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Implications of the Paris Agreement on Africa

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The Implications of the Paris Agreement on Africa

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Abstract

In December 2015 the outcome of the 21st meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP 21) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Paris resulted in the Paris Agreement – an agreement which provides a pathway to limit global temperature rise to well below two degrees Celsius (20 C). United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki Moon described the agreement as "historic" and one that "promises to set the world on a new path to a low emissions, climate-resilient future".

The agreement has also been described variously as "the best outcome we could have hoped for", "remarkable", "a new chapter of hope" and "a monumental triumph for people and our planet". It charts a new course in the global effort to promote a paradigm shift towards low-emission and climate resilient development pathways and to enhance the resilience of developing countries to the impacts of climate change.

This policy brief gives a highlight of the key outcomes, Africa's expectations and priorities before COP21, and more importantly, the implications for Africa. Additionally, the brief identifies policy responses needed to promote the implementation of the Paris Agreement in Africa's major sectors, with particular emphasis on agriculture.

The Paris Agreement

In comparison to the Kyoto Protocol, the Paris Agreement reflects a mixed approach that combines bottom-up flexibility to achieve broad participation with top-down rules to promote accountability and ambition in climate change mitigation and adaptation. Unlike the Kyoto Protocol, the Paris Agreement places some level of responsibility on developing countries by promoting shared responsibility for tackling global climate change. To achieve this target, parties to the Paris Agreement submitted Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) indicating individual countries' unique plans to reduce emissions and adapt to climate change. All African countries, with the exception of Libya, commendably submitted their INDCs before the COP21 meeting. Countries' contributions included unconditional and quantifiable emission reduction targets that are achievable with international support. The agreement requires all countries to take action, while recognising their differing situations and circumstances.

As of April 2016, forty-seven African states have formally signed the Paris Agreement.

Key Outcomes of the Agreement

The agreement resulted in the following key outcomes:

- A general goal to limit global temperature increase to well below 20 C, while urging efforts to limit the increase to 1.50 C
- Binding commitments by all parties to make nationally determined contributions(NDCs), and to pursue domestic measures aimed at achieving them
- All countries are committed to report regularly on their emissions and the progress made in implementing and achieving their NDCs, and to undergo international reviews
- All countries are committed to submit new NDCs every five years, with the clear expectation that they will represent a progression beyond previous ones
- Binding obligations of developed countries under the UNFCCC to support the efforts of developing countries and encourage voluntary contributions by developing countries
- Mobilise international support of US$100 billion annually by 2020 to 2025, with a new, higher goal to be set for the period after 2025
- The Agreement extends a mechanism to address loss and damage resulting from climate change, which explicitly will not involve or provide a basis for any liability or compensation
- Parties that engage in international emissions trading are required to avoid “double counting”

The Paris Agreement covers all the crucial areas identified as essential for any landmark agreement on climate change: Mitigation, transparency system, global stock-take, adaptation, loss and damage, finance, technology transfer and capacity building.

Africa’s Priorities for COP 21

The International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in its 5th Assessment Report indicates that Africa is most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change due to its low adaptive capacity to respond economically, politically and geographically. These impacts are being exacerbated by a number of non-climatic factors, including prevailing poverty, chronic diseases, weak economic growth, and inadequate finance. Ahead of the Paris Climate Conference Africa’s priorities largely focused on adaptation mechanisms, capacity development, technology transfer and finance.

Adaptation

Article 7 of the Agreement establishes “the global goal on adaptation” to “protect people, livelihoods and ecosystems” with a unique focus on developing countries. It calls on countries to act to enhance adaptive capacity, strengthen resilience and reduce vulnerability to climate change. The Paris Agreement specifically mentions adaptive capacity and how individual countries intend to carry out measures such as resilience mechanisms, disaster risk management and innovation through relevant technologies. The Agreement binds parties to engage in an adaptation planning process, submitting and updating adaptation communications periodically. Each country is obliged to submit and update their adaptation efforts every five years. African countries need to demonstrate commitment by planning and implementing effective adaptation actions and reporting on their adaptation progress and needs.

The Paris climate agreement: key points

The historic pact, approved by 195 countries, will take effect from 2020

Temperatures

2100

- *Keep warming **"well below 2 degrees Celsius".** Continue all efforts to limit the rise in temperatures **to 1.5 degrees Celsius"***

Finance

2020-2025

- *Rich countries must provide **100 billion dollars from** 2020, as a "floor"*
- *Amount to be updated by 2025*

Differenciation

- *Developed countries **must continue to "take the lead"** in the reduction of greenhouse gases*
- *Developing nations are encouraged to "enhance their efforts" and move over time to cuts*

Emissions objectives

2050

- *Aim for greenhouse gases emissions to peak **"as soon as possible"***
- *From 2050: **rapid reductions to achieve a balance between emissions** from human activity and the amount that can be captured by "sinks"*

Burden-sharing

- ***Developed countries** must provide financial resources to help developing countries*
- *Other countries are invited to provide support **on a voluntary basis***

Review mechanism

2023

- ***A review every five years** First world review: **2023***
- *Each review will inform countries in "updating and enhancing" their pledges*

Climate damage

- *Vulnerable countries have won recognition of the need for "averting, minimising and addressing" losses suffered due to climate change*

Source: AFP, 2016

For Africa, the focus should be on the formulation and implementation of national adaptation plans, as well as solutions to address loss and damage. Critical areas for adaptation include irrigation and drought management, diversification of agricultural practices, a more resilient livestock sector, better saving and lending mechanisms for farmers, and better forest-conservation practices. Africa's adaptation strategies should follow a country-driven, gender responsive, participatory and fully transparent approach, taking into consideration vulnerable groups, communities, ecosystems and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) as a resilience mechanism to enable communities to adapt to climate challenges.

Mitigation

Currently, Africa accounts for the smallest share of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, but mitigation steps are necessary to minimise the GHG emissions of the continent as a whole. Most of these emissions are as a result of forest clearings for agriculture and timber. For example, as of 2010 it is estimated that in Ethiopia, livestock and crop cultivation contributes more than half of total emissions. The sector's share is further increased to around 85 percent if forestry is included.

Article 4 of the Paris Agreement focuses on sinks and reservoirs, calling on Parties to promote sustainable management, and to promote and cooperate in the conservation and enhancement, as appropriate, of sinks and reservoirs of all greenhouse gases not controlled by the Montreal Protocol. These include biomass, forests and oceans as well as other terrestrial, coastal and marine ecosystems.

Many African countries have signaled a strong commitment in their NDCs to adhere to the mitigation target. The Agreement is a catalyst to promote Africa's forest management towards emission reduction through REDD+ which will incentivise countries to limit deforestation. To this effect, Article 6 creates a "voluntary cooperation" to promote to and incentivise communities to participate in the mitigation of carbon emissions through afforestation.

Climate Change Financing

Financial commitments are essential for Africa's adaptation and mitigation efforts. Among the issues agreed upon in Paris, the need for financing both climate adaptation and mitigation probably remains the most important concern for Africa. Most of the plans for adaptation and mitigation in the African NDCs are overwhelmingly contingent on climate finance. In its Adaptation Gap Report, UNEP estimates that Africa's adaptation costs could rise to $50 billion per year to achieve an ideal scenario holding global warming below 2°C.

To this end, developing countries require appropriate financial flows to meet their mitigation and adaptation needs in line with their own national objectives.

Although the Agreement does not strengthen commitment by developed countries, but repeats their obligation to provide financial resources in continuation of existing UNFCCC obligations, Article 9 was agreed on the provision that developed country Parties shall provide financial resources to assist developing countries.

In line with this resolution, developed country Parties have committed to mobilise up to $100 billion annually by 2020, from public and private sources on a voluntary basis, for both adaptation and mitigation actions across developing countries. Mobilisation of climate finance should represent a progression beyond previous efforts, but no baseline is given to establish measurement of the progress made. The Agreement highlighted a wide variety of funding sources, instruments and channels such as the adaptation fund, Green Climate Fund, and other private and public sources that can be accessed to improve adaptation and mitigation measures in Africa.

The UNEP Adaptation Gap Report also notes that domestically, Africa could raise up to $3 billion annually for adaptation by 2020, but that as the challenges of climate change deepen, the funding gap will widen. However, capacity to access these funds could be an obstacle to the adaptation and mitigation efforts. African countries must demonstrate their ability to attract and manage climate finance for adaptation and mitigation plans. In this regard, Africa will require capacity building in the area of funding proposal writing skills to develop bankable proposals that will meet no objections in terms of meeting fund raising criteria

Technology Transfer and Capacity Building

Technology transfer and capacity building are essential to the success of the Agreement. Africa will require adequate technology and support to implement their NDCs in the move from adaptation planning to adaptation action. Article 10 of the Paris Agreement is devoted to the requirement of technology transfer from developed country to developing country Parties. To enable technology transfer, the Agreement establishes a mechanism to expedite research and development, and the export of technology to developing countries. Capacity-building, under Article 11, seeks to enhance the ability of developing countries to take effective climate change action by facilitating technology development, dissemination and deployment, access to climate finance, training, public awareness, and the transparent, timely and accurate communication of information. Barriers that prevent technology transfer to Africa need to be removed, including the appropriate treatment of intellectual property rights and removal of patents from certain climate-related technologies. International cooperation on climate-safe technologies and building capacity in the developing world will significantly help to address climate change.

General implications of the Paris Agreement for Africa's key sectors

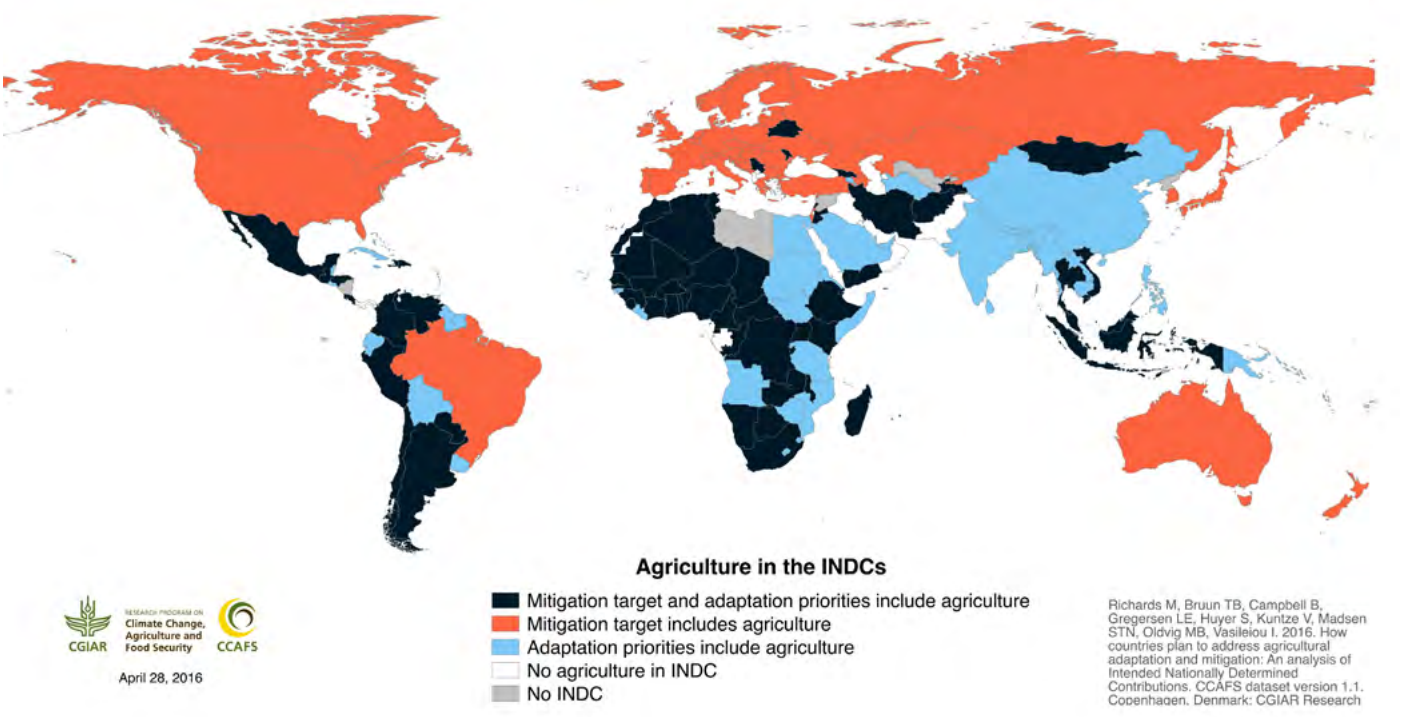
Energy Sector

The International Energy Agency (IEA) has identified Africa as the "epicentre of the global energy challenge and energy poverty" and estimates that the continent has more than 620 million people who lack access to electricity. A recent report by McKinsey global management consulting, notes that Africa has 13 percent of the world's population, but 48 percent of the share of the global population without access to electricity. The Paris Agreement identifies sustainable energy as a means of meeting Africa's acute access to energy challenge by acknowledging the need to promote universal access to sustainable energy in developing countries, particularly in Africa, through the enhanced deployment of renewable energy - an acknowledgement that is the only explicit reference to Africa in the Agreement. Instead of traditionally relying on centralised generation and largely fossil fuel based generation as a source of electricity, the Paris Agreement and various initiatives launched at COP21 provide impetus for Africa to choose another path to development, one in which decentralised generation and renewable energy will each play a central role.

African countries need to start by formulating policies that will incentivise investment in clean energy, off and mini-grids to expand energy access to vulnerable poor rural communities, spur rural industry, and create jobs without piling up carbon. It is worth noting that oil subsidies in Africa cost an estimated $50 billion every year, and 65 percent of subsidies in Africa benefit the richest 40 percent of households. Considering that this amount equals 5.7 percent of Africa's GDP and exceeds the region's health spend, then scrapping subsidies and redirecting funds to low carbon initiatives is a worthy policy move towards more economically inclusive and environmentally sustainable societies. Solar investment is an opportunity that governments in Africa can tap through relevant policy and attract appropriate investments to bridge this gap.

The Paris Agreement and African Agriculture

African Agriculture is and will be the mainstay of the economic growth and transformation of the continent as it employs about 65 percent of Africa's labor force and accounts for more than one-third of the continent's GDP according to African Union and World Bank statistics. Africa's vulnerability to climate change is largely linked to its high dependence on an agricultural sector predominated by rain fed systems. This makes it particularly vulnerable to changes in precipitation patterns. Climate change is expected to impact crop production in Africa through changes in temperature and the quantity and temporal distribution of water supply. The IPCC predicts that rising temperatures and unpredictable rain patterns will make it harder for farmers to grow certain key crops like wheat, rice and maize.



Source: CGIAR, Information Note, 2015

While many of the projected effects of climate change on agriculture are negative, it is possible that productivity could increase in some areas due to more favourable climatic conditions.

An analysis by the CGIAR Research Programme on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS) shows agriculture is discussed in 80 percent of the INDCs submitted by nearly 190 countries. This portrays the importance that countries attach to the agriculture sector and its influence on the climate debate. Agriculture will continue to feature prominently in upcoming discussions of the UNFCCC. The Subsidiary Body for Science and Technological Advice (SBSTA), an auxiliary body of the UNFCCC, has provided a platform for agriculture to be discussed during its meetings. SBSTA needs to ensure there are clear standards for comparing and assessing the agricultural components of national CSA strategies.

To this effect SBSTA 44 was held in May 2016 with a workshop on agriculture which focused on two elements of agriculture:

1) Identification of adaptation measures
2) Identification and assessment of agricultural practices and technologies that enhance productivity

The INDCs provide a platform for Africa to showcase how innovative measures can boost food production in a changing climate. In this regard, Africa must aim to increase productivity and sustainable production systems to achieve food self-sufficiency. In addition Africa needs to optimise the agro-sector by applying Ecosystem Based Adaptation Approaches (EBA) that enhance ecosystems to improve food security, incomes and job creation without further escalating greenhouse gases.

Article 4.1(e) of the UN Climate Change Convention calls on Parties to cooperate in preparing for adaptation to the impacts of climate change; develop and elaborate appropriate and integrated plans for coastal zone management, water resources and agriculture, and for the protection and rehabilitation of areas, particularly in Africa, affected by drought and desertification, as well as floods.

Despite the ground breaking success of the Paris Agreement, the lack of attention given to agriculture has proven a cause for concern for many African countries considering the catalytic role agriculture plays in the socio-economic development of the continent.

Policy Implications for Africa

Following the adoption of the Paris Agreement, the next logical step for Africa is to translate that momentum quickly into the agriculture sector where action is most needed. Real work will take place at local, national and landscape-specific strategies to tackle interwoven efficiency, adaptation, and mitigation challenges while promoting food security.

For Africa to be able to address the issues pertaining to agriculture and climate change, it is imperative to promote initiatives geared at improving adaptation, increasing food productivity and reducing green-house gas emissions from the sector. The African Union and the continent's negotiating bodies in the global climate change discussions have emphasised that adaptation to climate change remains a priority for the continent. For rain-fed farming systems, as in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa, one of the most important priorities is expanded access to irrigation, especially small-scale irrigation.

Also the SBSTA needs to ensure there are clear standards for comparing and assessing the agricultural components of national Climate change and Agriculture strategies. At the continental level, Goal 6 of the Malabo Declaration of 2014 on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods provide a vision for an African led response to the impact of climate change on the agriculture sector.

The Malabo Declaration has envisioned that by the year 2025, at least 30 percent of African farms, pastoral, and fisher households will be resilient to climate and weather related risks. It is therefore critical for African country partners to align policies and strategies to Malabo. National Agriculture Investment Plans which have been developed out of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) processes also need to mainstream climate change considerations.

Significantly, a number of programmes and initiatives are galvanising a catalytic effort to bring coordination and coherence to Africa's efforts to combat the effects of climate change on its agriculture sector. These include initiatives such as the NEPAD Climate Change and Agriculture Programme - driven by the NEPAD Agency with the overall aim of meeting the African Union's vision of supporting 25 million farming households to practice Climate Smart Agriculture by 2025.

Africa has not been able to adequately access all major funding opportunities related to climate change - primarily as a result of capacity restraints. The Green Climate Fund (GCF), which has identified climate-resilient agriculture as one of its five investment priorities, presents a great opportunity for Africa to access climate funds. It is therefore imperative for Africa to fully develop its capacity in terms of project preparation and fund absorption.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that the outcome of the Paris Agreement is a remarkable new chapter of hope for Africa in the climate change mitigation and adaptation discourse. Adaptation to climate change remains a priority for the continent and the Agreement has placed Africa at the pivot of adaptation and renewable energy deployment. The next step for Africa is to translate that momentum quickly into agriculture, energy and other critical sectors where action is most needed. In addition, there is a need for effective national strategies to tackle adaptation and mitigation challenges while promoting food security. African countries have to take responsibility for a long-term development strategy towards a low-carbon development path and enhancing their resilience to climate change.

Africa's plans for adaptation and mitigation in the NDCs are overwhelmingly contingent on climate finance, technology and capacity building. African countries must therefore tap into existing funding opportunities in adaptation and mitigation. The countries must strengthen their national capacities to effectively and efficiently plan for, access, manage and monitor international climate funds. Africa will also require adequate technology and capacity to implement their NDCs and support the move from adaptation planning to adaptation action.

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Glossary

- **Adaptation**

Adjustment in natural or human systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli or their effects, which moderates harm or exploits beneficial opportunities.

- **Adaptation Fund**

The Adaptation Fund was established to finance concrete adaptation projects and programmes in developing countries that are particularly vulnerable and are Parties to the Kyoto Protocol. The Fund is to be financed with a share of proceeds from Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) project activities and receive funds from other sources. It is operated by the Adaptation Fund Board.

- **Capacity building**

In the context of climate change, the process of developing the technical skills and institutional capability in developing countries and economies in transition to enable them to address effectively the causes and results of climate change.

- **Climate finance**

Climate finance involves flows of funds from developed to developing nations to help poorer countries to cut their emissions and adapt to climate change

- **Conference of the Parties (COP)**

The supreme body of the Convention: Currently meets once a year to review the Convention's progress. The word "conference" is not used here in the sense of "meeting" but rather of "association". The "Conference" meets in sessional periods, for example, the "fourth session of the Conference of the Parties."

- **Green Climate Fund (GCF)**

At COP 16 in Cancun in 2010, Governments established a Green Climate Fund as an operating entity of the financial mechanism of the Convention under Article 11. The GCF will support projects, programmes, policies and other activities in developing country Parties. The Fund will be governed by the GCF Board.

- **Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs)**

All countries that signed the UNFCCC were asked to publish their Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) in the lead up to the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference held in Paris, France in December 2015. Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) is a term used under the UNFCCC for reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

- **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)**

Established in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organization and the UN Environment Programme, the IPCC surveys world-wide scientific and technical literature and publishes assessment reports that are widely recognised as the most credible existing sources of information on climate change. The IPCC also works on methodologies and responds to specific requests from the Convention's subsidiary bodies. The IPCC is independent of the Convention.

- **Mitigation**

In the context of climate change, mitigation is human intervention to reduce the sources or enhance the sinks of greenhouse gases. Examples include using fossil fuels more efficiently for industrial processes or electricity generation, switching to solar energy or wind power, improving the insulation of buildings, and expanding forests and other "sinks" to remove greater amounts of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

- **Paris Agreement**

The Paris Agreement is an agreement within the framework of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) dealing with greenhouse gases emissions mitigation, adaptation and finance - starting in the year 2020.

- **REDD**

Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation

- **Technology transfer**

A broad set of processes covering the flows of know-how, experience and equipment for mitigating and adapting to climate change among different stakeholders.

- **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)**

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is an international environmental treaty negotiated at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro from 3 to 14 June 1992, then entered into force on 21 March 1994.

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