business and investors, civil society, frontline communities, indigenous peoples, and around specific solutions, build resilience, and mobilize finance at scale. This includes the African continent, under the African Union (AU). African countries have generally assumed responsibility for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, while acknowledging the expected catalyzing and financing roles of richer industrial countries. Africa contributes less than 4% of Global CO₂ emissions,² yet the continent will bear most of the brunt of climate change.



*Figure 1: Per capita CO₂ emissions, 2020. Data source: Our World in Data,³
based on the Global Carbon Project.⁴*

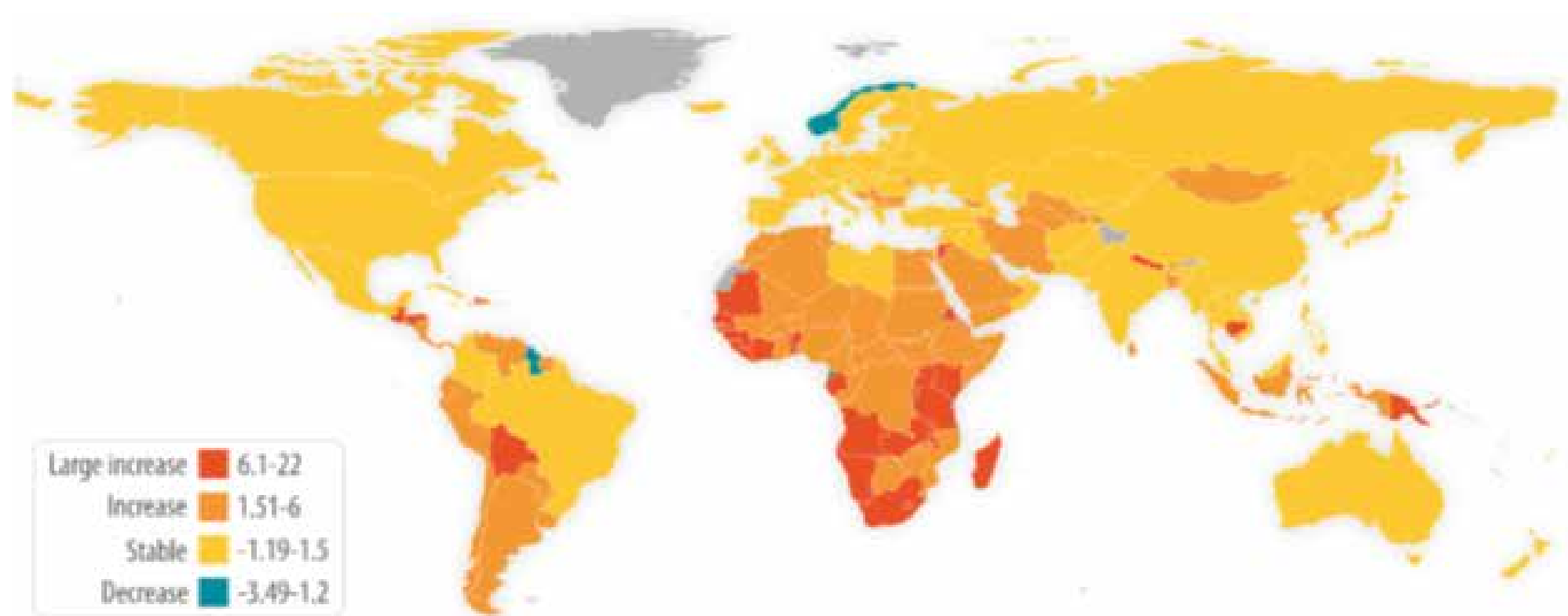


Figure 2: Change in vulnerability gap scores by 2050 based on projected climate and socio-economic trends (RCP8.5-SSP3 scenario⁵). Data source: INFORM Climate Change⁶.

The African Union goes to COP28 with specific objectives and priorities

COP28 will mark the first Global Stocktake, which will assess global progress on the Paris Agreement. It is therefore an ideal platform to put a spotlight on Africa's potential and reaffirm the continent's needs.

In September this year Kenya hosted the first Africa Climate Summit, resulting in the Nairobi Declaration – a clear statement of Africa's needs and priorities. The declaration aligns with the African Union Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy and Action Plan,⁷ which was adopted in February 2022 and sets a framework for climate action in Africa, including external partnerships around financing, adaptation and other priority areas. The Nairobi Declaration was adopted to be the basis for Africa's common and negotiating position in the global climate change process to the December's COP 28 and beyond. It also aligns with the position talks for achievement of global climate goals in the lead up to COP28.⁸

The key outcomes of the consensus declaration reached by African Heads of State and Government, in the presence of other global leaders, intergovernmental

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organizations, Regional Economic Communities, United Nations Agencies, private sector, civil society, organizations, indigenous peoples, local communities, farmer organizations, children, youth, women and academia, are:

- 1. Major polluters should pay for climate change:** The declaration demands that major polluters commit more resources to help poorer nations. It urged world leaders "to rally behind the proposal for a global carbon taxation regime including a carbon tax on fossil fuel trade, maritime transport and aviation, that may also be augmented by a global financial transaction tax". The continent is currently only receiving about 12% of the financing it needs⁹ to cope with climate change and its effects.
- 2. Funding increases of an entirely different system order:** The Nairobi Declaration call for concrete, time-bound action on the proposals to reform the multilateral financial system already under discussion. It calls on multilateral development banks to increase concessional lending to poorer countries and for the "better deployment" of the IMF's special drawing rights mechanism, which issued \$650 billion as part of the Fund's COVID-19 response. Other proposals included measures to help indebted countries avoid default, such as instruments that can grant 10-year grace periods. "In Africa, we can be a green industrial hub that helps other regions achieve their net zero strategies by 2050," said Kenyan President William Ruto, who hosted the summit.

Leading up to COP28, the African Union has specified its priorities, in line with the Nairobi declaration and its climate change strategy.

The main priorities of the African Union at COP28¹⁰ include:

- 1. Centering nature, people, lives & livelihoods:** Putting nature, people, lives and livelihoods at the heart of climate action, including helping the most vulnerable communities adapt to the change that's already occurring.
- 2. Transitioning to clean energy:** Fast tracking the energy transition and slashing emissions before 2030 to limit global warming to 1.5° C above pre-industrial levels.

- 3. Delivering on finance:** Deliver old promises and set the framework for a new deal on finance. Climate finance must be affordable, available, and accessible to developing countries.
- 4. Mobilizing inclusivity:** Mobilize the most inclusive COP ever, ensuring that decisions and discussions, and how the solutions are implemented, are truly inclusive and done in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

The AU's historical commitment amidst challenges

Since the 1970s, a series of droughts and excessive rainfall have severely deteriorated the terrain in the Sahel-Sahara area, causing food poverty, competition for resources and land, and relocation. The concept of re-greening the Sahel has been around since the 1980s, but it truly took off in 2007, when the African Union supported the Great Green Wall¹¹ for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative, which aims to grow 8,000 kilometers of plants and trees throughout Africa, from Dakar to Djibouti. The project, which already includes over 20 African countries, could help restore 100 million hectares of land, trap 250 million tonnes of CO₂, and create 10 million jobs by 2030. Local communities administer the areas assigned by the member states. They grow drought-resistant tree species and use traditional techniques to gather and distribute high yearly rainfall through irrigation systems.

Climate policies are developed, implemented, and overseen by AU organizations¹² such as the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, the AU Commission, the Pan African Parliament, and the Economic, Social, and Cultural Council. Furthermore, the AU has many specialized technical committees (STCs) at the ministerial and senior official levels, which deals with food security, biodiversity, and climate change issues. The AU development agency (AUDA-NEPAD) oversees priority projects at the REC and AU levels in accordance with Agenda 2063. The Climate for Development in Africa Programme (ClimDevAfrica),¹³ which is



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co-managed by the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank (AfDB), and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), provides guidance and technical assistance.

The AU is however still plagued by structural flaws. Despite this, it has been effective in directing the collaboration of African states on several initiatives and programs that it has established. The AU climate strategy¹⁴ recognizes the need for African countries to address structural challenges. One issue is that many African governments are unable to assess the efficiency of their climate-related spending due to a lack of an appropriate measurement, reporting, and verification process. Another concern is a lack of safety procedures to limit loss and damage, such as early warning systems, social transfers to encourage livelihood diversification, or customized insurance methods. The strategy¹⁵ also identifies the need to improve support for climate empowerment for various stakeholders such as schools, the private sector, non-governmental and civil society organizations, as well as technology transfer and the development of local technologies to assist African countries in better mitigating and adapting to climate change.

According to the African Union's, well-managed climate finance enables the delivery of multiple development outcomes such as food and water security, energy security, good health, employment, and other benefits. It is already emphasized that loans are not appropriate for many African countries, which are already overburdened, and suggests a preference for grants. It also advocates for better legislation and circumstances for blended finance, public-private partnerships, or innovative financial instruments (such as green bonds) to leverage more private finance in climate projects.

Leveraging opportunities through collaboration and engagement with other blocs.

The Africa Union and the Europe Union both express strong interest in fighting climate change, with the former having the necessary abundant resources and the former have the financing and technical assistance required to unlock the resources. The two blocs are therefore in a good position to find a common ground. The ability of the EU to demonstrate the benefits of a net-zero economy by establishing and financing new opportunities outside of the bloc's own, is critical to discover common ground between borders. The AU and the EU have a long history of collaboration, also among member states and institutions. The collaboration is centered on political dialogue, technological and collaboration between institutions. The EU has a major role to play when it comes to credible climate finance and adaptation. Its leadership on critical climate concerns, such as in leading the international financial reform system, energy diplomacy, and adaptation and resilience are important leverage points.

In the sphere of climate change, the EU and the Organization of (Sub-Saharan) African, Caribbean, and Pacific States (OACPS)¹⁶ have long shared common concerns and ambitions. The freshly signed agreement on a future OACPS-EU relationship contains a title on environmental sustainability and climate. The eventual agreement would also contain a regional protocol for Africa, which will underline the difficulties on which the parties have pledged to collaborate in the areas of the environment, sustainable natural resource management, and climate change. This involves eliminating inefficient fossil fuel subsidies, collaborating on preventing and managing climate-related conflicts, addressing loss and damage, and increasing climate resilience. A title on e-learning is included in the newly signed agreement on a future OACPS-EU relationship. However, the OACPS-EU agreement is not yet in effect. Partnership for green transformation and energy access is one of the new EU-Africa Strategy's pillars. It expands on existing collaborations such as the Africa-EU Energy Partnership (AEEP)¹⁷ and the Africa-EU Renewable Energy



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Cooperation Programme (RECP).¹⁸ African and EU heads of state or government pledged to support Africa in its transition to develop just and sustainable pathways towards climate neutrality in the 6th EU-AU Summit's Joint Vision for 2030 February 2022,¹⁹ while recognizing Africa's energy.

According to the Deputy Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the Great Green Wall effort,²⁰ which has so far been more of a mosaic than a continuous barrier, was planned to restore 18 million hectares and created 350 000 jobs by the end of 2021, but is currently still far off the target. To strengthen the effort, the UNCCD-led Great Green Wall Accelerator secured US\$19 billion in pledges at the One Planet Summit 2021, matching available funds with Great Green Wall projects and triggering fresh investment; the EU contributes €700 million annually to the initiative.

Beyond COP 28

The road to and beyond COP28 is a rapid succession of diplomatic and political opportunities for global leaders to engage. Africa and Europe, as well as other blocs partnering can make a valuable contribution to the global climate agenda, both by facilitating dialogue and engagement, and by supporting emerging consensus in other fora. They can drive more coordinated efforts across different multilateral era and help facilitate a more consistent dialogue around respective positions as they take shape across a range of multilateral, regional and bilateral and involve a complex patchwork of instruments and institutions.

It is time to shift away from dogmatic views on renewable energy and fossil fuels and instead focus on commercial potential. This necessitates a greater understanding of the range of climate and economic development priorities that shape national perspectives, as well as the structural, political, and economic elements that enable countries to be ambitious on green energy. The dialogue between AU, EU and other global leaders should center on establishing shared advantages while tackling ongoing transition risks.



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It is time for a more open discussion on the consequences of EU climate policy. This includes a more upfront consideration of mitigating and ancillary actions related to EU policies such as the CBAM and other external climate measures. Similarly, the EU's attempts to green its industries and increase their competitiveness should not be presented as a finished product, but rather as a starting point for negotiations with a variety of New South partners and stakeholders, including Africa. It is time for a more deliberate and planned approach centered on displaying project-level results. The timescale for implementing meaningful global climate action is extremely short, and there is a substantial risk of losing momentum. AU, EU and other bloc officials should avoid the trap of policy signaling or ideal-type solutions, instead focusing on delivering immediate outcomes in climate finance, energy, and industrialization, as well as conveying progress more effectively.

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About IAP

Integrated Africa Power (IAP) is a multi-unit enterprise specialized in energy and infrastructure development on the African continent. We seek to solve Africa's energy deficits, through integrated systems solutions, resource pooling and cross-border cooperation. Our approach is based on our philosophies of tailored suitability, cost-effectiveness, sustainability and energy-development linkages.

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