



11TH G20 PARLIAMENTARY SPEAKERS' SUMMIT



PARLIAMENTARY ACTION TO FIGHT CLIMATE CHANGE

19 August 2025

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Harnessing Parliamentary Diplomacy for the Realization of Global Solidarity, Equality, and Sustainability

ACRONYMS

AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AU	African Union
CAAPD	Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme
CBAM	Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism
CO₂	Carbon Dioxide
COP	Conference of Parties to the Convention on Climate Change
ETS	Emissions Trading System
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
GST	Global Stocktake
GtCO₂e	gigatonnes of CO ₂ equivalent
ICT	Information Communication and Technology
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
MPs	Members of Parliament
NAPs	National Adaptation Plans
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NYCs	National Youth Councils
PIDA	Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
WMO	World Meteorological Organization

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACRONYMS2

1. BACKGROUND5

2. INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE6

 2.1. International Frameworks and Agreements6

 2.2. African Climate-Related Frameworks.....7

3. STATUS QUO OF CLIMATE CHANGE9

 3.1. Climate Change Mitigation9

 3.2. Climate Change Adaptation 11

 3.3. Climate finance 12

4. YOUNG PARLIAMENTARIANS AS DRIVERS OF CLIMATE ACTION AND INNOVATION 14

5. ROLE OF PARLIAMENTS AND INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT 15

 5.1. The role of legislation in addressing climate change 15

 5.2. Best practices for parliamentary engagement on climate change 16

 5.3. Finances or Budget Allocation 16

 5.4. Oversight and Accountability 17

 5.5. Changes in parliamentary business 17

6. CONCLUSION 18

BIBLIOGRAPHY 19

ABSTRACT

Keeping global temperature increases below the 2°C and 1.5°C Paris Agreement targets is becoming increasingly difficult. Current G20 emission trends suggest these limits will soon be surpassed, leading to more frequent and severe climate disasters like floods, storms, and droughts. Young people, especially in developing nations, are disproportionately affected by these events. In response, there's a growing need to include youth in climate action and decision-making, focusing on a transition to sustainable economies and equitable access to climate finance. Young parliamentarians are uniquely positioned to advocate for these policies and ensure sufficient funding. The International Court of Justice's 2025 advisory opinion reinforced states' legal obligation to address climate change through mitigation, adaptation, finance, and technology transfer. Therefore, parliamentarians must ensure that effective climate policies and programmes are implemented to meet the Paris Agreement's goals.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- Due to increasing greenhouse gas emissions, the global temperature is projected to exceed the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C target substantially within a few years.
 - G20 members contribute more than 77% of global emissions, while African countries collectively contribute only 5%, reinforcing the need for differentiated responsibilities and support for their climate mitigation and adaptation.
 - Agenda 2063 is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), where the African blueprint shares a common vision for a prosperous, equitable, and sustainable future.
 - Young parliamentarians can contribute to climate governance by leveraging legislative and budgetary oversight to hold governments accountable.
 - Parliamentary tools such as audits, public hearings, and impact assessments allow young legislators to evaluate the effectiveness of climate programmes and demand transparency in fund allocation. Public platforms for engagements such as youth parliaments afford young parliamentarians and young people as stakeholders the opportunity to raise awareness, discuss challenges and share solutions as a collective.
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1. BACKGROUND

Due to increasing greenhouse gas emissions, the global temperature is projected to exceed the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C target substantially within a few years.

The global climate crisis continues to worsen, with increasing evidence that the world is dangerously deviating from the Paris Agreement's target. The internationally agreed target to keep the rise in global temperature well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit it to 1.5°C is becoming more challenging to achieve. If current trends continue, global temperatures will exceed this limit within a few years, resulting in more frequent and severe climate-related disasters.¹ The November 2023 climate anomalies underscore this bleak outlook, where global temperatures temporarily exceeded 2°C above pre-industrial levels for the first time in recorded history. Every month of 2024 experienced record or near-record warmth, and the global annual mean near-surface temperature was 1.55°C above the 1850-1900 pre-industrial average.² This is a stark warning of what may happen if emissions are not urgently curbed. The Copernicus Climate Change Service projects that, at the current rate, the 1.5°C target of the Paris Agreement will stabilise by May 2029.³ Focusing on the African Continent, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) found that the average temperature has increased faster than in other parts of the world, leading to an above-average increase of 0.86°C above the 1991-2020 average.⁴

For young people today, the climate crisis is not a distant threat. Hence, there is a call for opportunities to facilitate the stronger inclusion and engagement of youth in climate action. Young people are growing up witnessing, and often directly experiencing, increasingly frequent and severe events such as flooding, intense storms, tropical cyclones, relentless heat waves, and devastating droughts.⁵ These climate change manifestations are destroying our landscapes, causing tragic fatalities, substantial economic losses, widespread hunger, the proliferation of diseases, and significant insecurities regarding fundamental needs such as food, energy, and water. Such firsthand experiences emphasise a crucial truth that addressing climate change constitutes not merely a policy choice but a moral obligation for the current generation and future generations.⁶

This paper provides a brief overview of the key global and regional climate frameworks that inform the climate agenda, the current status of climate realities and action, the role of youth and young parliamentarians in driving innovation, and the role of Parliaments and parliamentarians in advancing climate action. There is a reflection from the perspective of the least developed and developing countries, in particular, Africa.

¹ UNEP (2024b).

² WMO (2025b).

³ CCCS (2025).

⁴ WMO (2025b).

⁵ UNFCCC (2023).

⁶ Ardoin & Bowers (2025).

2. INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

2.1. International Frameworks and Agreements

The foundational international legal framework on climate change is the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change** (UNFCCC), which aims to encourage global efforts to combat climate change. The central goal under the UNFCCC is to stabilise the atmospheric greenhouse gas emissions, the ultimate goal being their reduction. While the framework does not establish binding targets, it advocates the principle of “Common but Differentiated Responsibilities” among nations, emphasising that countries share a collective duty to tackle climate change, but their liabilities and capabilities vary. Hence, more of the burden of climate action should be placed on developed countries that have historically contributed more significantly to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Signatory countries have a responsibility to comply with decisions under the protocols and agreements adopted under the UNFCCC. The principal agreement is the 2015 Paris Agreement.

The **Paris Agreement**, a legally binding international treaty on climate change, establishes long-term goals to guide all nations in significantly reducing their global GHG emissions.⁷ It aims to keep the rise in global temperature well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit it to 1.5°C, increasing adaptation capabilities, fostering climate resilience, and aligning finance flows with low-emission, climate-resilient development pathways. Every five years, Parties to the Agreement should assess their collective progress towards meeting the Agreement's purpose and long-term goals through the Global Stocktake (GST) process. The first GST took place in 2023. The key messages from the GST were that there is progress towards climate action. However, it is insufficient to achieve the GHG emission reductions, enhance adaptation, scale up finance and uphold international cooperation.⁸ Informed by the GST, each country is expected to submit an updated and more ambitious Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) every five years. Updated and more ambitious NDCs were due by February 2025, but postponed to September 2025, after 182 of the 195 contracting countries missed the deadline. By 15 August, only 28 countries had submitted their NDCs to be included in the NDC Synthesis Report to be released ahead of Brazil's COP30.⁹ To facilitate the implementation of the Agreement, financial mechanisms should be enhanced to support developing countries in mitigating climate change, building resilience, and improving their capacity to adapt to climate impacts.¹⁰ As a part of the Enhanced Transparency Framework of the Agreement, countries must submit **biennial transparency reports** every two years, reflecting, among others, progress towards NDCs, policies and measures, climate change impacts and adaptation, levels of financial, technology development and transfer and capacity-building support, capacity-building needs and areas of improvement.

⁷ UNFCCC (2016).

⁸ UNFCCC (2023).

⁹ UNDP (2025).

¹⁰ UNFCCC (2023).

Group of Twenty (G20) Member States generally guide their climate action by commitments to the UNFCCC, the Paris Agreement, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, seeking to achieve these coherently. They aim to modernise their economies, boost competitiveness, stimulate employment and growth, and ensure the socio-economic benefits, which include poverty eradication and increased energy access.¹¹ Recent G20 declarations further underscore these commitments and plans to be carbon-neutral before 2050. However, these undertakings could be derailed by geopolitical developments and policy changes often associated with electoral outcomes, among other risks. Notwithstanding many risks to the commitments, the October 2024 G20 Environment and Climate Sustainability Working Group Ministerial Declaration reaffirmed the G20's commitment to scale up urgent action on climate change, biodiversity loss, and land degradation, while calling for increased adaptation financing. The November 2024 G20 Leaders' Summit in Rio de Janeiro reiterated adherence to the Paris Agreement, endorsed tripling renewable energy capacity globally, and doubling the rate of energy efficiency improvements by 2030. However, these declarations have faced criticism for sometimes lacking concrete plans on phasing out fossil fuels and for insufficient clarity on grant-based climate finance for developing nations, a concern also raised in the July 2025 G20 Development Ministerial Declaration in Skukuza.

2.2. African Climate-Related Frameworks

South Africa, the G20 host country, is also affected by various climate-related commitments made in regional bodies. In **Agenda 2063**, the African Union envisions a Continent striving for a prosperous future, built on inclusive growth and sustainable development that uplifts every single person.¹² It seeks an Africa with strong democratic institutions, respect for human rights, peace, and security, driven by African-led solutions. Development under Agenda 2063 will be inherently people-centred, actively harnessing the immense potential of all African citizens, with a particular focus on women, youth and children, to fuel progress from within. Agenda 2063 is aligned with the **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs), where the African blueprint shares a common vision for a prosperous, equitable, and sustainable future. The visions emphasise the interconnectedness of social, economic, and environmental progress to achieve many of the global targets by 2030 and beyond. Beyond the shared vision, the implementation of Agenda 2063 aligns with all 17 SDGs, enabling African nations to adopt an integrated and coherent approach to implementing, monitoring, and evaluating both Agenda 2063 and the SDGs. Based on the established joint frameworks and technical working groups, to ensure cooperation in their implementation plans¹³Parliaments have a responsibility to encourage and ensure their respective countries to integrate both agendas into their national development strategies, medium-term plans and annual programmes. Within the context of climate change, several guiding frameworks advocate for, among other outcomes, climate-resilient economies and communities as part of supporting global climate action. A few are briefly outlined below.

¹¹ Mazzucato (2025).

¹² African Union Commission (2014).

¹³ UNDP (2024).

2.1.1 African Union (AU) Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy and Action Plan (2022-2032)

This ten-year plan aims to unify the Continent's strategy on climate change, promoting joint efforts and collaboration to mitigate its effects and capitalise on opportunities associated with a green transition.¹⁴ It prioritises eight areas, including agriculture, water, and energy, urging member countries to integrate them for low-emission, climate-resilient development. The Nairobi Declaration (2023) strengthened these commitments, highlighting the need for parliamentary oversight.

2.1.2 Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP)

Since agriculture is vital to African food systems and livelihoods, the AU emphasises the urgent need for action through **CAADP**. The sector is highly vulnerable to climate change, particularly the increasing extreme weather events that are reducing agricultural productivity and threatening food security in many African nations. African countries have undertaken to invest at least 10% of national budget to achieve a 6% growth rate of the sector to halve poverty, end hunger and enhance investment and climate resilience by 2025.¹⁵ The Continent has not achieved its goals, including all seven Malabo commitments, due to poor oversight, fragmented policies, and lack of political leadership.¹⁶ Parliaments have a clear responsibility in ensuring that member countries develop and implement supportive programmes for a climate-resilient agricultural sector.

2.1.3 The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)

The **African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)** Agreement aims to create a single market for goods and services, increase intra-African trade, and promote sustainable socio-economic development of Africa, as envisioned in Agenda 2063.¹⁷ The implementation of AfCFTA adopts a phased approach that will help Africa achieve its climate goals and accelerate the transition to renewable energy, particularly on investment, intellectual property rights, competition policy, digital trade, and the inclusion of women and youth in trade.^{18,19} African countries working together to cut emissions is more effective than each country acting alone. Research also highlights that carbon pricing in Africa could be a powerful tool to help countries achieve their climate targets, thereby creating a greener and more prosperous Africa. Investment in energy and clean technologies, driven by climate policies, stimulates aggregate demand in the short term and, in turn, increases the supply and productive capacity of economies in the longer term.²⁰ Young MPs can develop new financial instruments and investment strategies that channel capital towards climate solutions. This includes green bonds, climate risk insurance, and impact investing.²¹ Parliaments can thus play a crucial role in ensuring that their respective countries develop and

¹⁴ African Union (2022).

¹⁵ African Union Commission (2016).

¹⁶ Amameishi (2024).

¹⁷ African Union (2018).

¹⁸ African Union (2018).

¹⁹ Fontagné et al. (2024).

²⁰ OECD/UNDP (2025).

²¹ Ibid.

pass enabling domestic legislation to facilitate free trade, expand market access, increase access to finance, and reduce bureaucracy, thereby ensuring they are on track with the phased approach to implementing the AfCFTA.

3. STATUS QUO OF CLIMATE CHANGE

3.1. Climate Change Mitigation

The primary cause of climate change is the emission and buildup of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. As a result, climate mitigation, which is actions taken by governments, businesses, or individuals to reduce or prevent greenhouse gases, or to strengthen carbon sinks that remove them, must be prioritised for enhancement. However, despite strong scientific consensus and the urgent nature of the problem, current climate commitments and actions worldwide are significantly inadequate.²² To meet the 1.5°C target by the end of the century, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions must drop by 42% by 2030 and 57% by 2035. Achieving these demands requires extraordinary global cooperation and annual emissions cuts of about 7.5% until 2035.²³ Even if all nations fully implement their existing NDCs, their self-imposed climate targets, the world will still face a catastrophic temperature increase of up to 3.1°C by 2100.²⁴ In 2023, global GHG emissions hit an unprecedented 57.1 gigatonnes of CO₂ equivalent (GtCO₂e), marking a 1.3% increase from 2022. Alarming, 68% of these emissions originated from the energy sector. Despite growing investments in clean energy technologies, fossil fuels, particularly coal, remain deeply ingrained in the global energy landscape, especially in rapidly developing economies.²⁵ Total energy-related CO₂ emissions increased by 0.8% in 2024 to 37.8 Gt CO₂, reaching a record high. Emissions from the energy sector continued to grow but at a slower rate in 2024 than in 2023, partly due to record-high temperatures. Rapid adoption of clean energy technology is helping to limit growth, preventing 2.6 billion tonnes of CO₂ emissions annually, and Africa is taking the necessary steps to increase the adoption of renewable energy.²⁶

G20 members contribute more than 77% of global emissions, while African countries collectively contribute only 5%, reinforcing the need for differentiated responsibilities and support for their climate mitigation and adaptation.

Africa still contributes minimally to global GHGs, despite committing to reducing its continental emissions. GHG emissions among G20 members also increased in 2023, accounting for 77% of global emissions. Including all African Union members increases the total global emissions percentage to 82%, a slight rise of only 5%. Nigeria and South Africa are collectively responsible for about 2% of these emissions.²⁷ This demonstrates that, despite having 55 member States (compared to the G20's 20 countries plus the European Union (EU) and AU as of 2023), Africa's overall contribution to global emissions remains relatively low. This is especially remarkable considering Africa's large and

²² UNFCCC (2023).

²³ UNEP (2024b).

²⁴ UNEP (2024b); WMO (2025b).

²⁵ UNEP (2024b).

²⁶ IEA (2025).

²⁷ Carman & Baumgartner (2022); UNEP (2024b).

expanding population. It also supports the argument that African nations, while highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, are not the main contributors to the problem. Despite projections of significant growth in emissions and population in Africa, the Continent's emissions remain understudied. Many countries lack recent, comprehensive assessments of GHG emissions and removals due to sporadic and often outdated reports from individual countries.²⁸ Due to this gap in emissions data, some African countries may become victims of climate policies from other countries and regions that require climate action data as a prerequisite for carbon tax/tariffs exemptions. G20 countries have committed to cooperate among themselves and with non-G20 countries to facilitate funding climate mitigation, mutual learning, good practice sharing and capacity-building, including through existing fora, inter alia, such as the NDC Partnership.²⁹

The implementation of the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), a carbon tax mechanism, is designed to address carbon leakage, which occurs when companies relocate carbon-intensive production to countries with less stringent environmental regulations to avoid the costs associated with the Emissions Trading System (ETS).³⁰ From 2026, CBAM will impose a carbon price on certain carbon-intensive imported goods³¹, mirroring the carbon cost of similar goods produced within the relevant country that has adopted the CBAM. This mechanism is intended to encourage global decarbonisation and ensure that industries of the implementing countries are not disadvantaged by competition from less environmentally conscious producers. Many African countries have carbon-intensive industries established through foreign direct investment, which could face heavy taxes unless they shift to carbon-free operations. The EU, among other countries, including Canada, Japan, Turkey, the United Kingdom, South Korea, and the Russian Federation, are at different stages of developing or implementing the CBAM.³² In the United States of America, the Clean Competition Act (3422/H.R.6622) from the 118th Congress and the Foreign Pollution Fee Act (S.1325), which was reintroduced in April 2025, both aim to set a price on carbon-intensive imported products starting in June 2026. In the United Kingdom, the CBAM was initially planned to begin in 2026 but was postponed to 2027 as part of the drive to accelerate the economy's transition to net zero by 2050.³³ The EU will implement its CBAM from January 2026. However, the EU has undertaken to support developing and least developed countries towards decarbonisation and transformation of their manufacturing industries.³⁴ G20 countries, which are mainly the ones implementing CBAMS, can ensure that CBAMs align with international trade rules and reduce the risk of trade disputes, while also honouring their “common but differentiated response” in the implementation of CBAM.

Least developed and developing countries will thus need to accelerate vital mitigation measures or explore alternative markets that fairly impose carbon taxes, while building their green economic activities. Furthermore, countries are expected to balance domestic priorities with international commitments on issues such as phasing out unabated fossil fuels in electricity generation,

²⁸ Mostefaoui et al., (2024).

²⁹ IEEFA (2024).

³⁰ Perdana & Vielle (2025).

³¹ Carbon-intensive goods include cement, iron, steel, aluminium, fertilisers, electricity, and hydrogen.

³² Lim & Kim (2025).

³³ UK Government (2024).

³⁴ European Union (2023).

stopping deforestation and degradation, and transitioning to zero-carbon transportation. Least developed and developing countries will need to develop their capacity to gather data to inform the national stocktake, enhance their 2025 NDCs in 2025, to ensure ongoing access to some economies, and set new targets for 2035 and beyond.³⁵ This is the core of a just transition - a move to a low-carbon economy that is fair and equitable for everyone, especially workers and communities heavily dependent on fossil fuels. It guarantees that the shift to a sustainable economy does not leave vulnerable groups behind by creating decent jobs, providing social protections, and offering training and reskilling programmes.³⁶

3.2. Climate Change Adaptation

Africa, as other parts of the world, is experiencing extreme weather events, including droughts, floods, heatwaves, sea-level rise, biodiversity loss, food and water insecurity, and other climate-related hazards. These events occur more frequently and with greater intensity, are more deadly, and cause costly disasters.³⁷ Climate change adaptation, which involves actions that help reduce vulnerability to the current or expected impacts of climate change, is thus critical to achieve. These climate disasters are severely impacting livelihoods and reversing gains made in addressing poverty, infrastructure, development, inequality, and many other socio-economic indicators. The Global Goal on Adaptation, as established by Article 7 of the Paris Agreement, commits Parties to enhancing resilience, reducing vulnerability, and supporting adaptation actions to support the achievement of SDGs.³⁸

All SDGs are directly and indirectly affected by climate change. Hence, achieving the Paris Agreement sets the global community on course to achieving the SDGs.³⁹ According to a recent analysis by the African Development Bank, climate change could result in a yearly reduction of up to 2% in Africa's GDP by 2050. Climate change costs in African countries can reach up to 5% of their GDP, significantly hindering development and efforts to reduce poverty across the Continent.⁴⁰ Although international adaptation funding increased from US\$22 billion in 2021 to US\$28 billion in 2022, it still falls short of the estimated annual requirement of US\$187 billion to US\$359 billion.⁴¹ The African Development Bank projects that Africa's adaptation financing gap from international sources ranges from \$166 billion to \$260 billion in 2020-2030. More than 40 African countries have completed or are working on their National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), but the quality and success of implementing these plans vary widely.⁴²

As climate impacts grow more severe, raising awareness of effective adaptation strategies, strengthening policy frameworks, and fostering innovative technological solutions will be essential for building societal, economic, and ecological resilience in Africa.⁴³ The World

³⁵ Boehm et al., (2023).

³⁶ UNFCCC (2018).

³⁷ WMO (2025a).

³⁸ UNFCCC (2023).

³⁹ UNDESA-UNFCCC (2024); WMO (2025a).

⁴⁰ AfDB (2023).

⁴¹ WMO (2025a).

⁴² AfDB (2023).

⁴³ WMO (2025a).

Meteorological Organization (WMO) estimates that by 2030, up to 118 million extremely poor people (living on less than US\$ 1.90 per day) will be exposed to drought, floods and extreme heat in Africa, if adequate response measures are not put in place. This will place additional burdens on poverty alleviation efforts and significantly hamper growth.⁴⁴ To better cope with climate change, least developed and developing countries should focus on investing more in tools like weather observation and monitoring systems, scenario planning, early warning systems for disasters, climate resilient infrastructure, sustainable farming practices, community-based adaptation, building capacity and awareness, and ways to assess risks and vulnerability to climate change from the limited resources.

In some African countries, such as Namibia, South Africa and Rwanda, national governments are making notable investments in adaptation through their budget allocations.⁴⁵ However, in general, African States primarily relied on debt instruments (standard loans) for adaptation finance, accounting for 57%. This share has been rising, averaging 53% from 2017 to 2021, and is significant, considering the rapid growth of external debt in Africa, which has outpaced GDP growth since 2010. Concessional terms dominated, constituting 69% of debt instruments, while non-concessional loans were mainly utilised to fund middle-income countries in the region. Nevertheless, least developed countries in Africa have also obtained non-concessional debt for adaptation.⁴⁶

Climate adaptation should not just focus on the environment. Other vulnerable sectors, such as agriculture, health, tourism, education and housing, amongst others, should have funded sectoral adaptation plans. Each sectoral adaptation plan could be enhanced through catalytic collaborations to build a greener and more diversified globally competitive economy. Public-private partnerships carry great potential in unlocking catalytic finance, supporting innovation, building green skills, and driving institutional reforms and the adoption of data-driven insights. This will help mitigate risks, build adaptive capacity, shorten recovery, boost resilience at local, national, and regional levels and guide sustainable development strategies. Part of the adaptation should explore economic diversification, social protection, research and development and technology adoption. Technological interventions should leverage traditional or indigenous technologies through nature-based solutions to increase acceptance of interventions. If these investments are locally led or community-run systems, they will help reduce risks, build the ability to adapt to changes, and strengthen resilience from local communities all the way up to national and regional levels. Ultimately, this will guide strategies for sustainable development across the Continent. Parliaments will thus play an important role in ensuring that climate adaptation is equally prioritised, as is often the case with climate mitigation efforts. Furthermore, there is a need to drive the operationalisation of the loss and damage fund to aid vulnerable countries recover from both economic and non-economic losses.

3.3. Climate finance

⁴⁴ UNEP (2024a).

⁴⁵ DFFE (2023).

⁴⁶ UNEP (2024a).

Climate finance has been a significant challenge in climate action, as developed countries have not honoured their US\$100 billion annual pledge towards global climate action. During COP15 in 2009, developed countries committed to mobilising US\$100 billion a year by 2020 in the Copenhagen Accord for climate finance to support low- and middle-income countries.⁴⁷ However, bureaucratic and exclusionary criteria imposed during the application process effectively prevented many African countries from accessing the funds, with only a few countries on the Continent being exceptions.⁴⁸ Without urgent, coordinated action that includes debt restructuring, increased climate finance, and stringent enforcement mechanisms, global climate goals may remain out of reach. The 2023 Oxfam Report found that:

- Developed countries restructured up to one-third of official aid as climate finance instead of new funding;
- Allocated more funds towards mitigation;
- Converted more than half of the grants into loans;
- Provided inadequate funding for adaptation, and
- Employed misleading accounting practices.⁴⁹

As a result, many developing countries have found the climate financing process to be lacking in transparency, genuine accountability mechanisms, and the ability to incorporate local considerations, ownership, and responsiveness to the needs of the communities it is intended to reach.⁵⁰ On the contrary, developed countries celebrated fulfilling their Copenhagen commitment, although it was only achieved in 2022 through complex schemes and processes.⁵¹

At the COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan, developed countries pledged to triple climate finance to developing countries, from the previous goal of US\$100 billion annually, to US\$300 billion annually by 2035. This pledge is voluntary, and countries can withdraw, hence it is not enforceable. Least developed and developing countries remain sceptical based on their experience when the pledge was US\$100 billion.⁵² The pledged amount is significantly less than the required amount, according to the 2023 African Economic Outlook Report by the African Development Bank. The report estimates that Africa will need between US\$2.6 trillion and US\$2.8 trillion by 2030 to fulfil its climate commitments outlined in countries' recent NDCs.⁵³ This translates to an estimated annual total climate finance need for Africa of US\$277 billion. Additionally, the United Nations projects that Africa requires US\$1.3 trillion annually to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).⁵⁴ Therefore, closing Africa's climate finance gap and achieving the SDGs solely through domestic sources is not feasible.

The ongoing inability to access climate finance highlights the urgent need for African nations to examine and address the root causes of their limited access to climate funding. Despite

⁴⁷ OECD (2024).

⁴⁸ Zagma *et al.*, (2023).

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Freitas & Mwaniki (2024).

⁵¹ OECD (2024).

⁵² Wei *et al.*, (2025).

⁵³ AfDB (2025).

⁵⁴ Freitas & Mwaniki (2024).

increasing financial commitments worldwide, many least developed and developing countries face difficulties securing climate finance due to a mix of systemic and institutional challenges.^{55,56} These include weak negotiation skills to obtain favourable deals with development partners, fragmented and insufficient climate planning, and the lack of effective mechanisms to monitor climate finance flows. Furthermore, the absence of reliable data weakens evidence-based decision-making, while policy environments in many countries remain unfavourable for attracting climate investments. There are also notable gaps in public and institutional awareness of climate-related risks and opportunities, as well as limited access to the technologies necessary for effective climate action. These problems are not just technical but reveal critical governance gaps that demand robust oversight and accountability. Parliaments, in particular from developing countries, as guardians of public interest and allocators of national budgets, should play an active role in climate finance. By enhancing their oversight of climate finance planning, execution, and reporting, parliaments can help guarantee that climate finance is mobilised efficiently, utilised strategically, and distributed fairly to promote resilient and sustainable development.

4. YOUNG PARLIAMENTARIANS AS DRIVERS OF CLIMATE ACTION AND INNOVATION

Young people are a dynamic source of innovation, yet face significant barriers to political engagement, including poverty, education and employment hurdles, and discrimination.⁵⁷ A global survey revealed that 76% of under-30s feel politicians do not listen to them, a sentiment particularly strong in South Africa (90%). This disenfranchisement stems from administrative, legal, and financial obstacles, lack of trust in institutions, inadequate civic education, and a scarcity of relatable candidates.^{58,59} Globally, youth are underrepresented in parliaments where only 17.5% of Members of Parliament (MPs) are under 40, and a mere 2.6% are under 30, with 37% of chambers having no MPs under 30. To combat this, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) recommends youth quotas, aligning voting and eligibility ages, supporting youth parliamentary channels, empowering young parliamentarians, mentoring aspiring youth, and advocating for broader participation.⁶⁰

Young parliamentarians can contribute to climate governance by leveraging legislative and budgetary oversight to hold governments accountable.

Parliaments are crucial for enhancing youth involvement in oversight, legislation, budgeting, and public participation. Young parliamentarians are uniquely positioned to champion youth rights and interests, promoting impactful policies and ensuring adequate budgetary allocations.⁶¹ National Youth Councils (NYCs) are vital bridges between youth and decision-makers, often officially recognised by governments.⁶² Parliaments should collaborate with these and other youth stakeholders, integrating youth voices into public hearings, legislative reforms, budget

⁵⁵ Freitas & Mwaniki (2024).
⁵⁶ IEEFA (2024)
⁵⁷ UNDP (2022).
⁵⁸ European Youth Forum (2022).
⁵⁹ Ibid
⁶⁰ Inter-Parliamentary Union < <https://www.ipu.org/i-say-yes> >
⁶¹ Inter-Parliamentary Union (2024).
⁶² European Youth Forum (2022).

processes, and committee oversight. Innovative engagement mechanisms include developing youth charters, using social media for awareness, and offering parliamentary internships to foster direct involvement and learning.⁶³

The escalating climate crisis urgently demands new governance approaches, and young

Public platforms for engagements such as youth parliaments afford young parliamentarians and young people as stakeholders the opportunity to raise awareness, discuss challenges and share solutions as a collective.

parliamentarians are increasingly becoming vital players in driving climate action through innovation and oversight. Innovation encourages the development of new technologies, strategies, and approaches to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Young parliamentarians can drive the crafting of new laws, regulations, and incentives that encourage climate-friendly behaviours and investments. This includes tools such as carbon pricing, mandates for renewable energy, and building codes that enhance energy efficiency. Young MPs can drive climate action through scrutinising legislation, influencing budgetary allocations, and applying oversight tools to monitor government compliance with climate commitments.⁶⁴ Their fresh perspectives and advocacy for

intergenerational equity position them as key actors in pushing for innovative climate change policies. Young parliamentarians can also be instrumental in shifting societal norms, behaviours, and attitudes to promote sustainability through campaigns that encourage energy conservation, waste reduction, and more sustainable lifestyles.⁶⁵ Fostering such innovation requires broad collaboration across sectors and diverse stakeholders, including youth, to ensure solutions are both inclusive and effective. Members of Parliament, especially their younger members, are ideally placed to promote this collaboration, connecting innovative ideas, their realisation, and implementing impact-driven oversight.

5. ROLE OF PARLIAMENTS AND INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

The ICJ advisory opinion in July 2025⁶⁶ confirmed the obligation of States to address climate change through mitigation, adaptation, finance, technology development and transfer, transparency of action and support, and capacity-building. Parliamentarians must therefore ensure adequate efforts, including climate action instruments (policies, laws and programmes) are implemented to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement. Inadequate efforts to meet the NDC threshold could amount to a breach of international obligations.

5.1. The role of legislation in addressing climate change

- Parliament plays a crucial role in addressing climate change, primarily through the power of legislation. Parliaments should thus ensure that countries have legislation that aligns with their international commitments and use their oversight role to ensure that such

⁶³ Kosciulek (2020), p.4.

⁶⁴ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2023).

⁶⁵ UNFCCC (2022).

⁶⁶ The ICJ climate change ruling.

legislation is being implemented. Legislation should encourage governments to set ambitious targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, enhancing resilience, green infrastructure investments, sustainable agricultural practices and adaptation that prioritise vulnerable groups (women, youth, people living with disabilities and children), particularly at this stage where countries are updating their NDCs.

- Parliaments should encourage youth participation in the legislative process by ensuring youth structures and their voices are expressed in the development and implementation of innovative solutions in key sectors such as energy, agriculture, and transport.
- For countries with high emissions, parliaments should actively review and potentially increase the price on carbon emissions, using legislative mechanisms to create economic disincentives for polluting activities, incentivise investment and facilitate the transition away from fossil fuels, while also avoiding undermining local economic development.
- Parliaments should encourage a review or harmonising legislation and programmes across various sectors and governmental levels, thereby creating a coherent and effective framework that enables comprehensive climate action.

5.2. Best practices for parliamentary engagement on climate change

- Establishing cross-party committees specifically focused on climate change is crucial, as it fosters collaboration across political divides and ensures a more unified, long-term approach to a complex issue.
- Exposing parliamentarians to various climate change training programmes, ensuring they have access to experts or consistent dialogue between parliamentarians and diverse stakeholders. This equips them with the necessary knowledge to understand scientific data, policy implications, and potential solutions. Parliamentarians can then use this knowledge in their constituencies to create awareness, encourage, and support local (community and household) climate change mitigation and resilience initiatives and innovations. To encourage youth participation, Members of Parliament should collaborate with youth-led movements to amplify pressure for climate action.
- Use social media and digital platforms to engage directly with the electorate to solicit input that can be brought to the attention of Parliament. These platforms can also be used to raise awareness and educate young people.
- Establishing sustained collaborative relationships with civil society organisations, academic and research institutions and providing regular opportunities for engagement with parliamentary committees, including capacity building opportunities for parliamentarians and parliamentary officials. The networks and collaborations can then be extended to constituency work, where ideas can be converted to pilot projects or programmes.
- Host youth parliaments with a focus on climate change and invite stakeholders to participate from civil society, government and the private sector.

5.3. Finances or Budget Allocation

- Allocate sufficient funds to climate-related initiatives, including renewable energy projects, energy efficiency programmes, and adaptation measures and should have impact-oriented indicators.
- Ensure that governments invest in climate-resilient infrastructure, such as flood-resistant roads, drought-tolerant agriculture, health systems, climate resilient buildings, etc.
- Protect vulnerable populations from the adverse impacts of climate change. E.g. technology for people living with disabilities, poor, rural and under-serviced communities.
- Foster public-private partnerships to leverage private sector resources and expertise for climate action. These partnerships could help resolve the primary barrier to accessing climate finance, such as the lack of a comprehensive NDC Investment Strategy.
- Parliaments should also ensure that their governments develop institutional capacity to gather and analyse climate data, as data scarcity has been identified as a key factor increasing perceived investor risk in African climate projects.
- Parliaments should ensure the integration of climate change into all government programmes, as its impact affects all sectors. Parliamentarians can then ensure that programmes implemented in their constituencies reflect integration of climate change, and associated responses.
- Track climate funding (e.g., taxes, levies, international grants, guarantees, concessional loans, commercial loans) and expenditures through robust systems to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of climate spending. Parliamentarians can thus help ensure transparency in climate funding of projects within their constituencies to keep communities informed and enable them to provide input on programmes in their areas.

5.4. Oversight and Accountability

- While sourcing climate finance is critical in the fight against climate change for governments, equally important is the development of domestic capacity between national and sub-national departments to coordinate and track climate finance and impacts on funded programmes. Parliaments must oversee this process in line with their parliamentary responsibilities.
- Parliaments must prioritise accountability by requiring governments to report on their progress in meeting climate change targets, including regional commitments.
- Lobbying other parliaments globally and in the region to ensure their governments honour their climate commitments.

5.5. Changes in parliamentary business

- Determine and track carbon footprint or emissions from Parliament's operations and set clear targets and timelines to reduce them, including green procurement (recycled material).
- Promote transparency in parliamentary greening efforts by conducting an annual sustainability audit and publishing the results.
- Ensure water and energy efficiency on the premises, while also reducing carbon miles where meetings can be held online.

6. CONCLUSION

Addressing the climate crisis fairly, inclusively, equitably and sustainably demands a comprehensive approach to climate finance and policy. G20 Members have a moral obligation to prioritise grants over loans to avoid worsening the already heavy debt burdens of least developed and developing countries. Over-reliance on loans by vulnerable countries, even those with low interest rates, risks diverting funds from vital social and economic needs, hindering long-term development and regional trade. A just transition must be supported with dedicated funds for retraining workers, social protection, and diversifying economies, while equally investing in climate adaptation that is driven by innovative solutions. This includes building resilient infrastructure, setting up early warning systems, renewable energy and promoting climate-smart agriculture to protect communities from increasing climate impacts. Governments have a significant responsibility in ensuring the implementation of just transition programmes, while parliaments should carry their constitutional oversight mandate to ensure the transition is just, affordable and efficient. On global trade, rules must adhere to the principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities. Tools like the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism need careful design to prevent unfair pressure on developing economies that are already managing complex industrial changes. Parliaments must strengthen their oversight role. They need to ensure that climate policies and finances are transparent, inclusive, and fair, driving solutions that benefit every community. The involvement and inclusion of young parliamentarians in addressing social issues like climate change through policymaking will ensure that their innovative ideas are incorporated in driving change across the world.

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