



Afrika Youth Caravan TO COP27

Afrika Youth Caravan to COP27 Statement

Background

In the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change 26th conference in Glasgow, it was clear that the voices of the people shaped the agenda. The people – youth, indigenous groups, most affected people and areas (MAPA), small islands and developing states (SIDS), showed leadership by rising against mere commitments and demanding urgent, serious action, accompanied by climate financing & addressing of loss and damage by developed world and fossil fuel groups- yet, this was the most exclusive COP to think of. The barriers to meaningful participation by youth were so evident. Accessing finances and undergoing the excruciating visa and travel processes, and worse still, getting badges, was a hectic process for many. We fought to get into the conference spaces, we fought to tell our stories as they are, tell off leaders for lack of action, and to get space to showcase our solutions.

As part of the process of developing Africa and the global youth statement for the 27th Conference of Parties, Kenya Environmental Action Network, in partnership with the Youth Sustainable Development Network, Youth4Nature, Action for Nature and Earth's Coalition For Sustainable Development Network, held consultative workshops across Afrika through the Afrika Youth Caravan To COP27 in Lagos- Nigeria, Nairobi- Kenya, Lusaka- Zambia and Alexandria- Egypt. Pre-workshops preceded the Caravan and sub-regional workshops from September to early October, culminating with over 400 online and in-person participants.

The caravan saw multi-sectoral participation from NGOs, national and international developmental experts and partners, youth, Academia and Government representatives. Designed under three thematic areas; Resilience, Just energy transition and youth action, the caravan identified the unique narratives and on-the-ground actions driven by Afrikan Youth through their leadership and expertise in the climate-nature nexus. Afrikan Youth is up to 70% of the continental population- the most youthful globally. Their potential in helping to adapt to the devastating impacts of climate change can only be realised when accorded the adequate support they need and deserve.


- As Afrikan youth, we value meaningful intergenerational engagements and knowledge exchange because we understand the need to work together, learn from each other and break the barriers hindering meaningful engagement of youth from Afrika.
- We, the participants in the inaugural Afrikan Youth Caravan to the UNFCCC COP, consent that;

1. Resilience- We are resilient, not victims!


- **Food systems;** Our food systems ought to be able to adapt to the worsening climatic conditions. Our indigenous knowledge of resilient agricultural production systems must be considered- adopting climate-smart techniques and models. The adoption and use of GMOs notably have detrimental impacts on biodiversity and ecosystem integrity.
- **Loss and Damage and Climate Finance;** Global North countries must heed their commitments to Climate finance; Adaptation and loss and damage as a priority objective of the UNFCCC COP27. The idea of loss and damages must be addressed through financing. Still, the plans and procedures for adaptation are the keys to addressing L&D. Apart from the apparent funding issues, language and knowledge barriers seem to present the biggest challenges for youth-led projects locally. This is because most people are preoccupied with other issues like everyday living, health care, etc. and don't seem to give the problems of climate change any importance.
- **National Determined Contributions;** National Governments, should acknowledge, provide and create opportunities for youth- through their nationally determined contributions (NDCs), involving them at the policy and implementation levels. In sub-Saharan Africa, commitments from nations and their officials are typically highly superficial and lack substance. Even though commitments are made theoretically, they are never followed through in practice. There are several opportunities for young people. They cover Energy, Policy Making, Waste Management, and Climate Change.

2. Just Energy transition. Discussions on just energy transition need to centre and prioritise Afrikan needs and interests proportionately.

- The energy sector in Afrika is already going renewable at a faster rate. At about 4% of the total emissions, there still remains a huge burden of climate change on economies and livelihoods. Several advances in energy transition are underway, particularly in the area of local inventions and technology. However, adopting models to attain a just transition at the local level has remained a considerable barrier. Implementing an equitable energy transition requires multilevel funding and support, government policies, and other pertinent hand-holding with essential players and decision-makers.

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- Whilst the just energy transition is a huge and prerequisite step to steer faster Afrika's development, there still exist power challenges, rights based issues, benefit sharing, access and availability..The dynamics of a just transition should take into account cheaper access, community rights, environmental considerations aimed at improving livelihoods of those at the grassroots.
 - A just energy transition entails decentralisation of energy solutions, with solid financial instruments and incentives that can support a just transition- subsidies to renewable energy access and availability to the grassroots. Private financing mechanisms will go a long way in steering faster the transition needed by Afrika to faster adopt renewable energy solutions.
 - With the just energy transition, no one should be left behind. All production systems involve the use of energy; and thus energy forms a pinnacle and backbone of all production systems across the continent and the World at large.

3. Youth Action- We are YOUTH leaders, and we demand a seat at the table where decisions on our future will be made.

- We are a young continent and we can't sit back and let the older generations make our decisions for us. Youth constitute about 60% of the continental population and are leading numerous projects already- on sustainable energy, ecosystem restoration, climate literacy, climate-smart innovations, and social enterprises. Much information is also exchanged about how to adequately disseminate, contextualise and upscale these actions by youth in their environment and communities.
 - Localisation of climate literacy and education, adaptable to the unique characteristics of each region- taking into account similarities, climate change is not the same everywhere.
 - Youth are experts- leading their communities while taking action against the climate crisis. Whereas they have the zeal, there still is a huge gap to bridge their ambitions to action. Stakeholders- Governments, civil society, private sector actors should invest in building the capacity and supporting youth efforts and work towards addressing the climate crisis.
 - While the youth are an active and dynamic lot, it is important to engage in intergenerational solidarity. With the impacts of the climate crisis more than tripling in just the last five decades, it even paints an existential threat to sustainable climate action with a huge gap of inadequate intergenerational knowledge transfer. Intergenerational dialogues are crucial to enhance more holistic and feasible actions for climate action.
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Recommendations

- Enhance food production systems to be able to adapt to the worsening climatic conditions, taking into account traditional indigenous knowledge across production value chains
- Establish and create avenues for youth to learn, build their capacities and access support (financial and technical) to scale up their climate smart initiatives in their own communities.
- Build youth capacity to understand negotiation procedures, climate finance, and carbon markets
- Youth to use available resources unique to their community to promote climate justice, especially leading bold and impactful actions at the grassroots
- Continue strengthening the ability to adapt to climate careers and build resilience.
- Decentralise energy solutions with robust financial instruments and mechanisms for youth and communities at the grassroots.
- Mobilise strong financial mechanisms through public-private partnerships as well as Government institutions to invest in the energy transition while ensuring equity and access to communities and youth at the grassroots.

Conclusion

- Climate change is not an isolated issue in Afrika and must be considered. We need to talk about Africa's development, particularly its economic development, as there should be an active and well-rounded discussion about the future of humanity in our communities and even at COP27, we must encourage deep and meaningful engagements with relevant actors and stakeholders to address critical issues of food insecurity, biodiversity loss, drought and famine, pollution, energy and unsustainable manner. We will only identify the root causes of these problems and the innovative solutions if all stakeholders are meaningfully engaged without being looked down upon or tokenized
- COP26 in Glasgow was exclusive, at least that is what we thought "until COP27, dubbed "the Afrikan COP" yet Afrikan activists leading on incredible climate solutions have lacked funding and accreditation to attend the conference, making it even worse than the previous one, When will these young leaders be recognised and allowed to influence the outcomes of such high-level conferences?