

Addressing the Climate Crisis and Human Settlements Nexus in Africa through Integrated Multilateral Action: Articulating Vision and Opportunity

Despite contributing little to greenhouse gas emissions, Africa is one of the most vulnerable continents to climate change. Rising adaptation needs and urbanization, among other trends, pose new challenges and opportunities for climate resilience in the continent. Indeed, as per the UNEP Adaptation Gap Report 2023, Africa's adaptation costs are estimated to rise to USD 50 billion annually by 2050 if the global temperature increase is kept below 2°C. This high-level event, convened by the Government of Botswana and supported by the UN Science-Policy-Business Forum (UN-SPBF), explored integrated, cooperative multilateral approaches to tackle some of Africa's most pressing climate challenges.

Moderator Axel Threlfall, Editor-at-Large, Reuters, initiated the session by inviting the audience to envision Africa having achieved a transition to net-zero emissions by 2050, as well as sustainable livelihoods for all its citizens.

Mokgweetsi Masisi, President of Botswana, said the stakes are high for Africa, which finds itself at the “tail end of global development” while grappling with the impacts of climate change. He urged for urgent action, citing the heavy toll on



Panelists pose for a family photo.

human lives and livelihoods. Despite these challenges, he emphasized that Africa has “a responsibility and an opportunity” for a responsible transition, while learning from the pitfalls of other countries. Indeed, the Africa Climate Summit held in September 2023 (ACS), he continued, reinforced a unified regional approach for COP 28 and highlighted the need for smart investments promoting value addition in fossil fuel transition and harnessing the continent's potential in solar energy. Regarding technological transfer, he remarked that Africa will “make great friends” with those who can help the region harvest water from the atmosphere, modernize energy, and transition away from fossil fuels.

Hage Geingob, President of Namibia, said the urgency of the climate change crisis demands that the world moves from mere messaging to tangible actions. He called on the African region to recognize the impetus of self-reliance in finding solutions to address the region's climate-related problems. Finally, he expressed his desire to return to Namibia as “a peacemaker,” conveying the message that COP 28 has delivered the necessary escalation in climate action.

Jean-Paul Adam, Deputy Under-Secretary-General and UN Special Adviser on Africa (USG-OSAA), referred to the loss and damage fund agreed at COP 28 as a huge step forward. He lamented that the amounts pledged do not reflect the urgency of the climate emergency, particularly compared with the amount of money spent on wars. “We are excited about (loss and damage)



Mokgweetsi Masisi, President of Botswana, arrives at the pavilion with **Hage Geingob**, President of Namibia.

Moderator **Axel Threlfall**, Reuters**Kamal Amakrane**, Global Center for Climate Mobility

announcements but we need to feel them, and fast,” President Masisi added, noting that a successful COP 28 would involve discussions on the specific challenges faced by the African region and “a real genuine response.”

Kamal Amakrane, Managing Director, Global Center for Climate Mobility, said he viewed the loss and damage fund as “a glass half full,” praising the climate change community for negotiating the fund within two years. He called for filling the finance gap to the required USD 1.8 trillion before 2030 and for rapid disbursements to developing countries.

Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director, UN-Habitat, noted that, together with Asia, Africa is the fastest urbanizing continent. She further referred to recent efforts to promote a holistic, cross-ministerial approach to sustainable development, stressing that “we cannot segment climate to environment ministers. Whatever happens in cities impacts the climate.” In response to a question on the benefits of South-South cooperation, Adam said it was an avenue for best practices, such as redirecting African funding towards local investments in areas such as infrastructure, digital technologies, and climate resilience, to be more widely adopted.

On climate mobility, Amakrane urged for the development of strategies that anticipate rather than react to climate change-induced displacements, underscoring that the knowledge and data is available not only to map different possible futures but also to create targeted responses that take into account the specific needs of each community. The objective, he added, is to empower people to stay home. “No one wants to go to Europe and the US, but they want to live in dignity,” he concluded.

In final remarks, Mohd Sharif called for accessible, affordable, and adequate climate solutions. Adam called for rethinking risk evaluation for small and medium-sized enterprises and climate infrastructure, noting the need for insurance and seed financing. Amakrane underlined the need to localize climate funds, adding that “it’s the farmers, it’s the fishermen who need to have access to small grants.” President Geingob highlighted COPs as opportunities to speak with potential investors, and President Masisi noted that, while focusing on investors’ return on investment was part of the solution, “reparations must be a driving principle, too.”

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**Hage Gottfried Geingob**, President of Namibia, and **Mkgweetsi Masisi**, President of Botswana, share a laugh.**Jean-Paul Adam**, Deputy USG-OSAA, and **Maimunah Mohd Sharif**, Executive Director, UN-Habitat