SHIFTING POWER QUARTERLY

A PUBLICATION OF **POWER SHIFT AFRICA**

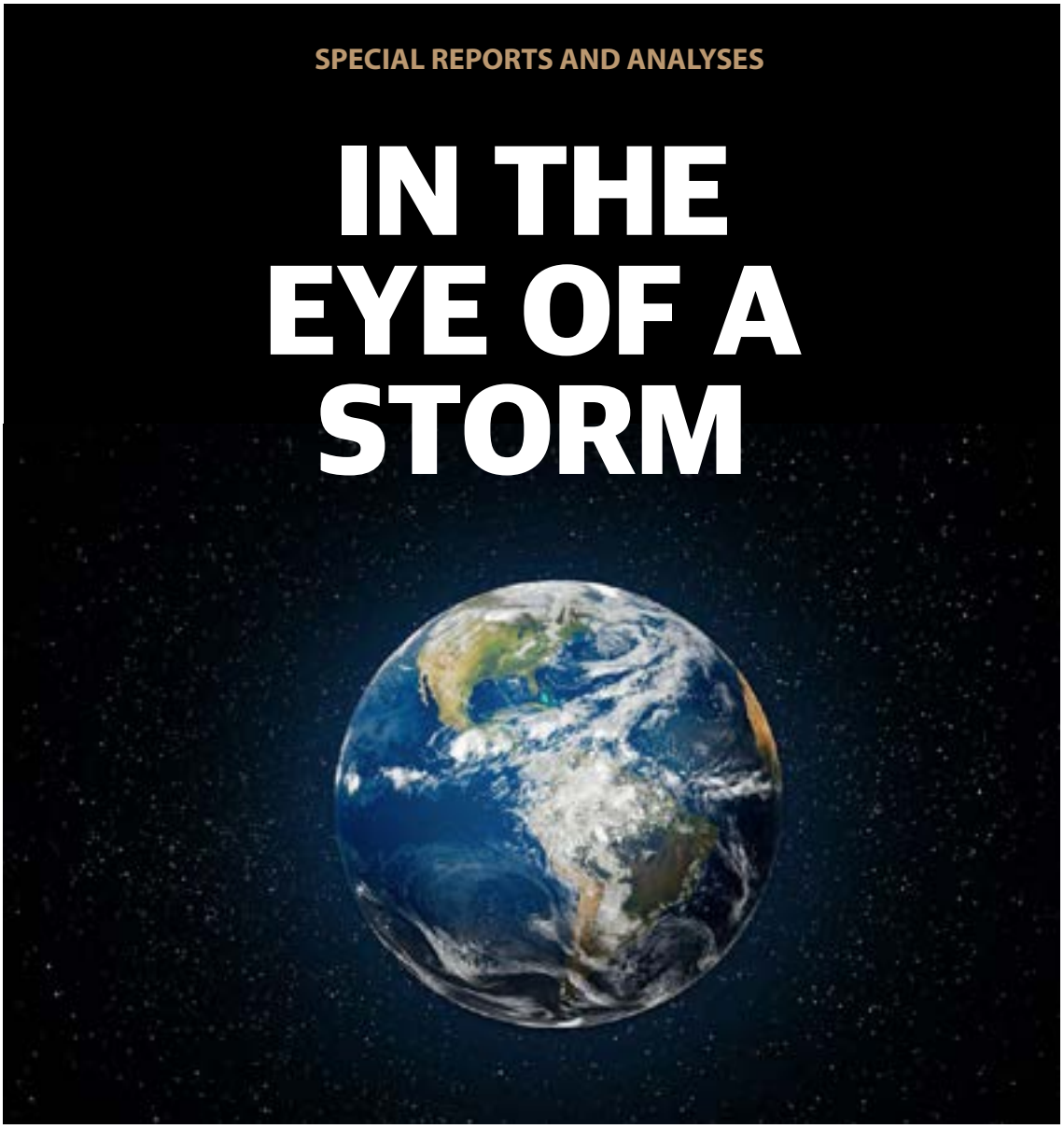
STREAMING NOW ON YouTube



SCAN THIS QR CODE TO WATCH
OUR MOZAMBIQUE DOCUMENTARY

SPECIAL REPORTS AND ANALYSES

IN THE EYE OF A STORM



We all knew our planet was being battered by extreme weather events, but we didn't know how badly off we all were as a result. In this special issue, our analysts are asking the hard questions on adaptation, fossil fuels, budget cuts, and how to reshape the African story

TOO HOT TO HANDLE: The 11 years between 2015 and 2025 are the hottest in recorded history, according to a new report by the World Meteorological Organization. We sort of felt that, didn't we? **Page 4&5**

ACTING UNBOTHERED: As the world hots up, the AfDB is sinking billions into a violent Mozambique fossil gas project. Surely, our friends in Abidjan can do better than this. **Page 6&7**

NOW WE MUST RETHINK FOOD: The quiet shift from maize to more resilient crops like sorghum and millet is not just an agronomic adjustment, but a cultural and economic transition that requires markets, policy support, and consumer acceptance to move in step. **Page 8&9**

yay or nay

WHERE THE WORLD MADE OR SHED CLIMATE PROGRESS

KENYA SCALING RENEWABLES: On February 6 this year, Kenya announced new geothermal and wind capacity expansions, reinforcing its position as a clean energy leader. With most of its electricity already renewable, Nairobi is continuing to invest in low-carbon growth rather than backtracking into fossil dependence.

UGANDA, TANZANIA DIG IN ON OIL PIPELINE: On January 22, Uganda and Tanzania reaffirmed progress on the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP), despite environmental opposition. The project continues to move forward, locking in long-term fossil fuel infrastructure in a region already highly vulnerable to climate impacts.

SOUTH AFRICA'S ENERGY TRANSITION FUNDING: South Africa in March secured additional international financing under its Just Energy Transition plan. The funding supports coal phase-down and renewable expansion, representing one of the most structured transition efforts on the continent, even if implementation remains complex.



DEFORESTATION PRESSURES IN CENTRAL AFRICA: Satellite data from February showed increased forest loss in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, driven by logging and agricultural expansion. Enforcement remains inconsistent, and protection commitments continue to struggle against economic pressures and weak governance structures.

SHIFTING POWER QUARTERLY is published by **POWER SHIFT AFRICA** in Nairobi, Kenya. While we have done our best to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the information contained in this publication, errors and omissions might occur. The views and opinions expressed in this magazine are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means without prior written permission from the publisher. Send corrections, complaints or compliments to **news@powershiftafrica.org**

BACK COVER PHOTO PUBLISHED UNDER LICENCE FROM creative commons



editor's note

A warm welcome to this new era of climate advocacy

'While rooted in African contexts, this magazine will engage with global debates, drawing connections and highlighting lessons across regions, and we hope it will serve as a meeting point where ideas are tested and new insights emerge'

MOHAMED ADOW

Friends in the climate movement and beyond, welcome to the inaugural issue of our new *Shifting Power Quarterly* magazine, dedicated to examining climate discourse in Africa and around the world. We launch this publication at a pivotal moment when the urgency of the climate crisis is matched only by the complexity of the conversations surrounding it. Across the continent and globally, climate narratives are shaping policy, influencing investment, and guiding public understanding. Yet too often, these narratives are fragmented, distorted, or disconnected from the lived realities they seek to represent. This magazine seeks to bridge that gap.

Our ambition, which we hope will become your ambition too, is to create a trusted space for timely, expert analysis that informs, challenges, and enriches climate discourse. In a fast-moving landscape, where decisions made today have consequences for decades, the value of informed interpretation cannot be overstated. Data alone is not enough, and neither are reports and policy papers. What we need, what this publication seeks to provide, is context, and that includes an understanding not only of what is happening, but why it matters, who it affects, and how responses can be shaped for greater impact.

Strategic communications has become a critical pillar in climate action. It is no longer peripheral, but central to the work. The way climate issues are framed influences political will, public engagement, and resource allocation. This magazine is part of a broader effort at Power Shift Africa to strengthen that strategic layer. By offering analysis that is both rigorous and accessible, we aim to support practitioners, policymakers, researchers, and advocates in making better-informed decisions and telling more effective stories.

A distinguishing feature of this publication is its commitment to amplifying the voices of programmes teams. Too often, insights from the frontline remain confined within reports or internal discussions, yet these teams possess a depth of knowledge that is both practical and nuanced. They understand the barriers communities face, the trade-offs policymakers must navigate, and the unintended consequences that can arise even from well-intentioned interventions. When programmes teams write about the issues they engage with daily, they bring an authenticity and clarity that is difficult to replicate.

This proximity to the subject matter strengthens analysis. It enables a grounded understanding of climate discourse, reflecting realities rather than abstractions. It also helps challenge dominant narratives that may overlook local contexts or oversimplify complex dynamics. By creating a platform for these voices, we aim to elevate underrepresented perspectives while fostering a culture of reflection and learning within the climate community.

This work is especially important in an era defined by misinformation and disinformation. Climate change has become a battleground for competing narratives, some rooted in evidence, others in ideology or vested interests. False or misleading information spreads rapidly, eroding trust and undermining progress. In this environment, credible, well-argued analysis is essential.

Our response is not simply to counter misinformation, but to build resilience against it. This means investing in clarity, transparency, and credibility. It means acknowledging uncertainty where it exists while standing firm on established evidence; engaging with complexity rather than avoiding it; and creating spaces where ideas can be debated constructively without descending into polarisation.

We also recognise that climate discourse does not exist in isolation. It intersects with development, equity, governance, and justice. For Africa, these intersections are profound. The continent contributes the least to global emissions yet faces some of the most severe impacts. At the same time, it is home to dynamic innovation, diverse knowledge systems, and emerging leadership in climate action. This magazine reflects that dual perspective. While rooted in African contexts, it engages with global debates, drawing connections and highlighting lessons across regions. We hope it will serve as a meeting point where ideas are tested and new insights emerge.

But this is not a one-way conversation. We invite our partners, collaborators, and like-minded individuals to do more than read. Engage with the ideas, challenge assumptions, share experiences, and contribute your analyses. Whether you work in policy, research, communications, or implementation, your perspective matters. Write to us at *news@powershiftafrica.org*.



As we begin this journey, we know this is only the start. Each issue will deepen the conversation and expand the network of voices involved. Thank you for being part of this inaugural moment. We look forward to shaping a more informed, resilient, and effective climate discourse together.

the team

Mohamed Adow Executive Director **Fatuma Hussein** Programmes Director **Bernard Mwinzi** Head of Media and Strategic Communications **Amy Gilian Thorpe** Programmes Manager **Amos Wemanya** Senior Climate Advisor **Karabo Mokgonyana** Campaigns and Energy Advisor **Kudakwashe Manjonjo** Just Transition Advisor **Saada Mohamed** Finance Advisor **Fredrick Otieno** Project Associate **Joe Ware** International Communications Lead **Patience Agyekum** Climate Adaptation and Campaigns Officer **James Kahongeh** Media and Communications Lead **Thandile Zonke** Energy Campaigner **Christian Hounkannou** Energy Coordinator **Mercy John** Climate Finance Fellow **Meshack Mboya** Legal and Advocacy Fellow

POWER BRIEFS

EXTREME HEAT SIGNALS ESCALATING CLIMATE CRISIS
A record-breaking March heatwave across the western United States has been linked directly to human-driven climate change, with scientists saying such extremes would be "virtually impossible" otherwise. Temperatures surged far above normal, affecting over 140 cities and raising urgent concerns about accelerating global warming and preparedness.

DEADLY FLOODS PROVE AFRICA'S CLIMATE RISKS
Severe flooding in Kenya in early March 2026 killed dozens and displaced over 100,000 people after intense rainfall overwhelmed infrastructure. The disaster demonstrates Africa's growing exposure to climate extremes and the urgent need for better urban planning, early warning systems, and climate resilience strategies.

OCEAN TEMPERATURES HIT ALARMING NEW HIGHS
Global ocean temperatures have reached unprecedented levels, alarming scientists and intensifying fears about widespread environmental disruption. Oceans absorb over 90% of excess heat from greenhouse gas emissions, making them a critical indicator of climate change. Rising temperatures are already triggering mass coral bleaching, disrupting marine biodiversity, and fueling more intense hurricanes and cyclones. Warmer waters also contribute to thermal expansion, accelerating sea level rise and threatening coastal communities worldwide. Experts warn that without rapid and sustained reductions in emissions, these trends will worsen. **(See more in the main story, right)**

the big issue

2015-2025 the hottest 11 years in history

Reacting to damning report by the World Meteorological Organization, UN secretary-general Antonio Guterres says "when history repeats itself 11 times, it is no longer a coincidence. It is a call to act"



POWERFACTS

HEALTH RISKS INTENSIFY

The report also examines how climate change is affecting health outcomes. Rising temperatures and shifting rainfall patterns are altering the spread of diseases such as dengue fever, now considered the fastest-growing mosquito-borne disease globally. Heat stress is another growing concern. More than one-third of the global workforce faces exposure to dangerous heat levels each year, especially in outdoor sectors like agriculture and construction. In African cities, where urban populations are expanding rapidly, heat exposure is becoming more severe, particularly in areas with limited infrastructure and access to cooling.

The Earth's climate system has moved further out of balance than at any point in modern observations, driven by rising greenhouse gas concentrations that continue to heat the atmosphere, warm the oceans and melt ice, according to a new report from the World Meteorological Organization.

The agency's *State of the Global Climate 2025 r*eport finds that the pace and scale of change over the past few decades are without precedent in the observational record, and that many of the effects will persist for hundreds to thousands of years.

"The State of the Global Climate is in a state of emergency," said United Nations secretary-general António Guterres. "Planet Earth is being pushed beyond its limits. Every key climate indicator is flashing red."

The report, released on World Meteorological Day, confirms that the period from 2015 to 2025 represents the 11 hottest years ever recorded. The year 2025 ranks among the top three warmest years, with global temperatures about 1.43°C above the 1850–1900 baseline.

"Humanity has just endured the 11 hottest years on record. When history repeats itself 11 times, it is no longer a coincidence. It is a call to act," Guterres said.

For the first time, the report includes the Earth's energy imbalance as a central measure of climate change. This imbalance reflects the difference between incoming solar radiation and the heat that escapes back into space.That gap has widened steadily since records began in 1960 and reached a new peak in 2025.

"Scientific advances have improved our understanding of the Earth's energy imbalance and of the reality facing our planet and our climate right now," said Celeste Saulo, secretary-general of the WMO. "Human activities are increasingly disrupting the natural equilibrium and we will live with these consequences for hundreds and thousands of years."

More than 90 percent of the excess heat trapped by greenhouse gases is stored in the ocean, and oover the past two decades, the ocean has absorbed heat equivalent to about 18 times the world's annual human energy use each year. Indeed, ocean heat content reached another record level in 2025, continuing a trend in which each of the past nine years has set a new high.

The consequences are already visible across the planet. Marine heatwaves affected nearly 90 percent of the ocean surface during 2025, contributing to ecosystem stress, coral bleaching and shifts in fish populations. Warmer oceans also provide more energy for storms.

At the same time, ice continues to decline. Arctic sea ice extent was at or near its lowest level on record, while Antarctic sea ice ranked among the lowest ever observed. Glaciers have continued to lose mass, with some of the largest losses recorded in recent years.

These changes are feeding rising sea levels. Global mean sea level in 2025 remained near record highs, around 11 centimetres above 1993 levels, with the rate of increase accelerating in the past decade. For African countries with long coastlines, the risks are immediate. In Nigeria, coastal flooding and erosion are affecting communities and infrastructure, while in Mozambique storm surges linked to tropical cyclones are becoming more damaging as sea levels rise.

Extreme weather events in 2025 affected millions of people and caused billions of dollars in losses worldwide. In Africa, these events are increasingly interconnected with food systems, displacement and livelihoods. In the Horn of Africa, for instance, repeated drought conditions have strained agriculture and water supplies in countries such as Somalia and Ethiopia, while in southern Africa cycles of drought followed by intense rainfall have disrupted farming seasons and damaged infrastructure.

Flooding has also intensified in parts of East Africa. In Kenya, heavy rains in recent seasons have destroyed crops and displaced communities, compounding earlier drought impacts. Flash floods in the capital, Nairobi, in March caused widespread damage, killing more than 60 and sweeping away infrastructure.

The report describes how these overlapping shocks reduce the ability of communities to recover, particularly in regions already facing economic or political challenges. Irregular rainfall, higher temperatures and more frequent extreme events are reducing agricultural yields and increasing the risk of crop failure. In several African countries, this has translated into rising food insecurity.

fyi

Many of the changes described in the report will continue even if emissions are reduced. Ocean warming, sea-level rise and acidification operate on long timescales. The ocean has absorbed roughly 29 percent of carbon dioxide emissions over the past decade, leading to chemical changes that affect marine ecosystems and fisheries.

the watchdog

BY CHRISTIAN HOUNKANNOU AND KARABO MOKGONYANA

The **AfDB** is sinking billions into a violent Mozambique fossil gas project; it surely can do better than this

The African Development Bank (AfDB) likes to present itself as the champion of Africa's sustainable future, but its growing financial support for large liquefied natural gas (LNG) projects in Mozambique tells a different story; one that risks deepening local fragility, undermining climate commitments, and locking an already vulnerable country into a risky fossil-fuel path.

Since 2020, the AfDB has put more than US$550 million into LNG developments in Mozambique, including a recent US$150 million stake in the Coral North Floating LNG project. For a bank that has pledged to align its investments with the Paris Agreement, this direction is deeply concerning.

Cabo Delgado, the heart of Mozambique's LNG boom, has suffered a violent insurgency since 2017. At least 6,257 people have been killed, including more than 2,600 civilians. Over 1.1 million people have been displaced from their homes, and in 2021 Afungi, one of the flagship LNG projects, was forced to halt operations after deadly attacks.



While vast gas reserves in the region promised economic transformation, local communities have faced disruption rather than opportunity. There have been growing concerns over land dispossession, loss of livelihoods, limited access to jobs, and exclusion from the benefits linked to LNG projects.

At the same time, the expansion of LNG projects has been accompanied by increased militarisation to secure energy infrastructure. This has reshaped local dynamics, sometimes intensifying tensions between communities, the state, and private actors, particularly in contexts where concerns about human rights abuses and lack of accountability have been raised

This is not the environment for a megaproject sold as a development engine. Large extractive projects in fragile regions like Cabo Delgado often inflame tensions rather than calm them. Communities lose access to land and natural resources, livelihoods are disrupted, benefits are uneven, and grievances deepen. For a development bank, this should trigger the highest level of caution. In Cabo Delgado, the overlap between resource extraction, weak governance, and social exclusion has created conditions where conflict can deepen rather than be resolved

Yet so far, there is little publicly available evidence showing that the AfDB has fully assessed the conflict risks or ensured that project security operations respect human rights. Without transparency and community engagement, these projects risk worsening instability rather than supporting peace.

A climate time bomb

Mozambique's contribution to global emissions is tiny, but it sits on the frontlines of climate change, battered by cyclones, floods, and rising food insecurity year after year.

Against this backdrop, the emissions from Mozambique's LNG projects stand in stark contrast. Over their lifetime, they could generate as much as 4.5 gigatons of carbon dioxide, which would be a disaster for a world trying to limit warming to 1.5°C. Some analyses suggest that fully exploiting the gas reserves could eat up a significant slice of the remaining global carbon budget.

How does this square with AfDB's climate commitments? It doesn't. Financing fossil fuel infrastructure that will operate for decades is incompatible with a low-carbon future. This is particularly concerning as the world urgently needs to cut emissions. It also exposes Mozambique to stranded asset risks as global gas demand begins to plateau.

The environmental risks are immediate. The LNG projects sit along a coastline that sustains thousands of families through fishing and small-scale marine economies. Construction, dredging, and increased ship traffic threaten habitats, biodiversity, and local livelihoods.

But the public can't properly assess these risks, because many of the key environmental and social studies have not been fully disclosed. When communities are left in the dark, they cannot protect their rights, negotiate fair compensation, or understand the full consequences of the changes coming their way.

Supporters of the LNG projects often tout massive revenue projections of US$35 billion over decades, along with thousands of jobs. But experience from other resource-rich African countries paints a more complicated picture.

Extractive industries often create few long-term jobs, benefit elites over local communities, and leave countries vulnerable to global price swings. Most benefits flow to multinational companies and political elites, not the communities living near the projects. Meanwhile, investment in LNG can crowd out funding for renewable energy and clean cooking solutions that would directly improve lives in the short term.

Mozambique's future should not be reduced to a gamble on volatile fossil fuel markets.

The AfDB can and must do better

None of these concerns are abstract. They touch on the Bank's own policies on safeguards, conflict sensitivity, climate alignment, and inclusive development. The issue here is not opposition to development, but insisting on development that is sustainable, transparent, and just.

Before AfDB pushes ahead with more LNG financing, it should release all conflict and environmental risk assessments; engage in transparent and inclusive consultations with affected communities; assess credible alternatives, including renewable energy pathways; and demonstrate alignment with a 1.5°C-compatible future. These are basic standards for responsible development finance.

Mozambique deserves a path that brings stability, resilience, and prosperity. Africa deserves institutions that lead the continent into a clean energy future, not deeper into fossil dependence. The AfDB still has a choice: to lead Africa toward a just and sustainable energy future, or to reinforce the very systems that undermine it.

Christian Hounkannou is an Energy Coordinator and Karabo Mokgonyana Campaigns and Energy Advisor at Power Shift Africa

POWERFACTS

NUMBERS DON'T LIE: UNTOLD STORY OF THE DIRTY CASH

$550m

Since 2020, the AfDB has put more than **$550 million** into LNG developments in Mozambique, including a recent **$150 million** stake in the Coral North Floating LNG project. For a bank that has pledged to align its investments with the Paris Agreement, this direction is deeply concerning.

6,257

Cabo Delgado, the heart of Mozambique's LNG boom, has suffered a violent insurgency since 2017. At least **6,257** people have been killed, including more than **2,600** civilians. Over **1.1 millio**n people have been displaced from their homes, and in 2021 Afungi, one of the flagship LNG projects, was forced to halt operations after deadly attacks.

$35bn?

Supporters of the LNG projects often tout massive revenue projections of **$35 billion** over decades, along with thousands of jobs. But experience from other resource-rich African countries paints a more complicated picture. Extractive industries often create few long-term jobs, benefit elites over local communities, and leave countries vulnerable to global price swings.



adaptation

In this crisis lies a chance to reset our food systems

BY AMOS WEMANYA

The quiet shift from maize to more resilient crops like sorghum and millet is not just an agronomic adjustment, but a cultural and economic transition that requires markets, policy support, and consumer acceptance to move in step



Across Africa, seasons have stopped behaving like seasons. Instead, they arrive as extremes, either too little or far too much, turning agriculture into a high-stakes gamble. As of March this year, this is no longer a warning whispered in policy rooms, but a lived reality unfolding from the drylands of northern Kenya to the floodplains of Mozambique.

In northern Kenya, the earth has hardened into something almost metallic. Counties like Mandera, Wajir and Marsabit are caught in a deepening drought after consecutive failed rains. Pastoralist systems, once finely tuned to variability, are now being pushed beyond their limits. Livestock, the living banks of these communities, are collapsing. Hunger has tightened its grip on over three million people.

Yet, travel south and west within the same country, and the story flips violently. In Nairobi and Kisumu, early rains in March did not nourish; they overwhelmed. Flash floods tore through homes and infrastructure, displacing families and claiming lives. What should have been relief from drought instead became another layer of crisis.

Further south, in Mozambique, the land has been swallowed in slow motion. Months of relentless rain have submerged over 100,000 hectares of farmland. This is the double blow of drought and flood, not as opposites, but as twins.

Agriculture has always depended on rhythm, on the quiet contract between land and sky What is breaking now is not just crops, but predictability itself. This volatility is eroding the very foundation of food systems. When drought kills livestock in one region and floods destroy crops in another, national buffers vanish. Markets tighten, prices spike, humanitarian needs expand, and governments are forced into a cycle of response rather than strategy.

In this sense, climate extremes are not just ecological shocks, but systemic catastrophes destabilising economies, deepening inequality and amplifying displacement.

For years, adaptation has been treated like a toolbox: irrigation here, drought-resistant seeds there. But what is unfolding demands something more structural. Something closer to redesign than repair.

Resilient infrastructure is no longer optional. Water harvesting systems, irrigation networks, and strategic fodder reserves must become as fundamental as roads. Not as projects, but as public goods. Crop systems, too, must evolve. The quiet shift from maize to more resilient crops like sorghum and millet is not just an agronomic adjustment, but a cultural and economic transition that requires markets, policy support, and consumer acceptance to move in step.

And, perhaps most critically, early warning systems must evolve into early action systems. Information alone is not enough. It must trigger financing, logistics, and coordinated response across borders. If climate risk does not respect national boundaries, our resilience systems cannot afford to either.

Economics of survival

Yet, even as the need for adaptation deepens, the financial architecture supporting it remains profoundly misaligned. Africa requires between $53 billion and $100 billion annually for adaptation. What it receives is a fraction of that, roughly $11 billion, and more than half of this comes as loans.

Loans for survival are a dangerous paradox. They turn resilience into debt and crises into liabilities. For countries already navigating fiscal pressure, this model is as insufficient as it is counterproductive. What is needed is a financial reset. A shift that recognises adaptation as a global public good, not a national burden.

Against this backdrop, the fund responding to loss and damage offers a flicker of possibility. In 2026, its initial operations, though modest at around $250 million, mark an important shift. For countries like Kenya and Mozambique, this is a test of whether the global system can respond to irreversible climate impacts with speed and fairness.

But here lies the tension: the scale of need dwarfs the scale of response. If the fund is to matter, it cannot exist as a symbolic pool of recovery finance. It must be woven into a broader architecture, linked to debt relief, humanitarian response, and long-term resilience building. Otherwise, it risks becoming a bucket in a storm.There is a tendency to frame moments like this as tragedy. And they are. But they are also thresholds.

Africa's agricultural crisis is not just a story of vulnerability, but also of forced transformation. The old model — rain-fed, maize-dependent, externally financed — no longer holds. What replaces it must be bolder, such as decentralised energy-powered irrigation, climate-resilient value chains, regional food systems that distribute risk rather than concentrate it. In many ways, the seeds of this future already exist. What is missing is alignment between policy and finance, between national priorities and global commitments, and between urgency and action.

Because if there is one lesson from this double blow, it is this: The climate crisis does not arrive politely, one disaster at a time. It arrives all at once, from different directions, testing not just our systems but our imagination too.

Should we respond by patching the cracks… or by rebuilding the foundation entirely?

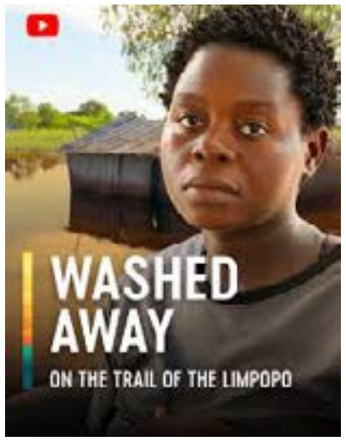
POWER DOCUMENTARY

YOU HAVE READ IT, NOW WATCH IT ON

YouTube

In this article, Mr Amos Wamenya, our Senior Adapation Advisor, points us "further south" to Mozambique, arguing that "the land has been swallowed in slow motion by recent floods. "Months of relentless rain have submerged over 100,000 hectares of farmland," he continues, adding that "this is the double blow of drought and flood, not as opposites, but as twins". The southern African country, like many Global South territories, is caught in the snare of a worsening climatic catastrophe. In February this year, a team of Power Shift Africa producers spent time in Mozambique and witnessed first-hand the devastation caused by flood waters in the southern part of the country. The documentary from this exclusive production is now **LIVE** on our YouTube channel. Watch it to follow our examination of the tragedy of a region suffering the consequences of a crisis it did not cause, and to hear our answer to the question of the moral obligations enshrined in the principle of Loss and Damage.

SCAN THIS QR CODE TO WATCH
'WASHED AWAY: ON THE TRAIL OF THE LIMPOPO'



power briefing

TIFI PROGRAMME

CIVIL SOCIETY AND LEGISLATORS MEET TO COORDINATE ADVOCACY FOR SADC INTEGRATION

JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA; MARCH 18–20, 2026: Civil society organisations, regional parliamentary representatives and policy analysts met here to coordinate advocacy efforts aimed at advancing Southern African Development Community (SADC) integration through the ratification of key regional protocols on trade, industry, mining and the movement of people.

The three-day SADC Trade, Industry, Finance and Investment (TIFI) Programme kick-off meeting was convened by the SADC Parliamentary Forum in partnership with the Economic Justice Network (EJN). It brought together participants from organisations including Power Shift Africa, AFRODAD, SAYoF, The Kele Foundation, the Youth Tax Justice Network and the Zambia Institute for Policy Analysis and Research, alongside representatives of the parliamentary forum.

The discussions focused on strengthening civil society engagement with SADC structures and identifying entry points to influence policy processes ahead of the SADC Summit scheduled for August 2026. A central priority was supporting the ratification of regional protocols, particularly the Protocol on Industry, which is viewed as a key instrument for coordinating industrial policy and supporting the development of transition minerals value chains.

Participants examined structural barriers to regional trade and industrialisation. These included fragmented regulatory frameworks across member states, the persistence of non-tariff barriers, and inconsistencies in sanitary and phytosanitary standards that affect cross-border trade. Concerns were also raised about individual countries entering bilateral agreements with external partners, a practice participants argued could weaken collective bargaining power within the region.

Power Shift Africa contributed to the discussions by outlining the importance of SADC protocols and identifying countries that have yet to ratify the Protocol on Industry, including South Africa, Lesotho, Eswatini, Comoros, Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of Congo. A draft workplan was developed during the meeting, outlining priorities such as producing knowledge materials for policymakers, and building fundraising capacity.

FORESTS

DELEGATES IN BID TO REPLENISH FUNDING FOR CONGO BASIN

NAIROBI, KENYA; JAN. 27–29, 2026: Representatives of Congo Basin countries, regional institutions and development partners met in Nairobi to prepare for a high-level donors' roundtable aimed at mobilising financing for the Congo Basin Blue Fund Investment Plan, a regional initiative focused on climate resilience, ecosystem protection and sustainable development.

The hybrid preparatory meeting, convened by the Congo Basin Climate Commission (CCBC) and the Congo Basin Blue Fund (F2BC) with support from the African Development Bank-linked Development Bank of Central African States (BDEAC), brought together focal points and finance experts from across the region, alongside observers from partner institutions and civil society organisations.

Participants reviewed progress made since earlier technical meetings held in Brazzaville in late 2025 and a pre-roundtable session during COP30 in Belém, Brazil. The Nairobi meeting served as a coordination step ahead of the Donors' Round Table scheduled for May 26, 2026, in Brazzaville on the sidelines of the African Development Bank Group Annual Meetings.

Discussions focused on preparing project pipelines from member states and aligning them with the Blue Fund's investment priorities. Officials stressed the importance of feasibility studies in strengthening project proposals, noting that technical soundness and financial viability will be key factors in securing donor support. The meeting also reviewed draft governance frameworks for the Blue Fund, including proposed rules of procedure for its various committees and governing bodies.

Civil society and regional organisations, including representatives from Central African and East African basin bodies, participated in the discussions, reflecting the cross-border nature of the Congo Basin and its shared governance challenges.

The meeting concluded with agreement on next steps, including further refinement of project proposals, circulation of draft documents to member states.

NEGOTIATIONS

Antwi invites AGN to Accra as tenure takes shape amid shifts



Ghana's climate negotiator, Dr Antwi-Boasiako Amoah, in January assumed the chairmanship of the African Group of Negotiators (AGN), stepping into the role at a moment of mounting geopolitical strain and uncertainty around global climate cooperation.

As one of Ghana's leading voices in international climate diplomacy, Dr Amoah brings experience from years of engagement in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process, where he has worked on adaptation, transparency and climate governance. His appointment places him at the forefront of coordinating Africa's common position in global climate negotiations.

As part of the groundlaying of his tenure, he has called for an AGN coordination meeting in Accra at the start of April. The meeting is expected to bring together negotiators from across the continent to align priorities ahead of key UNFCCC sessions later in the year, including discussions on climate finance, adaptation and the global stocktake.

Antwi, as many fondly refer to him, succeeds Tanzania's Richard Muyungi, who led the AGN through a period focused on elevating adaptation and resilience on the global agenda, particularly in the lead-up to COP30. Before him, Amb Ali Mohamed of Kenya had used his tenure to mount a strong push on climate finance and the operationalisation of loss and damage funding arrangements.

Antwi's leadership begins at a time when the multilateral system underpinning climate negotiations faces increasing pressure. Rising geopolitical tensions, shifting alliances and competing economic priorities have complicated consensus-building within the UNFCCC framework, which relies on cooperation and collective decision-making.

Observers say the Accra meeting will be an early test of his ability to consolidate Africa's negotiating bloc amid these challenges. With climate impacts intensifying across the continent, the AGN is expected to push for stronger commitments on finance, technology transfer and adaptation support.

INDUSTRIALISATION

EXPLORING GREEN AMMONIA AND COLD CHAIN INFRASTRUCTURE ACCROSS AFRICA

NAIROBI, KENYA; FEB. 19–20, 2026: A workshop convened by the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) and the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) brought together governments, financiers, private sector actors and development partners to explore investment pathways in green ammonia, fertilisers and cold chain infrastructure across Africa.

The two-day meeting focused on identifying practical partnerships to support green industrialisation, improve food security and strengthen regional trade systems, particularly along the Northern Corridor linking East African economies.

On green ammonia, participants discussed the potential to scale fertiliser production using renewable energy, positioning Kenya as an emerging hub for green hydrogen-based solutions. The approach is intended to reduce emissions associated with conventional fertiliser production while addressing low usage across the continent, which averages around 17 kilogrammes per hectare compared to significantly higher global levels.

However, participants also raised concerns about feasibility, particularly high electricity costs. While Kenya's grid is largely powered by renewable energy, electricity prices remain above levels considered competitive for large-scale green ammonia production. Discussions noted that viable large plants would require significantly lower power costs.

MINERALS

BE RESPONSIBLE, INDABA TELLS MINING COMPANIES

CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA; FEB. 9–12, 2026: The Mining Indaba, a major annual industry gathering with high attendance costs, brought together governments, financiers and mining companies. Development finance institutions outlined strategies aimed at expanding investment in Africa's minerals sector while promoting "responsible development." At a World Bank side event, officials discussed an emerging metals and minerals strategy and ongoing work linked to the Lobito Corridor, spanning Angola, Zambia and Namibia, with associated mapping and infrastructure planning. The institution indicated that it has already mobilised about $1 billion for the corridor and plans to scale up mining-related investment over the coming years.

The African Development Bank (AfDB) presented initiatives, including the Africa Guarantee Facility and proposals to support resource-backed financing models, intended to improve aggregation of mineral supply and ease access to capital for large-scale projects.

Other development partners, including the International Finance Corporation and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, described distinct roles in the financing ecosystem, ranging from early-stage mining support to long-term equity investments through commercial intermediaries.

A recurring theme was the push to move beyond raw extraction toward integrated mineral value chains. The Simandou iron ore project in Guinea featured prominently, described as a public–private partnership involving the Guinean government, Rio Tinto and Chinese partners, alongside plans for a multi-use rail system intended to serve both mining and agriculture. The project is valued at around $12 billion and includes government equity participation.

opinion & analysis



BY MOHAMED ADOW

Folks, Middle East turmoil is Africa's wake-up call on oil dependence

This is a reminder that fossil fuels are entwined with geopolitics, economic instability and environmental risk, thus, for Africa, the path forward is to invest in renewable energy and electrification

The ongoing conflict in the Middle East, pitting Israel and the US on one hand and Iran on the other, is a stark warning to Africa about the vulnerability of economies tied to fossil fuels. This illegal act of aggression, waged by two reckless governments who care not about the bloodshed they cause or the instability they trigger, is going to have far-reaching political, security and economic consequences across the globe.

Under the United Nations Charter, the use of force by one state against another is strictly prohibited unless authorised by the UN Security Council or carried out in clear self-defense after an armed attack. That was clearly not the case here, which explains why legal experts have described the strikes by the US and Israel as "manifestly illegal" as they undercut the very norms that sustain international peace.

The conflict has once again injected profound instability into global oil markets, with prices surging and supply fears rippling through the world economy. For Africa, these tremors are not distant rumblings; they expose a fundamental risk embedded by being tied to fossil fuels.

The conflict has disrupted oil shipments, particularly through the Strait of Hormuz, a maritime chokepoint through which roughly 20 per cent of the world's oil transits each day. In the immediate aftermath, tanker traffic plummeted as shipping companies anchored vessels outside the strait and war-risk insurance premiums spiked. The oil price jumped by double-digit percentages, and analysts warn prices could head toward $100 per barrel if the turmoil persists.

The irony is stark. A region thousands of miles away can so abruptly affect the cost of fuel which African businesses and households depend on. This volatility translates into higher transport costs, inflation, and constrained fiscal space for governments already juggling debt, development goals, and energy access challenges.

Africa's move away from fossil fuels has often been framed principally through the lens of climate urgency, and rightly so. Our continent is heating faster than the global average; drought, floods and food insecurity are becoming ever graver threats. But the Middle East shock makes another argument equally compelling: relying on fossil fuels is a strategic and economic liability, one we must not shackle ourselves to.

Every spike in oil price hits African economies hard. Most Sub-Saharan countries import a significant portion of their fuel, making them highly sensitive to global price swings. Higher petroleum costs crowd out investment in health, education and infrastructure. Even for oil producers like Gabon or Nigeria, the calculus is perilous. Heavy reliance on extractive exports ties national revenues to a commodity whose price is shaped by geopolitics far beyond African control. Nigeria's oil wealth, for example, has been linked to insecurity in the Niger Delta, depriving local communities of development while exposing the national economy to cycles of boom-and-bust.

By contrast, renewable energy and electrification, particularly solar, wind and geothermal, offer boundless potential for economic resilience. Africa sits atop some of the world's richest renewable resources. With our wind-swept and sunbaked plains, the continent could generate abundant clean power far cheaper than fossil fuels over the long run.

Already, progress is visible. In 2025, Africa recorded a 54 per cent increase in solar PV capacity additions, with countries like South Africa, Egypt, Kenya and Ethiopia making significant strides in renewable deployment. Kenya, for instance, already draws around 90 per cent of its electricity from clean sources and is expanding storage and geothermal capacity to support further growth.

Perennial and unpredictable

The conflict in the Middle East underlines a fundamental truth: geopolitical risk in fossil fuel markets is perennial and unpredictable. It is not a matter of "if" but "when" another shock disrupts supply and sends prices spiraling. Africa must not anchor its future to such instability.

This is not to deny that an energy transition must be managed equitably. Some African economies still rely on fossil royalties and jobs tied to extractive sectors. A just transition will require careful policy design, investment in retraining and social safety nets, and international financial support. But the alternative — doubling down on fossil infrastructure that is vulnerable to global crises and incompatible with climate goals — is a far greater risk.

The world is at a crossroads. The Middle East conflict is a reminder that fossil fuels are entwined with geopolitics, economic instability and environmental risk. For Africa, the path forward is to invest in renewable energy and electrification, not only because it tackles climate change, but because it strengthens economic sovereignty, shields communities from external shocks, and unlocks sustainable prosperity.

Africa should not wait for the next oil crisis to force its hand. The future we want begins with the choices we make today.

Mohamed Adow is the director, Power Shift Africa.

ANALYSIS

It came to pass: How conflict is affecting region

Uncertainty of global market dynamics is piling inflationary and currency pressures on countries

When tensions involving Iran affect global perceptions of oil supply, particularly concerns around routes such as the Strait of Hormuz, the impact on Africa is transmitted primarily through international oil markets rather than direct physical disruption. Crude oil is priced globally, so any increase in perceived risk or tightening of supply tends to raise benchmark prices, which then feed into the cost of imported petroleum products across African economies.

Most African countries are net importers of refined fuel, and this structural dependence shapes how they experience oil price movements. Countries such as **Kenya, Ghana, South Africa, Uganda,** and **Egypt** rely on imports to meet domestic fuel demand. When global oil prices rise, domestic fuel prices tend to follow, either through market pricing mechanisms or through adjustments in regulated systems. This affects transport costs, electricity generation in systems that rely on diesel, and the broader logistics networks that support trade and commerce.

Higher fuel prices also contribute to inflation. Because fuel is a key input in transportation and production, increases in its cost are passed through to food prices, manufactured goods, and services. In economies where a large share of goods is transported by road, these effects are often widespread. At the same time, increased demand for foreign currency to pay for fuel imports can place pressure on exchange rates. In countries with limited foreign exchange reserves, this can contribute to currency depreciation, which in turn raises the local cost of imports and reinforces inflationary trends.

Oil-exporting countries such as **Nigeria, Angola,** and **Libya** experience a different set of dynamics. Higher global oil prices can increase export revenues and improve foreign exchange earnings. However, these gains are often offset by the fact that many of these countries still import refined petroleum products due to limited domestic refining capacity. As a result, higher global prices can simultaneously increase export income and domestic fuel costs. The net effect depends on the balance between these two factors, as well as domestic pricing policies and subsidy regimes.

Across both importing and exporting countries, higher oil prices can create fiscal pressures. Governments that subsidise fuel may face increased public spending if they choose to stabilise domestic prices. Where subsidies are reduced or removed, households and businesses absorb the higher costs directly. Either approach can affect public finances and economic activity, particularly in countries with constrained budgets.

Transport and trade are also affected. Increased fuel costs raise the price of moving goods within and between countries, which can influence the cost of food, imported goods, and regional trade flows. Because many African economies depend heavily on road transport, these effects tend to be broad and immediate.

Overall, the impact of Iran-related oil tensions on Africa is operating through established economic channels such as global price transmission, exchange rate pressures, inflation, and fiscal responses. The specific outcomes vary by country, but the underlying mechanisms are consistent across the region.

March 30, 2026 SHIFTING POWER QUARTERLY 15

SCALE OF THE PROBLEM: France has announced a 37 percent reduction in development aid for 2025, equivalent to roughly €2.1 billion in cuts, while Belgium plans to reduce development spending by €318 million, roughly 32 percent of its aid budget. Meanwhile, The Netherlands has announced a 30 percent reduction in its aid budget, amounting to €2.4 billion annually from 2027, partly redirected toward national economic and security priorities. The United Kingdom is also planning significant reductions, including lowering official development assistance to 0.3 percent of gross national income by 2027, far below the long-standing 0.7 percent international target.

in-depth

BY KARABO MOKGONYANA AND MERCY JOHN

Global security vs climate security: Polluters cutting climate finance for defence budgets



For more than a decade, climate finance has been the cornerstone of the global climate bargain: developing countries would pursue low-carbon development while wealthy, high-emitting countries would provide financial support to help them mitigate emissions and adapt to climate impacts. That commitment is embedded in Article 9.1 of the Paris Agreement, which requires developed countries to provide financial resources to assist developing countries with climate mitigation and adaptation.

But now the global climate finance architecture is facing a dangerous reversal. The very countries historically responsible for the bulk of greenhouse gas emissions are increasingly cutting development and climate budgets and redirecting resources toward defence and security priorities. This shift is happening at precisely the moment when the climate crisis is intensifying and the financing gap facing developing countries, especially in Africa, is widening.

According to projections by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), official development assistance (ODA) was expected to decline by nine percent in 2024, and by a further 9 to 17 percent in 2025, potentially reducing global aid by up to US$35 billion in a single year.

These cuts are being driven primarily by large donor economies, including the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom and France, which together account for a substantial share of global climate and development finance.

Additional data from development finance trackers show that the 17 largest donor countries collectively reduced ODA from US$217.5 billion in 2023 to US$205.5 billion in 2024, with projections suggesting a further US$42.6 billion decline in 2025.

In several cases, the cuts are dramatic. For example, France has announced a 37 percent reduction in development aid for 2025, equivalent to roughly €2.1 billion in cuts, while Belgium plans to reduce development spending by €318 million, roughly 32 percent of its aid budget. Meanwhile, The Netherlands has announced a 30 percent reduction in its aid budget, amounting to €2.4 billion annually from 2027, partly redirected toward national economic and security priorities.

The United Kingdom is also planning significant reductions, including lowering official development assistance to 0.3 percent of gross national income by 2027, far below the long-standing 0.7 percent international target.

At the same time, policy shifts in the United States have raised concerns about deep reductions in international development and climate programmes, including proposals affecting large portions of USAID's US$42.8 billion budget.

Taken together, these decisions represent one of the most significant contractions in global development financing in decades, and experts warn that they reflect a growing prioritisation of short-term national security concerns over long-term global stability. Yet climate change itself is widely recognised as a "threat multiplier", intensifying conflict risks, migration pressures, and economic instability.

Climate finance already insufficient

Even before the recent wave of budget cuts, global climate finance flows were falling far short of what is needed. Developed countries pledged to mobilise US$100 billion annually in climate finance by 2020 to support developing countries' mitigation and adaptation efforts. This commitment, embedded in the international climate regime and repeatedly reaffirmed in UN climate negotiations, was only met years after the deadline and has long been criticised as inadequate relative to the scale of the climate crisis.

Meanwhile, the scale of climate needs in the Global South has grown exponentially. According to estimates cited by the UN Environment Programme, developing countries require between US$215 billion and US$387 billion annually for climate adaptation alone, far exceeding current finance flows. The adaptation finance gap is particularly stark as existing international public finance for adaptation is 10 to 18 times lower than estimated needs.

At COP29 in 2024, governments agreed to a new New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) on climate finance, which aims to significantly scale up climate finance beyond the US$100 billion benchmark to meet the vastly higher needs of developing countries. The goal reflects growing recognition that the cost of climate action in developing economies runs into the trillions of dollars annually.

Now, that agreement is unfolding against a contradictory trend that is creating a widening gap between global climate commitments and the actual financial resources being made available to support them.

What this means for Global South

For African countries and other developing regions, declining climate finance could have devastating consequences. Climate-vulnerable countries already face escalating costs from droughts, floods, extreme heat, and biodiversity loss. At the same time, many are grappling with rising debt burdens and limited fiscal space.

Without adequate climate finance, governments are forced to divert scarce domestic resources toward climate adaptation and disaster response, funds that would otherwise support healthcare, education, and economic development. The result is a deepening inequality in the global climate response.

At a moment when the world urgently needs to scale up climate finance into the trillions, the current trajectory points in the opposite direction. If wealthy, high-emitting countries continue to retreat from their financial commitments, the credibility of the Paris Agreement, and the possibility of an equitable global climate transition—will be placed at serious risk.

Karabo Mokganya is Campaigns and Energy Advisor while Mercy John is a Climate Finance Fellow at Power Shift Africa.

letter from addis ababa

Time for AU to take charge of climate and development interventions



All the continent's investments in resilience agriculture, water systems, infrastructure, and energy sovereignty should be reframed as productivity-enhancing efforts that underpin our collective growth, competitiveness, and long-term stability, argues **AMOS WEMANYA**

The recently concluded African Union Summit took place at a defining historical moment for the continent. What was once framed as an ecological crisis has now fully evolved into a structural economic, fiscal, and security challenge. Across Africa, climate shocks are no longer episodic disruptions, but systemic forces reshaping national budgets, increasing sovereign risk, destabilising energy systems, and constraining the very foundations of industrialisation.

Droughts in the Horn, floods across central and southern Africa and deepening food system disruptions have become macroeconomic stressors widening fiscal deficits and driving up borrowing costs. At the same time, the multilateral order that once promised coordinated global action is fragmenting. Thus, Climate finance is increasingly shaped by geopolitical competition and narrow national interests, leaving Africa caught between rising vulnerability and declining solidarity.

It is within this shifting terrain that the Summit's significance must be understood, not as just another convening, but as a test of whether Africa can move from participation to leadership in defining its future.

Reframing the story

One of the most important shifts from the Summit, and reinforced through civil society engagements, is the reframing of Africa's climate story. Africa is not merely a victim of climate change. Its current vulnerability is rooted in a long historical continuum of extraction, where its resources and labour fuelled industrialisation elsewhere. Recognising this reframes climate action as structural economic correction.

This shift demands a new posture in global engagement. Africa must move beyond abstract notions of shared global values and instead anchor international cooperation in clearly articulated continental interests. In a world of competing powers, coherence, not moral persuasion, will define outcomes.

The Summit reaffirmed Agenda 2063 as Africa's long-term vision for inclusive growth and sustainable development. It also highlighted progress under the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme and renewed urgency around implementing the African Continental Free Trade Area. Yet the real challenge is no longer vision, but execution.

I say this because Africa does not suffer from a shortage of frameworks, but from fragmentation. Industrial policy, climate strategy, trade integration, and financial architecture continue to operate in silos, diluting impact and weakening bargaining power. The AU should now evolve from a norm-setting body into a coordination engine, aligning these frameworks into a single, coherent strategy for structural transformation. Without this alignment, the continent risks policy drift at precisely the moment when strategic clarity is most needed.

A central insight from the Summit's discussions is the need to fundamentally reposition adaptation. Climate shocks are fiscal shocks. They increase sovereign risk, drive up the cost of capital, and erode fiscal space for development. In this context, adaptation cannot be treated as a peripheral or humanitarian concern. It must be understood as macroeconomic stabilisation.

Investments in resilience agriculture, water systems, infrastructure, and energy sovereignty should be reframed as productivity-enhancing efforts that underpin growth, competitiveness, and long-term stability. Africa cannot industrialise on a destabilised ecological foundation, and this simple reality should now guide fiscal policy, development planning, and investment strategies across the continent.

Next frontier of sovereignty

If there was one unifying thread across the Summit, it was the recognition that Africa's future lies in green industrialisation. Frameworks such as the African Green Industrialisation Initiative alongside AfCFTA and emerging regional strategies provide a foundation for value addition, regional integration, and industrial growth. But again, the challenge is operational.

Africa risks becoming the backbone of the global green transition without transforming its own economies. There is a real and present danger of exporting raw green minerals, hosting extractive energy enclaves, and externalising jobs and technology ownership.

To avoid "transitioning without transitioning Africans," the continent should act deliberately. It should build regional value chains that retain value within Africa, protect and nurture infant industries strategically, insist on value addition at source, and use trade policy as a tool for industrial development.

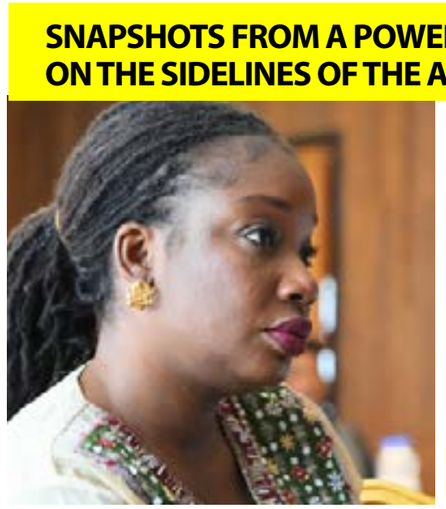
The central question emerging from the Summit is not whether Africa has the ideas or frameworks to transform, but whether the African Union is ready to lead with the coherence, authority, and urgency that this moment demands.

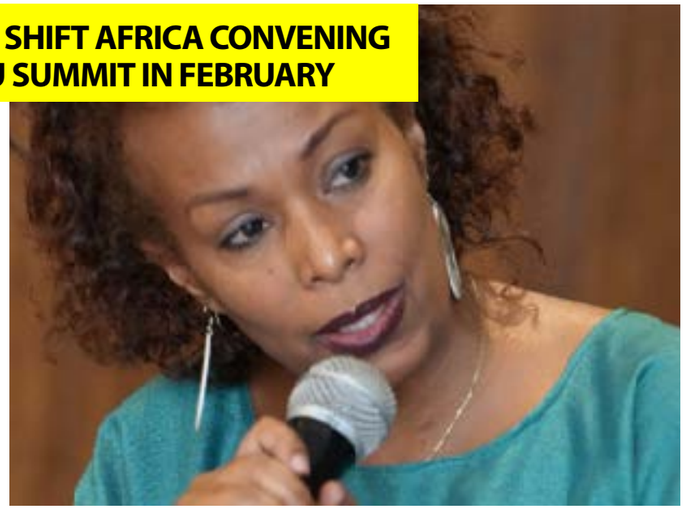
Leadership now requires more than convening. It requires enforcing alignment across continental frameworks, coordinating negotiation positions with discipline, driving accountability in implementation and building a unified financial and industrial strategy.

In a fragmenting global order, no external actor will organise Africa's transformation. That responsibility rests squarely with African institutions and most critically, with the AU.

Amos Wemanya is Senior Climate Advisor at Power Shift Africa.

SNAPSHOTS FROM A POWER SHIFT AFRICA CONVENING ON THE SIDELINES OF THE AU SUMMIT IN FEBRUARY







energy transition

TEXT BY AMOS WEMANYA

Cheap solar is ending, here's Africa's next energy leap

For more than a decade, the global solar revolution has been quietly underwritten by Chinese industrial policy. Ultra-low-cost photovoltaic (PV) modules, fueled in part by export rebates have enabled countries like Kenya to leapfrog traditional energy systems and expand access at unprecedented speed. But as of April 2026, that era is ending. With China withdrawing VAT export rebates on solar PV and scaling back battery incentives, the global solar market is entering a new phase defined less by price dumping and more by strategic positioning. For Africa, this is a moment of decision.

58GWp

Since 2017, over 58GWp of solar modules have been exported from China to Africa, translating into an estimated 63.9GWp of installed capacity. This places Africa's share of global solar closer to 2.6%, far higher than previously assumed.

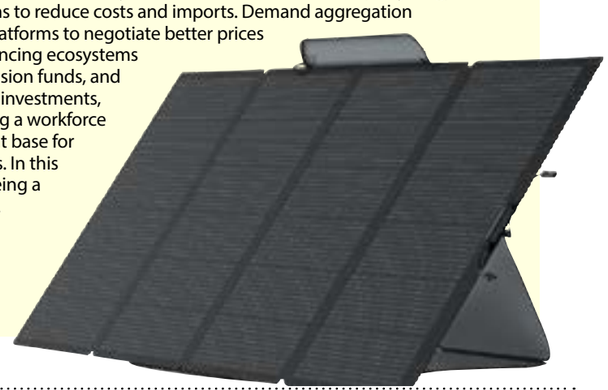
1 **A moment to foreground sovereignty:** At its core, this moment is about more than solar panels. For too long, Africa's energy transition has been externally defined, dependent on imported technologies, foreign capital, and global price dynamics, and the withdrawal of Chinese rebates exposes the fragility of this model. However, it also creates space for a new one. A sovereignty-driven approach does not mean isolation, but strategic integration, participating in global markets on more equitable terms while building domestic capacity and resilience. The end of ultra-cheap solar imports may feel like a setback, but history suggests that moments of constraint often drive the most profound innovation.

2 **The brighter side:** Even before this policy shift, Africa's solar story was far more dynamic than official figures suggested. The continent has emerged as the fastest-growing solar region globally, with imports rising by 17% in 2025 alone. Since 2017, over 58GWp of solar modules have been exported from China to Africa, translating into an estimated 63.9GWp of installed capacity. This places Africa's share of global solar closer to 2.6%, far higher than previously assumed. But the real story lies beneath the surface. The majority of this growth is not in large, visible solar farms, but on rooftops, in small businesses, and across farms and informal settlements. Commercial and Industrial (C&I) users and households are driving a decentralised solar revolution that largely escapes official tracking systems, and this "invisible grid" is already reshaping Africa's energy architecture.



3 **End of cheap imports:** China's withdrawal of export rebates will likely increase the cost of solar modules globally. For African countries, where affordability remains the primary barrier to energy access, this presents immediate risks, including rising upfront costs for households and small and medium enterpirses, slower deployment rates especially in off-grid and mini-grid markets, and increased financing pressures for developers and governments. But this is only one side of the story. The deeper implication is that the economics of solar are shifting from pure cost competition to value chain control, resilience, and localisation. Across the continent, early signs of a new industrial strategy are emerging. Nigeria is scaling up to 1GW of solar manufacturing capacity. Egypt is moving toward vertically integrated production, including cells and eventually wafers. Ethiopia has begun producing solar cells, signaling entry into higher-value segments of the supply chain. Kenya and Zimbabwe are positioning themselves as regional hubs for assembly and refurbishment. These developments represent the beginnings of an African solar industrial ecosystem, and China's policy shift may accelerate this transition, not by design, but by necessity.

4 **Three policy scenarios for Africa:** The choices African governments make now will determine whether this moment becomes a setback or a breakthrough. The **first is a passive consumer scenario** where African countries could absorb higher import costs without structural change, continued reliance on imported modules and batteries, slower expansion of energy access, increased inequality as solar becomes less affordable, and persistent exposure to currency volatility and supply chain shocks. This scenario risks stalling the continent's solar momentum just as it reaches scale. Then there is the **adaptive market scenario**. Here, governments respond with targeted subsidies, tax relief, and financing mechanisms that lead to temporary cushioning of price increases for consumers and limited growth in local assembly and light manufacturing. This approach maintains growth but does not fundamentally shift Africa's position in the global energy economy. Lastly, we have the **strategic sovereignty scenario**, where African countries uses this moment to reposition themselves within the global solar value chain. Industrial policy for solar manufacturing gives incentives for local production, regional value chains, and technology transfer. We have circular economy investments in refurbishment, recycling, and second-life battery systems to reduce costs and imports. Demand aggregation leads regional procurement platforms to negotiate better prices and stabilise supply. Local financing ecosystems mobilise domestic capital, pension funds, and development banks to de-risk investments, while at the same time building a workforce and research and development base for solar and storage technologies. In this scenario, Africa moves from being a price-taker to a market shaper.



financing adaptation

After decades of unfair credit rating, Africa is breaking free



BY SAADA MOHAMED

Africa has long stood at the centre of a striking paradox: a continent rich in natural resources and powered by the world's youngest population, yet still grappling with severe energy shortages, rising food imports, and vast infrastructure gaps.

At the heart of this challenge lies a complex mix of pressures, most notably extreme climate vulnerability and mounting debt, the last of which has, over recent decades, steadily constrained many African economies, limiting fiscal space and slowing progress toward broader prosperity and economic independence.

In the first quarter of 2026, many parts of the continent were ravaged by extreme events, with intense droughts in East Africa, destructive floods in the South, and heatwaves in the Sahel. These frequent and severe climate disasters are leaving behind a trail of untold devastation, ranging from heightened food insecurity to the destruction of critical public infrastructure.

The growing humanitarian emergencies are forcing African governments to allocate more resources that they do not have in the first place to save lives and rebuild damaged infrastructure.

By 2025, Africa was already facing an estimated $1.3 trillion financing gap to meet both its climate commitments and the Sustainable Development Goals. With fiscal space severely constrained, many governments found themselves with few options, often turning to humanitarian assistance while taking on additional debt simply to fund recovery and basic development needs.

As a result, several African countries have been pushed into a survival-first mode, managing immediate crises while struggling to mobilise the long-term capital required to build resilience, close infrastructure gaps, and sustain economic growth. While this is distressing, it creates a bigger, more damaging problem. Desperate circumstances often consign countries to negotiate financial facilities from a weak position, and usually on unfair terms, just to meet their immediate needs.

This desperate borrowing, exacerbated by, among others, climate impacts, has caused Sub-Saharan Africa to accumulate an external debt stock of up to US$901 billion as of 2024, according to the IMF's international debt report of 2025. This dire situation is aggravated by record-high debt servicing costs, with repayments amounting to $80 billion. Quite pointedly, this nearly matches the $87 billion Africa received in 2024 in new long-term external financing.

The IMF warns that Africa's biggest risk is not the overall debt stock, but, rather,t, rather, debt servicing, which currently absorbs 18.7% of government revenues three times the share recorded in 2014.

The endless loop of climate disasters, expensive loans, and high repayments has worsened countries' fiscal health, stripping them of their dignity and denying them the chance to build homegrown development, economic and climate resilience.

At the heart of this debt crisis is the role played by international credit rating agencies. Today, the largest share of the market is controlled by the "Big Three" foreign agencies, namely S&P Global Ratings, Moody's, and Fitch Ratings. These institutions are key in determining a country's risk levels for governments, corporates and the private sector, including the ability to repay or default on debt and access to international financial markets.

Lower credit ratings for African governments means higher interest rates, shorter maturities and stricter repayment terms. It also means the erosion of investor confidence, triggering capital flight or limited access to markets.

African government have for long protested that these ratings are often the result of methodological biases and limited reliable data, and thus do not fully consider Africa's unique economic realities.

Over time, this skewed credit rating has forced African governments to actively champion for urgent reforms of the global financial and debt architecture in the belief that the reforms would directly confront the current systemic barriers of prohibitive cost of capital, debt distress, and constraints in access to quality finance.

The African Union's recent Lomé Declaration on a common position on Africa's debt, for instance, strongly calls for the establishment of a UN Framework Convention on Sovereign Debt. It is hoped that such a framework will bring greater fairness, predictability, and the transparency needed to urgently prevent and resolve the continent's sovereign debt crises.

These efforts also informed the UN Member States' agreement at the 4th International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4) to initiate an intergovernmental process to address the gaps in debt architecture. Simultaneously, Africa is proactively developing home-grown solutions, including the ongoing efforts to establish the African Credit Rating Agency (AfCRA).

AfCRA is a pan-African initiative envisioned to deliver independent, credible, and African-owned credit ratings to boost transparency, reduce reliance on global rating giants, and foster fairer representation of the continent's creditworthiness. It is a permanent step forward in freeing the continent from sometimes predatory and high-risk premiums that end up extracting more resources than the borrowed funds ever create.

Once established, AfCRA will complement the global agencies by integrating Africa-specific data and socioeconomic indicators into credit risk evaluation frameworks. Its success will mean enhanced access to favourable markets and financing options, improved debt sustainability, accelerated investor inflows, and inclusive economic growth.

At this year's African Union Summit in February, African leaders noted that debt restructuring remains a top priority for the continent. The time is ripe for Africa to redefine its position on global financial governance, but we still need thepolitical momentum to make AfCRA operational as swiftly as possible. The signs are encouraging so far, for a continental credit rating agency could turn the tide on Africa's exploitation and rewrite the continent's story from one of perceived fragility to one defined by financial sovereignty and economic prosperity; because Africa's challenge has never been a lack of resources, but the absence of a fair system.

Saada Mohamed is Climate Finance Advisor at Power Shift Africa

BY FREDRICK OTIENO

Want to adapt? Plan, plan, plan

Extreme weather events, while difficult to predict precisely, are becoming more frequent and severe, and preparing for them requires learning from past

Africa's experience of climate change is no longer defined by unpredictability alone, but also by a question of justice. The floods witnessed across the continent in early 2026 show an urgent gap in access to reliable climate information and early warning systems, which remain largely concentrated in wealthier countries. While this inequity persists, African countries should also strengthen their own adaptive capacity to reduce losses.

Rising global temperatures are intensifying cycles of floods, droughts, storms, and heat stress across Africa. Yet Africa's ability to respond is constrained by weak infrastructure, limited social protection systems, and underdeveloped disaster preparedness frameworks.

This vulnerability is deeply rooted in history. Many African cities were shaped during colonial periods with little regard for environmental safety or long-term resilience.

As a result, rapid urbanisation has produced crowded, informal settlements, often located in flood-prone areas with poor drainage. These patterns reflect structural inequalities that continue to heighten exposure to climate risks.

In the first quarter of 2026, Kenya, Morocco, Mozambique, Ethiopia, and Madagascar experienced severe flooding that caused deaths, displacement, destruction of property, and widespread agricultural losses. Beyond the immediate damage, communities were left to cope with long-term trauma, lost livelihoods, and disrupted food systems.

Despite the role of historical emitters in driving climate change, Africa cannot afford to wait for delayed climate finance and technology transfers.

Adaptation should be proactive. Flooding, while difficult to predict precisely, is becoming more frequent and severe, thus preparing for it requires learning from past events and acting in advance.

Effective adaptation depends on both planning and behaviour. Populations at risk should be informed, equipped, and ready to respond. Floods are rapid-onset hazards, meaning early warning systems, accessible information, and community preparedness are critical. Technologies such as alarms and storm surge sensors can enable timely evacuations, but they should be supported by awareness and local capacity.

Land use planning is central to reducing vulnerability. Many flood impacts are worsened by settlements and farming activities located in high-risk areas. Weak land governance systems, often inherited from colonial structures, continue to allow unplanned development and occupation of floodplains. In some cases, cultural attachment to land complicates relocation efforts, but participatory and well-supported resettlement strategies are necessary in high-risk zones.

Recent events illustrate these challenges. In Mozambique, floods submerged vast areas of farmland, threatening food security and recovery. In Ethiopia's Gamo Zone, flooding triggered landslides, causing significant loss of life in already vulnerable highland communities. These cases point to the urgent need for better spatial planning and risk-informed land use.

Ultimately, while climate justice demands that developed countries provide finance and technology, Africa should also act independently.

The most effective immediate response lies in improved planning, strengthening land use systems, investing in social protection, enhancing community awareness, and building a culture of preparedness.

Fredrick Otieno is Project Associate at Power Shift Africa

law & human rights

See you in court: The case for African climate justice

Last year, a team from the Pan-African Lawyers Union, with the support of civil society organisations, filed a petition at the African Court of Human and Peoples' Rights, seeking an advisory on the human rights obligations African states have in responding to the climate crisis. In this article, Power Shift Africa's KARABO MOKGONYANA and MESHACK MBOYA argue that what is before the court is, essentially, a test of whether legal institutions are willing to confront a crisis shaped by decades of inaction and inequality as the case challenges the assumption that climate responses can remain within the realm of political negotiation

On May 2, 2025, the Pan-African Lawyers Union, alongside a coalition of civil society organisations, including the African Climate Platform, Natural Justice, Resilient40, and the Environmental Lawyers Collective for Africa, filed a petition before the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, seeking an advisory opinion on a defining legal question: what human rights obligations do African states have in responding to the climate crisis?

An advisory opinion may appear limited because it is not formally binding, but that view underestimates its potential impact. This case aimed to anchor climate governance in legal obligation rather than political discretion. It called on the Court to interpret regional human rights instruments, including the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Maputo Protocol, the Kampala Convention, and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, in the context of a worsening climate emergency.

The implication? Climate change is not only an environmental issue, but a systemic human rights crisis.

That crisis is already visible across the continent, and the burden falls most heavily on those already at risk, including women, children, older persons, indigenous communities, persons with disabilities, and internally displaced people. The significance of this case lay in its scope. The applicants were not seeking a narrow ruling on emissions, but asking the Court to define a comprehensive framework of state obligations in relation to the climate system and the protection of human rights. This included clarifying whether states are required to reduce emissions, promote sustainable practices, and cooperate internationally to safeguard the climate for present and future generations. It also raised the question of whether governments must go further by protecting communities from climate harm, strengthening adaptation and resilience, and providing remedies for loss and damage.

The petition directly addresses corporate accountability, asking what duties states have to regulate multinational corporations whose activities contribute to environmental harm. It also raises the protection of environmental defenders, questioning whether governments are obligated to prevent intimidation, harassment, and violence against those advocating for environmental justice.

Participation and transparency are central concerns, with the case probing whether citizens have a right to be involved in climate decision-making. It further interrogates what constitutes a just energy transition, and whether African states can invoke principles of equity and historical responsibility to seek compensation from high-emitting countries. This approach reframes climate change as a structural injustice shaped by history, inequality, and power.

So, you might wonder, why are we discussing this now? The timing is significant. The case follows the 2025 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, which affirmed that states have binding obligations under international law to prevent and address climate change. Similar positions have been taken by the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. Together, these developments are reshaping the legal landscape by reinforcing that climate inaction may constitute a breach of international law.

Yet global rulings often remain abstract and distant. The African Court has the capacity to translate these emerging norms into obligations that reflect regional realities. It can embed climate law within African institutions and legal systems, making it more difficult for states to avoid accountability.

This matters, because Africa contributes the least to global greenhouse gas emissions while experiencing some of the most severe impacts. Although this imbalance has long been acknowledged in international forums, it has not produced adequate accountability, financing, or structural change.

The case confronts this contradiction. It recognises African states as both victims of global climate injustice and duty bearers under human rights law. Governments are required to protect populations from foreseeable harm, invest in adaptation and mitigation, ensure inclusive and transparent governance, and regulate harmful conduct by both public and private actors. This reframing places responsibility not only on external actors but also within domestic systems of governance.

A strong advisory opinion could have far-reaching consequences. Climate action would no longer be treated as optional policy, but understood as a legal obligation grounded in human rights. Governments would need to justify their decisions, and failures to act could be challenged on legal grounds.

The implications for corporate accountability are equally significant. A clear articulation of state duties to regulate third-party conduct would narrow the space for environmental harm by multinational corporations. It would establish that responsibility for climate damage cannot be displaced onto private actors without oversight.

The case also carries practical consequences for affected communities. An authoritative interpretation from the Court would strengthen domestic litigation efforts, enabling communities to challenge harmful projects, demand stronger protective measures, and seek remedies for climate-related loss and damage. This shifts the balance of power toward those most directly affected.

Beyond the continent, the case contributes to a growing global effort to define climate justice in legal terms. It reinforces the position that climate change is fundamentally a human rights issue, and that state obligations are enforceable. This strengthens demands from the Global South for reparations, loss and damage financing, and more equitable systems of global governance.

What is before the African Court, therefore, is a test of whether legal institutions will confront a crisis shaped by decades of inaction and inequality. It challenges the assumption that climate responses can remain within the realm of political negotiation.

Africa has often been treated as a passive participant in global climate processes, and this case challenges that role. It asserts the authority of African legal systems and institutions to define and enforce climate justice on their own terms. The outcome now depends on whether the Court is prepared to act decisively. A strong opinion would not simply clarify the law, but redefine the terms of accountability, turning climate change from a subject of negotiation into a violation requiring remedy.

For a continent already living with the consequences of climate breakdown, that shift is not aspirational.

It is necessary.

Karabo Mokganya is Campaigns and Energy Advisor while Meshack Mboya is a Legal and Advocacy Fellow at Power Shift Africa.



