A REPORT ON THE NEXUS BETWEEN COVID 19 AND CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE

Held at the sidelines of 2021 Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development

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Pan African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA)
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Sessional reporting – opening remarks – Moderated by Mrs. Salina Sanou – Head of Programs and Mr. Charles Mwangi; Thematic Lead, Resilient Societies, People and Economies – Pan African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA)

Dr. Mithika Mwenda – The Executive Director; Pan African Climate Justice Alliance

While giving the opening remarks to the nexus conference, Dr. Mithika highlighted the difficulty that came within the year as a result of COVID–19 with the Alliance loosing key members to the pandemic including Mr. Siyanda of CLIMDEV and C4CD. Other impacts have been seen on the organizational structures, national, regional and international economies as well as systems collapse. Even so, the end is not known. Countries like Kenya, South Africa amongst others are already experiencing the third waves of the virus leading to loss of so many people amongst which include senior government officers and two presidents (Burundi and Tanzania).

Figure 1: Dr. Mithika Mwenda; The Executive Director for the Pan African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA); delivering his opening remarks on the nexus between climate change and COVID–19 during the Alliances’ Nexus conference in the sidelines of the 2021 African Ministers of Finance and Economic Planning Conference in Addis. Photo Credits: PACJA

While the health systems are currently facing the many challenges, the resultant effects on the environment and climate are very severe especially for the African communities at the forefront of climate injustice. According to the available statistics, about 90% of the African constituency has been cut off from the ongoing global connection and climate change discourse. This is as a result of lack of the requisite infrastructure including:

- **In availability of smart phones** – According to the available statistics, only 6.3% of the African constituency have smart phones. This is partly as a result of the affordability of the technology and partly as a result the increasing poverty levels in the continent – currently
compounded by the pandemic. As such, the participation of the African community in climate change discussions have been constrained to the greatest levels. PACJA; being the voice of the African CSOs; have since innovated a mechanism to counter this through a programme; Young Digital Activists (YDA); to help support the communities to continue intensified climate advocacy in the face of COVID – 19.

- **Low internet coverage** – the African continent still suffers low internet coverage limiting her communities and societies; especially pastoralists, fisher-folks, marginalized communities etc. who are at the forefront to climate injustices; to continually engage in climate change discussions.

- **Limited access to energy** – while through intensified advocacy by the Alliance through the Just Transition and Energy Access thematic area the continent has seen some slight access to clean renewable energy, a greater land mass of the continent; especially inhibited by those at the forefront of climate change impacts like climate insecurity, drought and desertification, reduced agricultural yields etc.; still remains unlit. As such, even the strides made by the Alliance through the innovative programme of young digital activists have sometime been curtailed thereby limiting the ability of the African continent to engage especially in such times of the pandemic.

Against the background provided, it is important that the Alliance pronounces herself on communication in the era of the pandemic and even join the heated debate amongst the stakeholders on the virtual conference of parties highlighting the **procedural justice** that this would present to the global south at the global and national levels and the need for COP 26 to be as participatory as possible.

**Other advocacy items for the African Civil Society Actors amidst the pandemic**

- **Shrinking democratic space** – given the increasing impacts of the pandemic, many governments have taken advantage to shrink the democratic space. It is important that the African Civil Society Organizations of the continent rise above the business as it is and advocate for open and democratic space even as the alliance intensifies her advocacy around the continent’s sustainable industrialization in the digital era.

- **Diversification/reallocation and repurposing of climate finance** – the prevailing circumstances in the African continent (pandemic) has seen a lot of diversification and reallocation of the climate finance. This is done despite the available knowledge and evidence that the continent is at a climate crisis – hence the converging of the CSOs alongside the African Ministers of Finance and Economic Planning Conference to advice against reallocation of climate finance. In the same line, Africa is constantly borrowing – in a borrowing stream – if not regulated especially with the continent’s CSOs, this shall compound the vulnerability of the continent as a result of debt overburdening. Advocacy in and around this area is therefore very important at such a time.

- **Green growth and building back and forward better** – with the rough economic and health times, the African nations and governments through their finance and economic planning ministers are keen on building back better but for the African CSOs, it is important to probe in and ask the tough questions on green recovery plans and not only building back better but also building forward better.
• **Just transition** – with the current times, it is estimated that about 3 million jobs will be lost in the continent. Similarly, in some countries, economists now estimate slowed economic development by about 2 – 3%. While these can be addressed from the justice standpoint, it is important for the African CSOs to ensure that the restoration of the economies is done in a pathway of climate resilience and that the pathways are inclusive of proper plans for action including but not limited to the sectors of agriculture, health, infrastructure etc. and equally address the involvement of the African people and the alignment of the same transitions with the African Agenda 2063 and the global vision 2030.

At the end of the consultative workshop therefore, the Alliance shall deliver a strong statement to the ministers of finance of economic planning with a view of addressing the twin challenges of climate change and COVID – 19 not in isolation but with a combined effort while considering the discussions and outcomes of the CSOs convening.

**High Level Presentations on Actions by various stakeholders on Climate and COVID – 19 Crisis. Moderated by Mr. Eugene Nforngwa; Thematic Lead; Just Transition and Energy Access at PACJA**

**Addressing the twin challenge of Covid – 19 and Climate Change in the Continent; Actions by the AUC - Mrs. Leah Wanambwa – The African Union Commission Department of Climate Change, Biodiversity and Wildlife**

![Figure 2: Mrs. Leah Wanambwa – The African Union Commission Department of Climate Change, Biodiversity and Wildlife; presenting on the actions by AUC to fight the twin challenge of COVID - 19 and Climate Emergency. Photo Credits: PACJA](image-url)
Following an election by the commission to propel the response to environmental and climate change concerns alongside the prevailing pandemic, Mrs. Lucy highlighted the following additions to the current directorate of environment and climate change of the AUC:

- Agriculture development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment
- Climate Finance Unit
- Nature Based Solutions Unit
- Renewables and Just Transition Unit
- Cities Unit
- Biodiversity and Meteorology Units

While highlighting the newly established units, Mrs. Leah draw the attention of the Alliance to the climate finance blueprint and the continent’s green recovery plan for input to ensure that the two documents spoke the voice of the African CSOs.

**Addressing the twin challenge of Covid – 19 and Climate crisis in the Continent; impact of COVID – 19 on climate negotiation processes – Ambassador Hussein Alfa Seyni Nafo – the spokesperson of the African Group of Negotiators.**

Covid – 19 exposed the fragility of the global economies. However, while Africa is no near the death tolls in the global north, our economy has shrunk the most. This is partly as a result of the continents’ monetary inequality with the global north and partly as a result of other factors – including the debt burdens etc.
Since the fall in of Covid – 19, the negotiation process have been greatly hampered by technology and technical limitations. As we speak, the African continent still faces real energy and connectivity issues which have greatly seen a slowed pace in the negotiation processes in the continent. Negotiation is such environment – without the requisite infrastructure – has proven very challenging thereby hampering the capabilities of the AGN to adequately deliver.

Away from the infrastructure, the AGN; following the return of the United States of America to the Paris Agreement and in line with President Biden’s planned climate summit with 40 head of states; have a planned meeting with the USA group of negotiators to explore areas of working together especially as regards building back and forward better.

**Plenary session - Moderated by Mr. Eugene Nforngwa; Thematic Lead; Just Transition and Energy Access at PACJA**
The position of the African Group of Negotiators on locally led climate action and virtual conference of parties – Dr. Mithika Mwenda – PACJA ED and Prof. Shaddad

Responding to the question on locally led climate action for the implementation of the Nationally Determined Contributions, the AGN spokesperson sought the support of the African CSOs in ensuring that the actions are clearly spelt out in the Paris Agreement action pointers so as to facilitate inclusion of local communities in the implementation of NDCs.

On the procedural justice – the push to have a virtual conference of parties – the AGN spokesperson indicated that the African Group of Negotiators had already taken a stand that they will not support a virtual COP as it was an injustice to the African constituency.

Key decisions that might spill to the 27th Conference of Parties in Africa – Khulekani Magwaza and Malesi

Some of the foreseen key items to spill over to the 27th conference of parties for enhanced planning by CSOs included

- Article 6 decisions – markets and non-markets
- Transparency mechanisms – monitoring verification and reporting

Impacts of Covid – 19 on the implementation of the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) in the African Continent – a case study of Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Ivory Coast, South Africa, Gabon, Morocco, and Ghana – Presentation by Dr. Mithika Mwenda
- Although Covid 19 does not discriminate, there is no doubt that it is the poorest in the global south that will be impacted the most and especially economically and socially.
- This is compounded by the fact that it is the poorest people who are already bearing the brunt of climate crisis and the impacts of extreme weather events.
- The pandemic has exacerbated the already delicate situation in the African continent, already engulfed by a myriad of other challenges including, but not limited to, climate-induced droughts, floods, landslides.

Figure 5: Dr. Mithika Mwenda; PACJA’s Executive Director; presenting on the impact of Covid - 19 on the implementation of the African Countries NDCs following a partnership study done by the Alliances' DNP's and Glasgow University. Photo Credits: PACJA

Justification for the study on the impact of COVID-19 on the implementation of NDCs in Africa

- This pandemic is likely to shift the global and even regional focus from the climate crisis
- This study was intended to collect new evidence reflective of people’s experiences, feelings, emotions and personal insights on how they are dealing with the corona virus pandemic (while tackling the climate crisis) as well as to provide critical thinking on how some of the issues that emerge need to be considered in current and future planning of handling pandemics (and crisis) of this nature.
Initial findings of the study - Challenges and aspirations

A majority of respondents reported Covid-19 has had a significant negative impact on their organization’s focus and activities on climate action.

A large majority of respondents reported Covid-19 has had a significant negative impact on the resilience of local communities to climate impacts.

A majority of respondents reported climate action is a moderately to very important priority in their country's post-Covid-19 recovery plans.

A majority of respondents reported their country currently and should focus on adaptation and mitigation equally.

A majority of respondents reported Covid-19 will have a significant negative impact on climate policy and the NDC development process in their country.

A majority of respondents reported Covid-19 will have a significant negative affect on the availability, allocation, and delivery of climate aid and finance in their country.

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A majority of respondents reported Covid-19 will have a significant negative affect on regional cooperation in the area of climate action and NDCs development process.

A majority of respondents reported Covid-19 would have a significant negative affect on their government's and other development actors’ response to climate change and commitment to climate action.

A majority of respondents reported agriculture, energy, and forestry & land use are currently and should remain priorities in their country's NDCs.

A majority of respondents reported Covid-19 will have a significant negative affect on the availability, allocation, and delivery of climate aid and finance in their country.

The largest proportion of respondents reported industrialized countries' NDCs commitments were somewhat to not very ambitious.

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A majority of respondents reported Covid-19 would have a significant negative affect on their government’s and other development actors’ response to climate change and commitment to climate action.

Whereas: a majority of respondents reported their country’s NDCs commitments were moderately to very ambitious.

An overwhelming majority of respondents reported civil society and social movements should have an important role in guiding climate action post-Covid-19 in their country.

Figure 6: An illustration of the challenges and aspirations as obtained during the study on the impacts of COVID-19 on the implementation of the NDCs in Africa. Source: PACJA

Panel Discussion on the impact of COVID – 19 on the implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions in Africa – University of Glasgow, Meryne Warah, Pius Oko
Some of the challenges as mentioned by the panelists in regards to the impacts of COVID – 19 on the implementation of NDCs included but not limited to:

- Diversification of finances
- The already ongoing process of the updating of NDCs
- Prolonged lock downs slowing down the implementation and updating processes

**Covid – 19 recovery process in Africa – shaping the CSOs position paper to the African Ministers of Finance and Economic Planning – Moderated by Mr. Malesi**

**Setting priorities and finding the finances for sustaining the recovery processes**
Figure 8: Covid – 19 recovery process in Africa – shaping the CSOs position paper to the African Ministers of Finance and Economic Planning – Moderated by Mr. Malesi

The session generate the CSOs position to the African ministers of finance, economy and planning (see annex 1)

DAY 2

African digital inclusiveness in tackling the twin crisis – climate change and Covid 19; The case of young digital activists in advancing climate justice at the grass roots – Philbert; Session Moderated by Eugene

Key issues from the YDAs session

- Large Population - It is estimated that 75% of Africa’s 1.3Billion are under the age of 35 years.
- Unemployment That Leads to Vulnerability - 60% of Africa’s Total Unemployment is Youth, making them soft targets (Radicalization, Bad Politics)
- The Youth are a critical segment of the society and by 2030, the youth will form half of the global population.
- Regular training for the YDAs is crucial in sharpening their skills in digital advocacy
- The YDAs have a role in creating digital visibility for PACJA
- Real time messaging and analytics is crucial
- Youth can play an integral role in devolving climate change advocacy from National level to the grassroots.
Opportunities in the digital world

- **Time Zones** - The Internet space allows for round the clock activism which if properly planned, can achieve more over a short duration of time at a far lesser cost overheads. Digital activism also transcends boundaries as we in Kenya can always join up with our colleagues in DRC for example, on streamlined effort for wider reach and more impact.

- **Creative and Innovative Potential** - Despite the huge potential to be more innovative and creative, YDAs (Due to low capacity) are yet to embrace this as an opportunity to do more creative interviews and stories of impact.

- **Limitless Unbounded** - There are no boundaries to digital activism, unless those prescribed by professional conduct or ethics like hate speech or incitement. Otherwise, this is an opportunity to do more. This can be harnessed to drum up more support for climate action.

- **Direct Messaging** - Digital activism has the potential to broadcast or pass a message directly to the relevant stakeholders without the winding bureaucratic formations that leadership of our time has defined. Can YDAs embrace this?

- **Ready Audience & Real-time Messaging and Analytics** - Every person with access to internet and power, is sure to be a target of positive and transformative agenda setting. Digital activism also defines a host of other real-time messaging and planning (Facebook Live) that we are yet to embrace. Lastly, the trail of messaging or digital footprint makes it easier to determine the total reach of particular messages, and whether the intended recipients have actually received particular messages. These can and should be appreciated more (More Social Media Capacity Trainings)

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The role of the WASH sector in Covid-19 recovery process – Ronnie Murungu, Water Aid

**Key issues**

- It is estimated that 565 million people in Sub Saharan Africa have no access to sanitation, and 330 million people live without access to safe water. Taking this at global level 1 in 10 people don’t have clean water closer to their homes that’s 785 Million people and 1 in 4 don’t have a decent toilet at home, that’s about 2 billion people.

- Compounding the Covid19 is the fact that Sub-Saharan Africa has the most variable climate on the planet and populations already struggle with drought and uncertain rainfall. Climate change and the increased uncertainty it brings necessitates more robust, inclusive approaches to water, sanitation and hygiene policy, planning, design and implementation.

- The poorest and most marginalized have done the least to contribute towards climate change and yet they will be the most badly affected by it.

- For the poorest and marginalized to be resilient to the challenges and uncertainties that climate change brings, access to climate resilient, inclusive, sustainable WASH is essential. Thus, climate resilient WASH, alongside the provision of other basic services such as education and health, are key to adaptation efforts.

**Role of WASH in the recovery process**

The following a key issues to address;
✓ Support to water and sanitation utilities to ensure the continuity of water supplies, enhanced monitoring, staffing levels and spare parts.
✓ Providing technical assistance to governments to strengthen country systems including: (i) ‘agile’ service delivery mechanisms (ii) enhanced water quality assurance/monitoring; (iii) preparation of utility emergency plans (absenteeism may be a serious risk); (iv) safely managing wastewater and fecal sludge; (v) emptying latrines and safely disposing excreta; (vi) monitoring secondary impacts
✓ Ensuring WASH programming is fully prioritized and coordinated as part of the national COVID-19 coordination mechanism set-up.
✓ In coordination with Health Sector, capacities are increased to assure continuity of WASH services and improve IPC measures in Health care facilities (HCFs) to reduce and contamination from health facilities to communities, as well as respond to the water and sanitation service demand
✓ Hygiene promotion activities targeting households, collective vulnerable sites and public spaces are well aligned with RCCE/C4D strategies, are specific to the disease known transmission route and aim to reduce the exposure to the disease at home and in communities.
✓ Water, sanitation and hygiene services and products are made available for confined households or areas of high incidence with vulnerable groups, exposed collective sites and public spaces
✓ Ensure integration of WASH in NDCs with clear measurable indicators and budget. (example revised NDCs from the Gvt of Rwanda)
✓ Guard against deprioritization of Rural WASH needs against urban needs (WASH related interventions in response to Covid19 are predominantly urban however this doesn’t mean rural WASH needs and Vulnerabilities have shifted).
✓ Promote and scale up WASH related innovations developed during Covid19 Response. This in a way is correlated to enhancing youth participation in WASH. (Most innovations are by youth). (Quality control critical)
✓ Conducting assessments and use that data to inform operations. (At local, national, regional continental level). State of Hygiene is Southern Africa / State of Hygiene in West Africa.
✓ Continue promoting local industries and entrepreneurs who stepped to produce the much need WASH products when international logistics routes where interrupted. (Maintaining Quality critical)
ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: CSOs statement to the minister’s conference

PACJA’S COMMUNIQUE TO THE CONFERENCE OF AFRICA MINISTERS OF FINANCE, PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Pan African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA) organised a hybrid Conference (Physical and Virtual) on the Nexus between COVID19 and Climate Change on the side lines of the ongoing Fifty-Third Session of Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development in Addis Ababa Ethiopia on 21-22nd March 2021. This Conference brought together xx people physically and xx people virtually from xx different African countries.

Considering the fact the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development is hosted under the theme “Africa's Sustainable Industrialisation and Diversification in the Digital Era in the Context of Covid-19”, takes place when the African continent is experiencing a third wave of COVID-19 infections and that the virus has not spared any region of the world,

Considering the fact that Africa will be among the most affected regions in terms of economic losses, if not in terms of the number of infections and that by some estimates, the outbreak will wipe out at least 30 million jobs on the continent and push down growth in many countries by an average of 2-3%.

Considering the fact that the continent has already lost over US$29 Billion of GDP, as estimated by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

Mindful of the fact that the plight of the African continent is amplified by the fact that the continent is already struggling with other challenges such as drought, floods, malnutrition, water scarcity, energy deficiency which can be attributed to climate change.

Mindful of the fact that the travel restrictions imposed by government’s world over, African governments have lost significant revenue especially in hospitality industry and tourism and that most of them are therefore struggling to fund their budgets and in some cases to service their external debts.
Mindful of the fact that the continent often lacks adequate capacity to anticipate and manage such shocks that relate to climate change and the Covid-19 pandemic complicates the situation even more,

Concerned that the COVID-19 outbreak is serving as a climate change threat multiplier, worsening the drivers of vulnerability on the continent, particularly persistent poverty, unequal distribution of wealth, poor resource management, conflicts, and weak infrastructure,

Concerned that on 23 March 2020, African ministers of finance warned that Covid-19 had placed additional strain on already underfunded efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the continent’s Agenda 2063 targets,

Accenting the fact that it is imperative that strategies geared toward dealing with Covid-19 integrate climate change response strategies and that ministries of planning and finance are critical in shaping the climate change agenda and its integration in the Covid-19 response strategies.

Convinced that sustainable industrialization in Africa must be seen in the light of global and regional commitments by African government especially the Paris agreement and the NDCs submitted by countries.

Determined to rally our efforts on the continent toward a low carbon industrialization path so as to achieve climate change response goals in pursuit of economic development,

PACJA therefore calls upon the Africa Ministers of Finance and Economic Development to;

1) Fast track regional economic integration in the continent to enhance the bargaining power of the continent on the global stage

2) Develop a common approach in dealing with the international debt burden as the continent struggles to recover from Covid-19

3) Prioritise the implementation of NDCs and allocate enough funds from their national budgets to fund delivery of their NDC targets. African governments need sound fiscal policies that integrates with climate change polices and strategies in their countries

4) Ensure that ministries of planning operationalize national climate change action plans through financing and integrate the national plans with international commitments like the Paris agreement
5) Operationalize the provisions of Maputo declaration where countries committed to allocate 10% of their budgets to finance agriculture which is one of the main sectors that supports lives in the continent and which is one the sectors that is seriously hit by climate change.

6) Recognises the importance of technology in communication, however many Africans are limited in terms of virtual participation in meetings hence we demand for a physical COP.

7) As ministries of finance, planning and economy to play a more central role in climate change policy processes – given that the climate crisis requires a multisectoral approach and necessitates substantial technical and financial investments and cross sectorial planning.

8) Prioritise renewable energy research, innovation and technology in the recovery process.

9) Prioritise investments that support locally lead climate actions, including tax incentives to SME and community lead initiatives.

10) Call upon the ministers to prioritise a multipronged approach to resilience building so as to deal with the multiple stresses and vulnerabilities affecting the continent that Covid 19 has exposed.

11) Integrate WASH within the NDCs and Adaptation plans with clear and measurable indicators and budget allocations.

12) Finally to join the African Group of Negotiators, Africa Ministerial Conference on the Environment and the Committee of African Heads of States on Climate Change to advocate on a no virtual UNFCCC negotiations due to the challenging high tech access situation of the continent.