

Climate change in southern Africa

ACTSA position paper

Southern Africa, apart from South Africa, contributes little to the causes of climate change but all of southern Africa suffers disproportionately from its effects. Climate change modelling indicates southern Africa is likely to experience temperature rises of between 1.5 to 3.0 degrees celsius. The region will become drier and hotter. The impact will be greater food and water insecurity, deepening poverty and further social inequality. The large-scale use of fossil fuels, which lead to greenhouse gases emissions, principally in the developed world is the main driver of climate change globally. In order to prevent this crisis from deepening, emissions must be reduced first and foremost in rich industrialised countries.

The main emitters of CO₂ in southern Africa are fossil fuel burning (especially coal in South Africa's thermal power stations) deforestation and land degradation.

The impacts on southern Africa

Rapid global warming due to climate change represents a severe threat to economic growth and development in southern Africa. It will exacerbate poverty and current inequalities in the region, but it can also serve as an opportunity to address these issues. The specific impacts of climate change on different sectors include:

- Food insecurity will be further aggravated by climate variability and climate change. Erratic rainfall is already increasing food shortages with droughts and/or floods leading to loss of lives and livelihoods. Humanitarian crisis are becoming more frequent in the region.
- Climate change will cause additional pressure on already unreliable water sources and health conditions will be particularly affected as a result.
- Mass migration, displacement and possible conflict: millions of people may be forced to move because of advancing desertification, flooding and agricultural disruption.
- Climate change constitutes a threat for a large range of rights, including the right to safe and adequate water and food, the right to health and adequate housing. Gender inequalities and women's rights will also be further aggravated.
- Decent work is endangered by the social and economic threats posed by climate change where workers from urban and rural areas will suffer from its impacts and governments' ability to deliver public services will be weakened.

Reversing the trend and managing the impact

In order to avoid the worst impacts of climate change global temperature increases need to be kept below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. At the same time specific measures to adapt to those effects must be adopted. The two internationally accepted strategies are: mitigation and adaptation.

- **Mitigation** (tackling the causes of rapid global warming) refers to the measures undertaken to reduce or eliminate greenhouse gas emissions. In particular, energy-efficient technologies and renewable energy sources are key to reducing greenhouse gas emissions across the world, including in southern Africa. South Africa has assumed a leading role in the region, launching a national mitigation response strategy.

- Adaptation (addressing and minimising the consequences of rapid global warming) strategies aim to minimise the adverse impacts of climate change; several southern African countries, are adopting specific national plans to this end to protect the economy and the most vulnerable people.

“Climate change can undermine our continuing efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals...Reducing the impact of climate change must involve greater commitment to the search for local solution”

Armando Guebuza, President of Mozambique

Southern African response

Prior to the Copenhagen Conference in December 2009, African Ministers of the Environment adopted the Nairobi Declaration which urges developed countries to set ambitious targets to reduce their emissions and support Africa under the future climate regime according to the following priorities: adaptation, capacity-building, research, financing and technology development and transfer. The Declaration also emphasised that African countries should be equitably compensated for environmental, social and economic losses, in the context of environmental justice and poverty reduction. In southern Africa civil society organisations, including the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), are calling for action which both addresses the climate crisis and reduces poverty.

Financing to tackle climate change

Southern African countries have joined other developing nations in demanding the establishment of a new multi-billion dollar fund aimed at supporting their efforts to tackle climate change. The demand is that such a fund must be additional to current development finance and only developed countries should contribute to it since they bear the historic responsibility for rapid global warming. Innovative financing proposals, including the ‘polluter pays’ principle, which involves the private sector, the ‘International Air Passenger Adaptation Levy’, an ‘International Shipping Levy’ and the ‘Financial Transaction Tax’ also known as the Robin Hood Tax present further opportunities to finance a new ‘climate change fund’.

ACTSA position

ACTSA 's position based on the calls by trade unions, other civil society organisations and governments in the region is;

- **There must an equitable, just and binding agreement which reduces greenhouse gas emissions with developed countries acting first and which enables developing countries reduce poverty.**
- **financing for climate change:** We call for the establishment of a new multi-billion dollar fund for developing countries to assist them in dealing with the impact of climate change. The money must be new and additional to current development aid, adequate, predictable and sustainable. Additional revenue for the fund could be raised through innovative financing schemes.
- **southern African mitigation and adaptation strategies:** We believe international support to southern Africa to meet the challenges of climate change must be in accordance with the priorities determined by southern Africa. Among these priorities are adaptation, capacity-building, research, financing and technology development and transfer.
- **addressing the social impacts of climate change in southern Africa:** We support the call by civil society in southern Africa for their governments to address social inequality in their mitigation and adaptation strategies. We support the call for a 'just transition' towards green economies in southern Africa and stress the role of public services including education, health and transport, and the need for access to energy.
- **regional development challenges:** We support sustainable growth to enable southern Africa to reduce poverty. We support the transportation of fairly traded southern African produce internationally and we support responsible tourism, inspired by principles of social and economic justice.