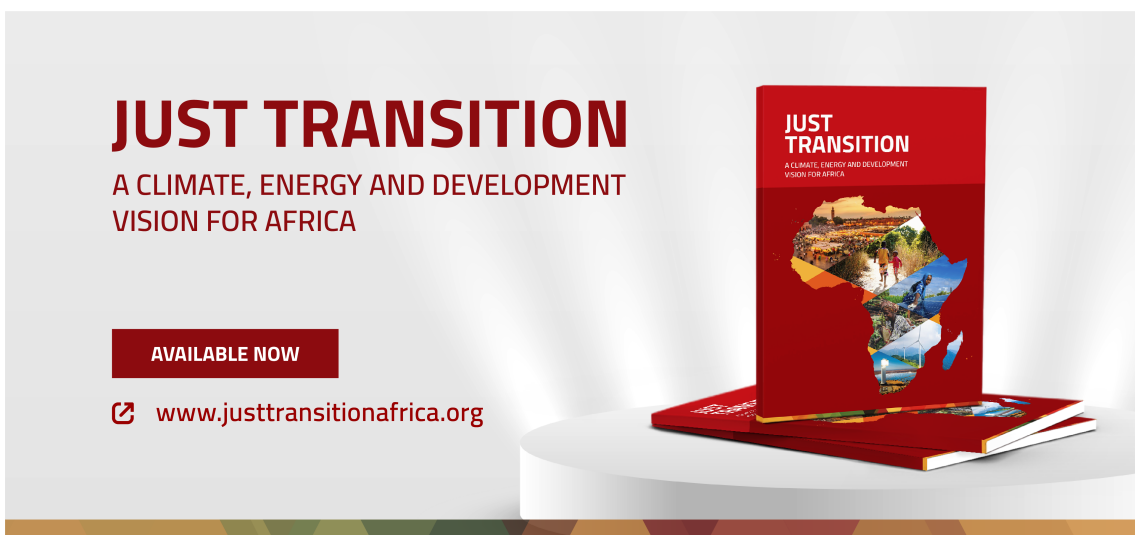


Press release, 29 May 2023

New report details how Africa can develop sustainably, collaboratively



While Africa continues to suffer the destructive effects of climate change and numerous other crises, a new report shows how the continent can embark on an African Just Transition that strengthens food and energy infrastructure and sets out a more resilient and just development path.

This report was co-authored by a collective of independent experts under the leadership of Dr. Youba Sokona, Vice-Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and one of Africa's most senior experts on climate, energy, and development.

It carries a foreword by President William Ruto of Kenya, who states: "I believe by becoming more assertive and pursuing a climate and development agenda through unified approaches of the kind outlined in this report, Africa will be able to mitigate the climate emergency and propel itself to prosperity."

The report highlights ways in which Pan-African collaboration can anchor the continent on a new path of development and just transition, by exploiting its huge renewable energy, food sovereignty and development potential.

It asserts: "Change provides opportunities for Africa to control its own future. Achieving a better future will require unprecedented strategic vision — one that is rooted in Africa's shared history, responsive to its tremendous potential and articulated with confidence."

It anchors its analysis by examining how climate change, misguided development policies and colonial dependencies have locked African countries into perpetual traps, including external debt.

It highlights three structural traps facing Africa, namely:

- Food insecurity, food imports and undernutrition
- Energy poverty created by inappropriate fossil-fuel based systems
- Failed or ineffectual industrial strategies

These traps must be addressed by:

- A transition to food sovereignty through agroecology
- A just energy transition to people-centered, 100% renewable energy systems
- Pan-African industrial policies that harness the continent's resources while caring for its people and environment.

The report is a wakeup call for African leaders to the effect that "without renewal of its strategic vision, the continent will remain a site of contestation by other global powers seeking to control its resources, markets and institutions."

Further, President Ruto states that: "Realizing the continent's potential requires bold, new approaches matched to the magnitude of the existential challenge posed by climate change which affects the continent disproportionately. These bold actions must be coupled with a strong sense of urgency and avoid pitfalls and traps of maldevelopment pathways which have previously held back the continent. Replicating mistakes of the past and expecting new results is not an option."

The report's findings build on more than a decade of collaboration and experience by the co-authors that includes building institutions and formulating major regional and continental level initiatives in relation to climate, energy, and development.

Key messages include:

Food Sovereignty

Africa is a net importer of food, with emphasis on high-cost, high pollutant cash crops. To change this, African countries need to switch to agroecological practices that promote food sovereignty, and conserve biodiversity, local varieties, and local knowledge.

This approach will provide more sustainable food production and secure livelihoods while protecting smallholder farming communities and strengthening local and territorial markets. It will also reduce the external debt burden.

Energy poverty

More than 600 million Africans are energy poor. But the continent also has an opportunity to bypass the dirty energy infrastructure of fossil fuels which have polluted the planet and triggered climate change.

Countries can adopt cleaner, cheaper, and more agile renewable energy forms to power Africa in the 21st Century. Africa bypassed the landline telephone technology and jumped straight to cell

phones. Similarly, we can leapfrog the fossil fuel-dependent development model to modern, people-centered renewable energy systems.

The report warns against the Global North's tragic obsession with dirty energy, which has left Africans at the mercy of the impacts of the climate crisis.

By pooling African energy networks and prioritizing renewables, the continent can become a clean energy superpower while avoiding the trap of old, centralized fossil fuel infrastructure that worsens the climate crisis.

A Pan-African industrial approach

The authors of the report urge African leaders to break out of the post-colonial trap of prioritizing extractive industries, simple assembly-line manufacturing and low-value-added exports to foreign countries.

Instead, they should develop internal African markets and formulate strategic partnerships and trade relations on Pan-African terms that can create economies of scale for new, socially and environmentally appropriate African industries.

The report argues that Pan-African industrial policies are vital for helping Africa break free from the role of 'sub-contracting' to the Global North. This will in turn make it possible to build productive systems that generate opportunities for Africans to ensure that the continent's wealth of resources benefits its people.

Just transition and development

The report emphasizes that Africa can and must formulate a vision of 'Just Transition' that is rooted in a deep interrogation of what 'development' entails and one that prioritizes human rights and well-being. This means reassessing past 'another development' visions and that sufficiency and equity must be at the core of all development efforts.

The report also states that it is not possible for the whole world to use resources at the current level of wealthy countries and elites. A Just Transition must entail a global convergence of energy and material use that focuses on/considers degrowth for those overconsuming.

A just transition also means reparations and provision of necessary financial support to African and other developing countries at scale and on par with the needs. The current net flow of resources from the Global South to the Global North must be immediately reversed.

The collective of independent experts co-authoring the report includes Youba Sokona (Vice-Chair IPCC), Yacob Mulugetta (University College London), Meron Tesfamichael (University College of London), Fadhel Kaboub (Denison University and Global Institute for Sustainable Prosperity), Niclas Hällström (WhatNext?), Matthew Stilwell (Institute for Governance and Sustainable Development), Mohamed Adow (Power Shift Africa), and Colin Besaans (Power Shift Africa).

Quotes

Dr. **Youba Sokona**, Vice-Chair of the IPCC, said:

"Africa is at an energy crossroads. Will the continent follow in the footsteps of its former colonisers who burned millions of tonnes of fossil fuel that polluted the planet? Or will it follow a different path? We can show the world that development in the 21st Century can be different from that of the 20th Century. We must establish policies that prioritize renewables and leave fossil fuels in the ground."

Tasneem Essop, Executive Director, Climate Action Network International, said:

"Is a better Africa possible? A question usually met with Afro-pessimism, stereotypical tropes, and ahistorical analysis. Now, with this pathbreaking Report, that is intellectually inspiring, technically robust, and practically feasible, we can find optimism that, as Africans, we can achieve a better life for all. The Report helps us understand how the current challenges and the interconnected multiple crises facing Africa today finds its roots in the historical context of colonialism and extractivism, it explores the structural legacies that continue and presents achievable proposals for an alternative development path for Africa that addresses the nexus between climate, energy and development. While focusing on Africa, this Report will also contribute immensely to the global discourse on alternative models of development, both in the Global South and North. We need courageous and visionary leadership, matched with the hopes and aspirations of masses of our people to get us on this path to a just, equitable and safe future"

Yacob Mulugetta, University College London, said:

"African countries need to pool their physical and technical resources together. Building and sharing knowledge is key. They must also unite in holding the Global North to account on their pledge to provide climate finance, and challenge the global finance architecture. Collectively, they must push for greater reforms of international financial institutions in a bid to unlock a wave of infrastructural developments in Africa."

Meron Tesfamichael, University College London, said:

"Due to their high dependence on agroecosystems for livelihoods and inadequate infrastructure, communities across Africa are vulnerable to climate shocks and stresses. Building resilience and meeting these challenges depends on countries' ability to strengthen their food and energy systems and to promote an inclusive and equitable development path. However, this demands countries projecting a vision of a just transition that is pro-people and built on the principles of social justice."

Fadhel Kaboub, Global Institute for Sustainable Prosperity, said:

"Africa's external debt trap can only be addressed via transformative long-term strategies focused on food sovereignty, renewable energy sovereignty, and a pan-African high value-added industrial policy. This report urges African leaders to acknowledge that our climate, energy, and development policies are inextricably connected, and therefore a comprehensive and coherent pan-African vision by and from African is critical for meeting the aspirations of our people and achieving a just, sustainable, and prosperous future for Africa."

Elizabeth Press, Director of Planning and Programme Support, IRENA, said:

"A renewables-based energy system presents a transformational opportunity for Africa. IRENA estimates that such a path would result in a GDP 6.5% higher than the current plans. Getting there is a matter of structures, plans and finance but also mindsets. This report offers critical input to the energy and development debate in Africa and the forthcoming Africa Climate Summit."

Mohamed Adow, Power Shift Africa Director, said:

“The global race to become leaders in renewable energy is about to explode and the African people can benefit from this abundant and increasingly cheap form of power. To be able to capitalize on this opportunity, however, African leaders must take a Pan-African approach by working together. Other countries are mobilising resources to push forward support for green industries; the US, EU and China have all announced packages of support in recent months. African leaders would be wise to develop their own, pan-African support plan for accelerating the clean energy revolution.”

Niclas Hällström, WhatNext? said:

“This report spells out a bold development vision from Africa, which shows that there are still no truly ‘developed’ countries anywhere. All countries need to be guided by a vision that meets everyone’s needs in a just and sustainable way. This means that wealthy countries need to decrease their energy and material consumption. It also means African countries can take charge of their development agenda with renewable energy and economic policies that genuinely serves the interests of their people, as shown by the African experts in this report.”

Ali Mohamed, Climate Change Envoy, Kenya

“By securing the first-ever loss and damage fund to support Global South communities driven into destitution by effects of the climate crisis, African leaders attending last year’s COP27 in Egypt demonstrated their profound unity of purpose. We need to see this unified approach in tackling Africa’s developmental challenges for the continent to maximize its possibilities and cement its place in the global arena.”