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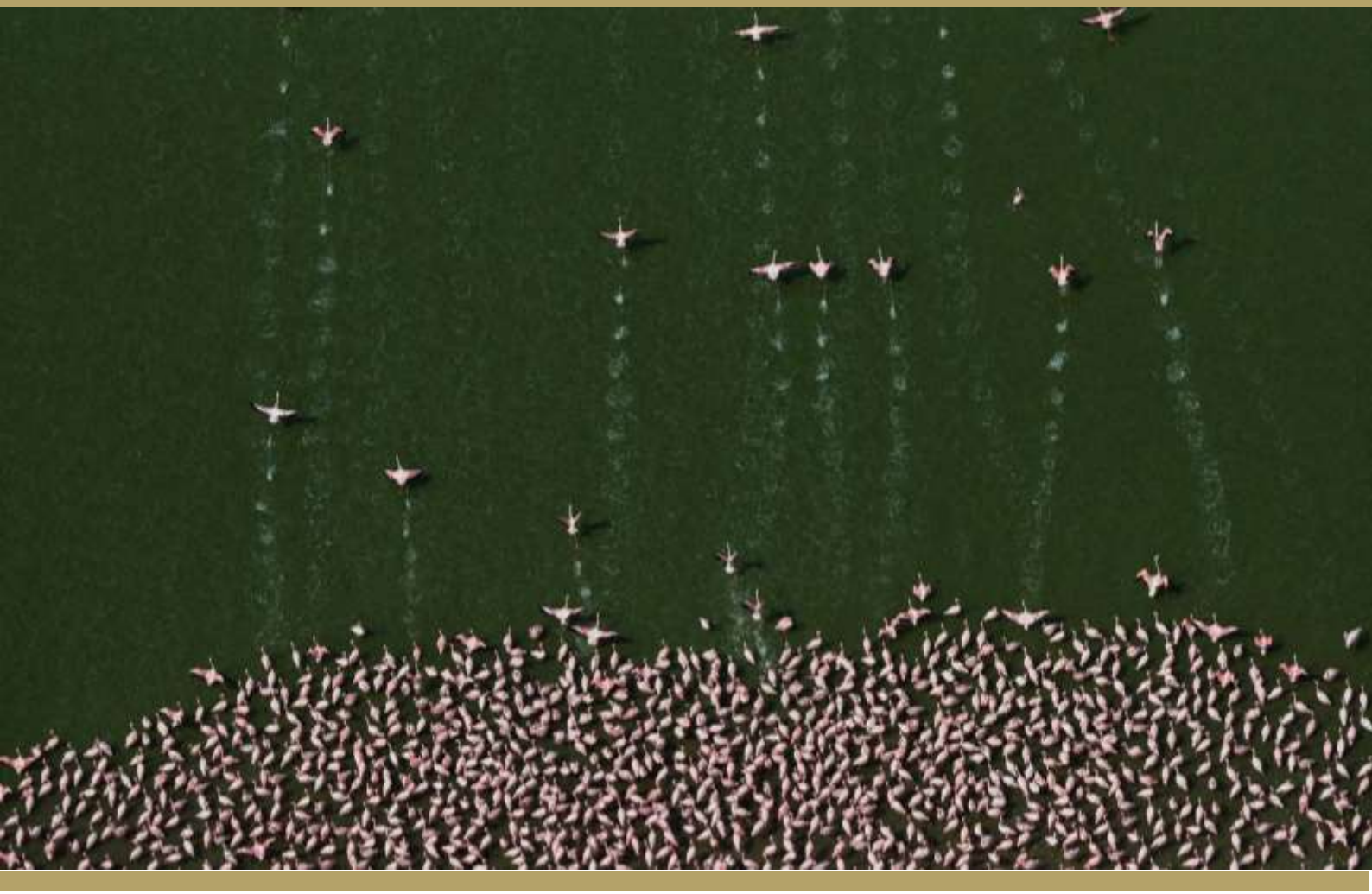
African Union

African Union

Green Recovery Action Plan

2021-2027



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Cover image: Flamingos at Lake Bogoria, Kenya (Getty images)

Principles / Executive Summary

1. Across Africa, progress on achieving the Agenda 2063, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement has not been uniform. Far too many people have not benefited from improvements to education, healthcare and security.

2. COVID-19 represents the biggest global economic shock since The Great Depression and will hit Africa particularly hard due to existing vulnerabilities. As a result, food insecurity and debt are rising, and hard-won development gains are being lost.

3. As the COVID-19 pandemic unfolds globally and in Africa, the situation remains fluid and rapidly evolving, and urgent responses, interventions, measures and responses are required. This calls for increased agility and heightened responsiveness from African states and other agencies to intervene and contribute positively in a timely and meaningful manner.

4. COVID-19 does not change the urgency of addressing African (and broader) environmental challenges, but it has accelerated decision points that could have substantial impacts. As countries move from containing the virus to economic recovery, choices are being made that will shape trajectories on emissions, resilience and biodiversity for decades to come. A clean and resilient recovery in Africa will lead to employment in the industries of the future whilst ensuring that we address the linked challenges of public health, prosperity and climate change.

5. In thinking about how the COVID-19 recovery can be clean, resilient, and inclusive, we do not need to start from scratch. Countries' national or sectoral masterplans, climate change adaptation plans and the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) – as well as a host of other national plans – provide blueprints for action.

6. Within this context, the Green Recovery Action Plan will tackle the combined challenges of the COVID-19 recovery and climate change, by focusing on critical areas of joint priority, including climate finance, renewable energy, resilient agriculture, resilient cities, land use and biodiversity.

From 2021 to 2027, under the leadership of the African Union and in partnership with AU member States and International Partners, the Green Recovery Action Plan will:

Strengthen collaboration on a broad range of shared priorities in support of the African Union's objectives for the Continent's sustainable recovery from COVID-19 and support the realisation of a shared vision for a prosperous, secure, inclusive and innovative future for Africa.

Embolden action on five priority areas including on:

1. Climate finance, including increasing flows, efficiency, and impact of funding;
2. Supporting renewable energy, energy efficiency and national Just Transition programmes;
3. Nature-based solutions and focus on biodiversity through work on sustainable land management, forestry, oceans and ecotourism;
4. Resilient agriculture, by focusing on inclusive economic development and green jobs; and
5. Green and resilient cities, including a focus on water (flooding and water resources) and enhancing information, communication and technology.

Galvanize efforts to support Green Recovery across the five priority areas through international partners, Pan African Institutions, Regional Economic Communities and AU member States by:

I. Mobilising Resources and Technical Support for member States;

II. Mainstreaming Green Recovery Principles in Planning, Development and Investment Strategies and

III. Increase the visibility of African Stakeholders in international fora.

The Green Recovery Action Plan will be implemented closely with Pan African institutions including the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and a wide range of regional and continental initiatives, development banks, the private sector, and African Union member States, so as to complement and enhance national recovery plans.

1. Situational Analysis on the Impacts of COVID-19 and Africa's Socio-Economic and Environmental Situation

Across Africa, progress on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement has not been uniform, even before Covid-19. Far too many people have not benefited from improvements to improvements in infrastructure, education, healthcare and security. For example, 600 million Africans currently do not have access to electricity and 90% of extreme poverty is likely to be concentrated in Africa by 2030. This is compounded by humanitarian disasters and internal conflicts which remain a persistent challenge.

Gender norms and power structures play a critical role in determining how women and men of different backgrounds are impacted by – and respond to – such crises. Pre-existing inequalities, gender-related roles and expectations, and unequal access to resources can deepen inequality and leave some groups disproportionately vulnerable.[1] Women are more exposed and vulnerable to climate change because they are often poorer, receive less education, and are not involved in political and household decision-making processes that affect their lives.[2] Women are also more vulnerable to climate shocks due to their role in subsistence rain fed agriculture and weaker access to resources and decision-making power.

The FAO has reported that even after controlling for socio-economic characteristics, women still had about a 13 percent higher chance of experiencing moderate or severe food insecurity than men, and close to 27 percent higher chance of being severely food insecure at the global level. As such, addressing inequalities is an essential part of building resilience and addressing climate and environmental challenges.

Within this context, COVID-19 represents the biggest global economic shock since The Great Depression and will hit Africa particularly hard due to existing vulnerabilities. The World Bank estimates that an additional 23 million people will be pushed into extreme poverty and 20 million jobs could disappear, costing Africa up to $500 billion in revenue. Food insecurity and debt are rising, and hard-won development gains are being lost.

1 GENDER, CLIMATE & SECURITY Sustaining inclusive peace on the frontlines of climate change 2020, United Nations Environment Programme, UN Women, UNDP and UNDPPA/PBSO

2 Nellemann, C., R. Verma, and L. Hislop (eds), Women at the frontline of climate change: Gender risks and hopes. A Rapid Response Assessment, 2011.

Many countries entered the COVID-19 crisis with significantly greater debt vulnerabilities that they had at the start the global financial crisis. In the years leading up to COVID-19, the composition of debt held by many African countries shifted away from traditional multilateral and concessional lending to both non-Paris Club official creditors – including China, Gulf States and India – and privately held, non-concessional loans. In addition, levels of debt held by African countries also increased over this time, averaging at debt-to-GDP ratios of above 50%, with several outliers having ratios in excess of 100%. Prior to COVID-19, a majority of African countries had fiscal deficits in excess of 3 percent.[3] Post COVID-19, the debt situation has resulted in a lack of fiscal space for Africa to simultaneously respond to the pandemic, build resilience to climate change, and get back on track to achieve the SDGs in this Decade of Action.

The United Nations Secretary-General's Policy Brief[4] on the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic in Africa recognizes that, in addition to the health impact, indirect consequences such as food insecurity, lack of medical supplies, loss of income and livelihoods, a looming debt crisis, as well as related security and political risks will be significant. As the COVID-19 pandemic unfolds globally and in Africa, the situation remains fluid and rapidly evolving, and urgent responses, interventions, measures and responses are required. This calls for increased agility and heightened responsiveness from African states and other agencies to intervene and contribute positively in a timely and meaningful manner. There is a need to seize the opportunities in the recovery from the pandemic to support the transformation of the continent towards a more inclusive and sustainable future. As such, the recovery from COVID-19 is an important opportunity to deliver cleaner, healthier, more resilient and more inclusive economies and societies, accelerating progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the goals of the Paris Agreement.

Women are being particularly impacted by COVID-19, with decades of progress reversed as women find their rights undermined, their access to public services and to the labour market curtailed, their unpaid care burden multiplied and their voices unheard during the pandemic. A recent UN report shows that COVID-19 is increasing the poverty gap between women and men. By 2030, the gender poverty gap for ages 25 to 34 will worsen from 118 women for every 100 men in 2021 to 121 women. By 2021, around 435 million women and girls will be living on less than $1.90 a day, including 47 million pushed into poverty due to the pandemic. This is especially true given the fundamental role that women will play in ensuring a successful COVID-19 recovery.

For the COVID-19 recovery to be sustainable, it must link a green recovery with an inclusive recovery. An 'inclusive' recovery will be one that leaves no one behind and ensures that marginalised groups (including women and youth) are actively involved and part of the recovery. This is especially important given Africa's demographic shift and associated challenges around youth employment across the continent. Young people will play a key role in all areas of COVID-19 recovery, and must be considered, championed, and included.

3 https://www.uneca.org/publications/covid-19-africa-protecting-lives-and-economies

4 https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg_policy_brief_on_covid-19_impact_on_africa_may_2020.pdf

Climate change and broader environmental degradation (i.e. land degradation, ecosystem degradation, habitat destruction, water and air pollution and biodiversity loss amongst others) further compound the challenges faced by countries during the COVID-19 recovery. Africa is already facing multiple threats induced by the impacts of climate change – from changing weather patterns which reduce crop yields, to natural disasters such as floods and drought which threaten communities and livelihoods. Collectively, these will affect the delivery of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and the Africa Agenda 2063 in full. The widening gap on financing for development is expected to increase with the least developed countries and developing countries in Africa potentially struggling to meet the SDGs.

Climate spending in developing countries particularly in Africa is likely to be hit hard in the short-term due to COVID-19 impacts. The Nationally Determined Contributions Partnership (NDC Partnership) initial global assessment[5] of COVID-19's impact on NDC revisions and climate ambition in 54 countries (including 29 in Africa) revealed two major challenges among others: 1) the focus on economic recovery and health threatens to distract political attention from climate change; and 2) diversion of financial resources away from climate action towards COVID-19 response due to competing priorities and mobility limitations. The survey results also highlighted the opportunity for well-designed economic recovery stimulus to accelerate the mainstreaming of climate action into development.

In thinking about how the COVID-19 recovery can be clean, resilient, and inclusive, we do not need to start from scratch: we can use projects already identified in countries' national or sectoral masterplans, as well as climate change adaptation plans and the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) of the Paris Agreement including the Land Degradation Neutrality targets, National Action Plans to Combat Desertification, Ecosystem Based Adaptation Strategy, National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans and others. To assess suitability, the World Bank has suggested that initiatives aimed at promoting COVID-19 recovery, should be assessed based on the benefits of short-term stimulus and job creation, including the number and timeliness of jobs created and fit with local skills, medium-term growth benefits, and the long-term sustainability and contributions to decarbonization, including assessing the country's current and future emission trajectory, protection of local ecosystems and biodiversity, and the impact on long-term growth potential.[6]

COVID-19 does not change the urgency of addressing African (and broader) environmental challenges, but it has accelerated decision points that could have substantial impacts. As countries move from containing the virus to economic recovery, choices are being made that will shape trajectories on emissions, resilience and biodiversity for decades to come. A clean and resilient recovery in Africa will lead to employment in the industries of the future whilst ensuring that we address the linked challenges of public health, prosperity and climate change.

5https://www.dropbox.com/sh/f9j5u5yc2d0ey7o/AACsa5k3rdbQfOHQ705aOLnna/8.%20Economic%20Advisory%20Support?dl=0&preview=NDCP_COVID_Response_Blog.pdf&subfolder_nav_tracking=1

6 STEPHEN HAMMER; STÉPHANE HALLEGATTE; FERZINA BANAJI How countries' climate ambitions can support a sustainable recovery from COVID-19 (Coronavirus); MAY 05, 2020

https://blogs.worldbank.org/climatechange/how-countries-climate-ambitions-can-support-sustainable-recovery-covid-19-coronavirus

2. Continental and International Policy Framework for Response to the Challenges faced by Africa

This Green Recovery Action Plan will build on existing work under various initiatives, including but not limited to the: Africa Adaptation Initiative (AAI), Africa Renewable Energy Initiative (AREI), Africa Blue Economy Strategy, African Union Sustainable Forest Management Framework, Pan-African Action Agenda on Ecosystem Restoration for Increased Resilience, Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), Adaptation of African Agriculture (AAA) Initiative, African Climate Resilient Agricultural Development Programme (ACRADP), Just Rural Transition (JRT) initiative, African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative (AFR100), The Great Green Wall for the Sahara and Sahel and Southern Africa, NDC Partnership[7], the Climate for Development in Africa Programme (ClimDev Africa), the three regional Climate Commissions: the African Island States, the Congo Basin, and the Sahel ., and with the African Development Bank (AfDB) to enhance the role of the regional office of the Global Center on Adaptation – Africa.[8]

More recently, an African Green Stimulus Programme (AGSP) has been proposed to support the continent's overall recovery programme from COVID-19 and contribute towards attaining the targets contained in Agenda 2063: 'The Africa We Want' and to support the Continent to get back on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This Green Recovery Action Plan developed jointly by the African Union Commission and the United Kingdom is intended to contribute towards the realisation of the Recovery plans African Green Stimulus Programme (AGSP), and the proposed priority areas herein are aligned to several of those identified in the AGSP. Where applicable, the Green Recovery Action Plan can draw from the outcomes of the country-driven Economic Advisory initiative and NDC revision processes for the NDC Partnership and align support to countries. Under the leadership of the African Union, in partnership with the United Kingdom, the Green Recovery Action Plan will also be positioned to work closely with pan African institutions including the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), and African Union member States, so as to complement and enhance their own recovery plans.

7 The NDC Partnership's economic advisory initiative launched on 29 June 2020 has been rolled out based on country requests for the next 12 months in 32 countries (14 in Africa) so far. The Economic advisors will be embedded in Ministries of Finance/Planning to conduct macro impact assessments of COVID-19 on the climate action and support countries to align their recovery efforts with climate action aiming at stimulating green growth. Complementary support through a virtual global thematic expert group has also been established at no cost for countries to access

8 Recently created by the AfDb More info: https://www.afdb.org/en/news-and-events/press-releases/global-and-african-leaders-welcome-launch-gca-africa-historic-moment-accelerate-adaptation-continent-37862

3. Green Recovery Action Plan

The Green Recovery Action Plan will tackle the combined challenges of the COVID-19 recovery and climate change, by focusing on critical areas of joint priority, including climate finance, renewable energy, resilient agriculture, resilient cities, land use and biodiversity.

3.1 Objectives

1. To strengthen collaboration on a broad range of shared priorities in support of the African Union's objectives for the Continent's sustainable and green recovery from COVID-19; and,

2. To support the realisation of a shared vision for a prosperous, secure, inclusive and innovative future for Africa.

3.2 Priorities and Specific Interventions

Climate finance

Increasing flows, their efficiency and impact

Renewable energy

Promoting renewable energy, energy efficiency and access, and supporting the "Just Transition" to clean energy

Biodiversity and nature-based solutions

Including sustainable land management, forestry, oceans and ecotourism

Climate resilient agriculture

With a focus on economic development and green jobs

Green and resilient cities

With a focus on water (flooding and water resources) and enhancing information, communication and technology

(Getty images)

3.2.1 Climate Finance

Activities to increase the flow, efficiency, and impact of climate finance will aim to reduce emissions through mitigation and reduce vulnerability through adaption. Many parts of Africa are highly vulnerable to climate shocks. As such, climate finance is needed to help mitigate and adapt to risks and improve resilience. However, climate finance is often not easily accessible and timely. Where finance is secured, inefficiencies in the mechanisms for delivery and the resulting failure to leverage broader finance mean that amounts having an impact on the most vulnerable are insufficient.

Climate finance is a critical enabler of the Green Recovery Action Plan to deliver results at scale. This is an opportunity to unlock accessibility and improve flows of climate finance to the most vulnerable regions and communities in Africa. Specific financing for mitigation and adaptation for climate change needs to be upscaled, and needs to complement and enhance initiatives being pursued as part of the Financing for Development in the era of COVID-19 and beyond, as part of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.[9]

Critically, the development of and allocation of finance should engage all parts of the population. It will be essential that all climate finance is informed by women, youth, people with disabilities as well as other marginal groups. These groups can (and do) play a critical role in response to climate change due to their local knowledge of and leadership in e.g. sustainable resource management and/or leading sustainable practices at the household and community level. For example, women's participation at the political level has resulted in greater responsiveness to citizen's needs, often increasing cooperation across party and ethnic lines and delivering more sustainable peace.[10] Without this, if policies or

9https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/part_i-_executive_summary_menu_of_options_financing_for_development_covid19.pdf/ https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/part_ii-_detailed_menu_of_options_financing_for_development_covid19.pdf

10 What is the connection and why is Gender and Climate Change important? https://unfccc.int/gender

projects are implemented without meaningful and inclusive participation it can increase existing inequalities and decrease effectiveness.

Success would see:

1	Greater overall accessibility, and efficiency of financial flows to address climate change in Africa, including on both mitigation and adaptation. More efficient and less complex practises and application requirements for accessing climate finance from different bilateral and multilateral funders.
2	Transformation of developing countries' Nationally Determined Contributions into a pipeline of bankable projects, which have the potential to attract investment at scale from the private sector. This could include private capital investments catalysed by government de-risking policies, and improved fiscal policies that enable the flow of private climate financing.
3	Focus on national projects already identified in countries' national or sectoral masterplans, as well as climate change adaptation plans and the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) of the Paris Agreement.
4	Adaptation and Resilience being embedded within all approaches to ensure disaster risk and future climate risk are included as part of all investments to ensure they remain risk informed and dynamic.
5	Increased investment on disaster risk for resilience. A greater alignment of finance, recognising the increasing risks posed by climate shocks. More lives saved through proactive planning and disaster risk management and reduction including through sustained investment in early warning, early action and preparedness, and mainstreaming disaster risk reduction in development processes.
6	Greater financial flows to the most vulnerable to build resilience to climate shocks, including women, youth, and marginalised groups. This could include development or expansion of social safety net packages for the most vulnerable.

Intervention Areas

The layering of existing, new, and additional adequate and predictable financial resources from both public and private entities will determine the level of success. For context, the financing gap for implementing the full scope of African nationally determined contributions is estimated at US$3 trillion by 2030.

Under Climate Finance we will aim to:

1	Improve accessibility and efficiency of financial flows for both mitigation and adaptation by protecting, enhancing, and improving the delivery of climate funding mechanisms. This will see increased climate finance flows to benefit the most vulnerable, including women, youth, and marginalised groups, to increase adaptation and build resilience to climate shocks.
2	Transform Nationally Determined Contributions into a pipeline of bankable projects, which have the potential to attract investment at scale from the private sector. Promote the use of policy-based and results-based climate finance tools.

3	Align with the UN Financing for Development work,[11] explore opportunities for debt swaps for climate action, promote development orientated carbon trading mechanisms that can help support climate adaptation in Africa, and recognise the role that micro-finance can play in improving resilience to both COVID-19, climate change and other shocks.
4	Taking note of the need for a Just Transition, encouraging states to ensure that economic recovery plans and borrowing from International Finance Institutions supports a recovery that is clean, resilient and inclusive – prioritising those areas outlined in this action plan over carbon intensive or climate vulnerable sectors.

11 https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/financing-development

Wind farm in Cape Town, South Africa (Getty Images)

3.2.2 Renewable energy

The demographic changes expected in the continent are likely to increase the demand for energy and transportation. The region's working age population is projected to increase by an average of 20 million each year over the next two decades, more than any other continent. There is a real opportunity to ensure that future generations needs are met through climate smart investments now. African countries require both support from international partners and the development space to achieve a Just Transition, especially given the high levels of inequality, unemployment and under-development facing the Continent. Africa's needs and circumstances need to be taken into consideration in order to transition in a just manner towards a low carbon future and to contribute towards the global challenge of addressing the climate crisis.

Promoting investments in Renewable Energy – Clean, renewables and energy efficiency systems are also important in protecting the health of the citizens of fast urbanising continent, with indoor air pollution responsible for 3.7 million deaths globally.[12] New investments must prioritise job creation and a just transition through access to affordable, reliable, and clean energy for the almost 600 million Africans that do not have access to electricity. This also necessitates a focus on transmission and distribution networks to ensure that energy being produced reaches the area's most in need. However, a situation where Africa would enter a new era of external import dependence on renewable technology at a time when foreign exchange will be difficult to obtain due to the Covid-19 economic disruption needs to be avoided.

12 WHO, https://www.who.int/globalchange/publications/COP24-report-health-climate-change/en/

Promoting energy efficiency and access – Energy efficiency is also a key area of focus in supporting countries to reduce emissions while also improving cost effectiveness of energy generation, transmission and distribution. Lack of and un-affordability of extending transmission lines to remote rural areas needs to be addressed. The reality is African countries are faced with the investment challenge in renewable power generation including investment into transmission grids. It is in this context, that the "just transmission" Programme should focus on ensuring that African countries invest in transmission grids.

Supporting national "Just Transition" programmes – A transition from investing in fossil fuels, and in particular coal to renewables is becoming increasingly economically viable with renewable energy envisaged to be now cheaper than new coal and creating more jobs per dollar invested.

However, for African countries, particularly those reliant on fossil fuels as a primary source of energy and foreign exchange earnings, it is acknowledged that the "Just Transition" is a complex and long-term process, which will be dependent on national circumstances, capabilities and the provision of adequate support. In supporting national "Just Transition" programmes for countries planning to do so, the circumstances facing every country in Africa need to be taken into consideration to ensure the solutions proposed are responsive to Africa's recovery programme.

The above are consistent with the objectives of many COVID-19 recovery packages, namely, to deliver green jobs, employment and income and maximise economic multiplier effects.

Intervention Areas

Investing in Renewable Energy and energy efficiency will require enhancing existing initiatives such as the Africa Renewable Energy Initiative (AREI)[13] and the SDG7 Initiative for Africa[14] in order to reach the goal to mobilize African potential to generate at least 300 GW by 2030. The SDG7 Initiative for Africa, based on three pillars of sustainability, governance and finance, aims to fast-track private sector investments for clean energy for enhanced access and climate action.

The African Island States (AIS) face unique challenges in addressing energy needs due to their locations. In recognition of the unique circumstance of island states, the African Union Commission will support all AIS in developing renewable energy programmes and accessing financing from climate funds and other potential funding sources to develop their renewable energy resources. It is expected that the programme will support them to reduce their dependence on fossil fuels and significantly increase use of renewable and climate resilient energy resources. The overall objective of the REAIS programme is to increase access to clean, affordable, modern and sustainable renewable energy for the inhabitants of the African Islands States in line with AU Agenda 2063, UN Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement.

According to the African Clean Cooking Energy Solutions Report of November 2014, in Sub Saharan Africa (SSA) the household sector consumes the highest energy proportion (45 percent) among the other sectors (Industry, Agriculture, transport). This high proportion of energy which goes to households is used as cooking fuel. Majority of the cooking fuel in SSA is from traditional solid biomass (80 percent), which takes the highest consumption share among developing regions around the world (North Africa, East and South Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean). Clean cooking fuel in households of SSA energy consumption mix is 20 percent, whereas in North Africa, clean cooking fuel share in the household fuel mix is 96.2 percent. Clean fuel penetration share in SSA is the lowest among the global household

13 http://www.arei.org/

14 https://www.uneca.org/publications/sdg7-initiative-africa-investing-clean-energy-brochure#:~:text=The%20SDG7%20Initiative%20for%20Africa,strengthen%20and%20upgrade%20transmission%20systems.

clean cooking fuel mix including North Africa. In this regard SSA is at the bottom of the world clean fuel pyramid.[15]

Globally, the renewable energy sector created 11 million jobs in 2018. AREI needs to provide sufficient support to enable African countries to take bold action to leapfrog to the smart, people-centred renewable energy and energy efficient systems as well as value chains in terms of new and emerging markets and job creation. Investments in renewable energy and a diversified energy mix could as well shield economies in the case of future pandemics and economic crises.

Under Renewable Energy the Action Plan will aim to:

1	Enhance and support the implementation of Renewable Energy Initiatives including, including the Africa Renewable Energy Initiative, the SDG7 Initiative for Africa to increase clean energy actions in NDC and support credit enhancement instruments to fast track and enhance private sector investments for those actions
2	Use the collective convening influence of the African Union and the COP 26 Campaigns to provide support to African countries in their just transition plans and mobilise developed countries, multilaterals and private financiers to support through their international spending.
3	Work to secure investment (public and private) and technology transfer in grid expansion, transmission, distribution and efficiency improvements, to widen access to electricity, while increasing the roll-out of mini-grids and off-grid products to those that cannot reach the national grid. A robust focus on both areas is important to a just transition.
4	Work to address critical gaps in technology transfer and technical expertise.
5	Enhanced work on clean cooking technologies and building national capacities to promote uptake and use of such technologies. This will not only improve health but also reverse the rate of deforestation given that charcoal and fuelwood trade are big drivers of landcover change.
6	Support countries' development and implementation of new and updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), LDN and Long-Term Strategies (LTSs).

15 http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/164241468178757464/pdf/98664-REVISED-WP-P146621-PUBLIC-Box393185B.pdf

House on the Sea in Pingwe, Tanzania (Getty Images)

3.2.3 Biodiversity and Nature-Based Solutions

African nations have ambition targets in sustainable land use and forestry. The populations and ecosystem in Africa's drylands are some of the most vulnerable to human and natural shocks due to diverse environmental factors. Africa has conceived the vision of restoring and sustainably managing 100 million hectares of land and creating 10 million jobs by 2030, a vision grounded on building a green corridor across the continent. As an African-led movement that contributes to 15 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the Bonn Challenge.

Nature-based solutions[16] are actions that work with and enhance nature to help address societal challenges. The concept is grounded in the knowledge that healthy natural and managed ecosystems produce a diverse range of services on which human wellbeing depends. Nature-based solutions provide the opportunity to build in climate resilience at the local levels, while also contributing to improved livelihoods. Investments in nature-based solutions thus allow countries to build back better through an immediate response to the economic impact of the COVID19 pandemic while also contributing to reducing the impact of climate change.

The environmental, social and economic dividend of well-designed nature-based solutions is enormous. Effective management and legal sustainable use of wildlife (fauna and flora) improves the livelihood of local communities, strengthens their resilience to the adverse impacts of climate change as well as contributing to national economies. Just as importantly, it turns the wildlife into an asset rather than a

16 https://www.naturebasedsolutionsinitiative.org/

liability to the rural communities that live with the wildlife. This in turn creates a sense of 'resource custodianship' in which local communities tolerate living with the wildlife, minimizing human-wildlife conflict as well as reducing the chances of poaching and illegal wildlife trade. Such an approach recognizes the importance of local communities the 'front line of defence' in the fight against poaching and illegal wildlife trade.

African countries will also benefit from support in relation to natural capital accounting and ecosystem services valuation. Such exercises can also help inform national development plans, biodiversity offsets (which are particularly important given that there will be an increase in demand for materials that support a low-carbon future), and Payments for Ecosystem Services mechanisms.

Investing in the Blue Economy would enhance the environmental contribution to the development of a sustainable blue economy in Africa, as well as contributing to the livelihoods of people living in coastal and riparian areas. Enhanced support for the implementation of the African Union Blue Economy Strategy for harnessing the potential for improving productivity and sustainable management of oceans, marine and freshwater ecosystems, job creation, strengthening food and nutritional security, wealth creation opportunities and environmental sustainability towards sustainable blue economy development is also required.

Modern and well defined marine spatial plans can help African nations maximise the potential of their oceanic resources sustainably. These should include Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) Reports that will enable decision makers to determine how best to deploy maritime security capabilities if a threat at sea (or on maritime-related infrastructure), a crime being committed or a situation with a high level of risk if left alone are identified.

African countries should be encouraged to support the proposed target of achieving 30% of oceanic areas under protection by 2030 to be adopted at COP 15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) initially scheduled to take place in May.

Revitalizing Biodiversity Economy, Nature-based Solutions and Eco-tourism will promote conservation, protect jobs, and natural assets. The contribution of our biological resources and their services to sustainable development needs to be realized through promoting the opportunities offered by the biodiversity economy. Additionally, addressing the threats facing Africa's biological resources, including land restoration, sustainable land management and alien invasive species management is critical. There is an urgent need for addressing illegal and unregulated wildlife exploitation and trade considering COVID-19 epidemic's origins and understanding the transfer of the virus from wildlife to humans to prevent similar future zoonotic transmission of diseases. Post COVID-19, there is a need to build on experiences and practices of regional cooperation structures, and to elaborate on strategies for integration and participation of formal and informal regional platforms in the Biodiversity Post-2020 processes.

Immediate support for ecotourism and conservation agencies, jobs is required, as the eco-tourism in Africa has been hit hard by COVID-19. Environmentally and socially responsible tourism that promotes conservation, needs to be revitalized as it has low visitor impact and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local people.

Intervention Areas

A focus on biodiversity through sustainable land management, forestry, oceans and ecotourism offers an opportunity to bring together and layer investments that enhance the collective impact.

Under Biodiversity and Nature-Based solutions the Action Plan will aim to:

1	Enhance and support the implementation of a number of initiatives aimed at combatting habitat degradation, including the: African Union Sustainable Forest Management Framework; African Strategy on Combatting Illegal Exploitation and Illegal Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora in Africa; the Pan-African Action Agenda on Ecosystem Restoration for Increased Resilience as part of Africa's commitment to implementing the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030); among others.
2	Support the development and management of national parks and other protected areas.
3	Enhance commitment to providing adequate resources to address the drivers of desertification, land degradation and drought and support of existing programmes such as the Great Green Wall for the Sahara, Sahel and Southern Africa, strengthen the African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative Sub-regional Action Programmes to combat desertification as well as the Southern Africa Initiatives.
4	Develop and improve mechanisms for protection of the ocean environment to support biodiversity, climate resilience and the blue economy.
5	Raise political ambition on nature-based solutions to climate change (and ensuring linkages to the COVID-19 response), and supporting to the Leaders Pledge on Nature.
6	Support the development and application of tools to better integrate nature and natural capital including biodiversity in national, sectoral and urban recovery and development strategies and plans.

Zakouma National Park, Chad (Getty Images)

3.2.4 Climate Resilient Agriculture

Economic growth in agriculture is two to three times more effective at reducing poverty and food insecurity than growth generated in other sectors. Of the people living in extreme poverty in Africa, 82% live in rural areas and the majority of these are smallholder farmers. A growing body of evidence links climate-related risk to the extent and the persistence of rural poverty in these environments. Investment in rural economies is key to both reducing poverty and building resilience to climate change.

A coordinated and coordinated approach, including women, and youth, to making agriculture and broader rural communities more resilient might include strategic investment in climate resilience agriculture (including through irrigation, seed varieties and advisory services, plus targeted research for agricultural resilience) and more profitable (including through scaling-up production and better integration with supply-chains). Getting the fundamentals right – evidence-based land management and planning, secure land tenure and effective broader governance – is needed to deliver this.

Success would mean a sustainable boost in agricultural productivity, rural livelihoods, resilience, and nutrition outcomes. Realigning policies, finance and support to incentivise investment and increase profitability of food system practices which deliver positively for climate, biodiversity, nutrition and poverty-reduction. An assisted shift in Africa's smallholder farming, away from subsistence alone through better access to value chains, can stimulate new forms of entrepreneurship and economic growth especially for young people. Improvements in productivity would reduce pressure on land that is the major cause of land degradation and deforestation.

Importantly, interventions in this area are particularly context-dependent, and have potential to deliver across multiple objectives, but also have scope for tensions across objectives. Effective gender-sensitive, youth informed, and climate-smart programmes require a deep understanding of the cultural, and resource context, including power dynamics and negative coping strategies, and this should inform

all stages. Suitability of interventions for inclusion in recovery package finance will vary by intervention and by place.

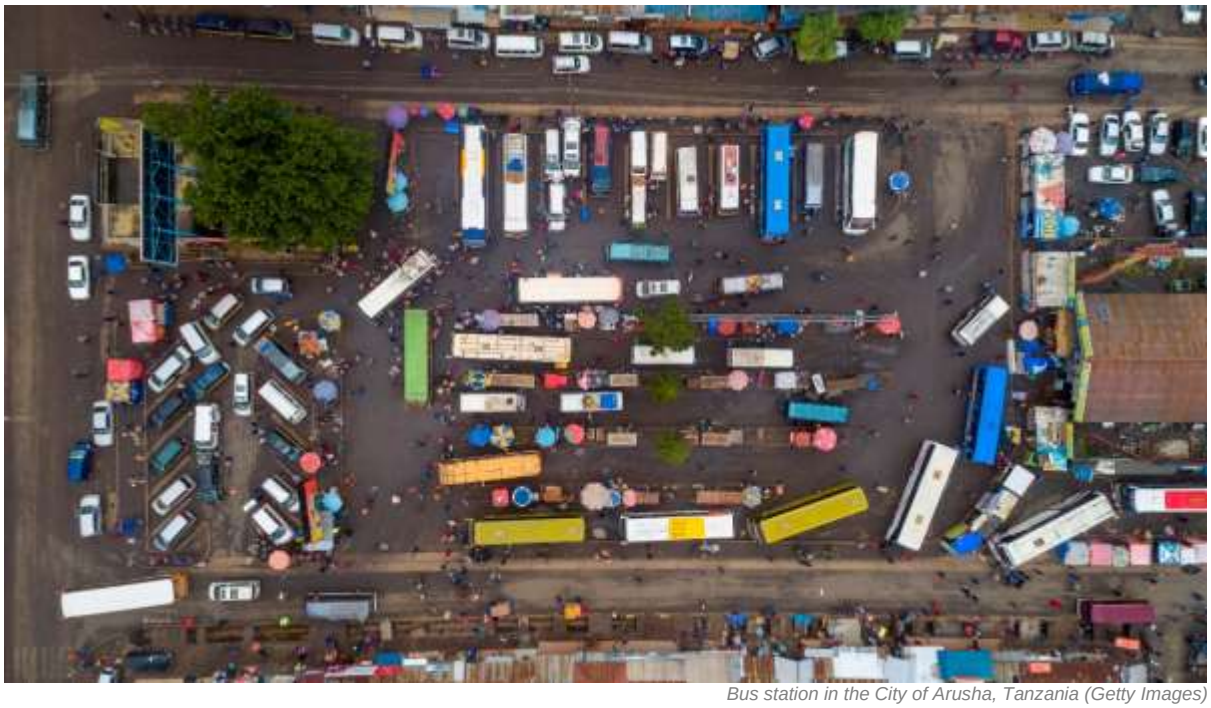
Intervention Areas

The proposal is for a coordinated approach to making agriculture and broader rural communities more resilient through strategic investment in resilience (including through irrigation, seed varieties and advisory services, plus targeted research for agricultural resilience) and more profitable (including through scaling-up production and better integration with supply-chains). In some places, getting the fundamentals right – secure land tenure and effective broader governance – is needed to deliver this. The focus would be on smallholder farming.

Under Climate Resilient Agriculture, the Action Plan will aim to:

1	Strengthen land governance and land markets through land tenure regularisation and building land administration systems, which is likely to yield benefits over a longer time period, but which could form an important component of post-COVID-19 recovery planning and support.
2	Scale up financing for climate change adaptation in agriculture: the success of adaptation actions in agriculture rely not only on technological innovations, but supporting institutional, policy, and investment environments, which can help innovations reach scale rapidly. New, fit-for-purpose business and financial models are an area for innovation to support scaling up of proven technological innovations, including in impact investing, blended finance, mainstreaming climate resilient practices into financial institutions operations.
3	Invest in green industrialisation of the agricultural sector, the opportunities available for intra-regional trade under the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA).
4	Mainstream adaptation and resilience in the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) processes and promote the Adaptation of African Agriculture (AAA) Initiative[17] and the African Climate Resilient Agricultural Development Programme (ACRADP).
5	Make best use of emerging technologies and instruments, including: clean energy technologies within the agriculture sector; Climate Services and satellite imagery to predict climate events and to reduce vulnerability; integrating social protection and insurance for rural populations, with data-driven early warning systems (e.g. climate and plant/animal threats); and leveraging private sector solutions such as on Pay and You Go (PAYG) solar irrigation.
6	Engage in investment and or policy commitments to strengthen public support to climate resilient and sustainable agriculture, for example building on the Just Rural Transition (JRT) initiative launched with UK support at UNCAS

[17] For example, by promoting the implementation of the Climate Resilient Agriculture Investment Plans (CRAIPs) in various targeted countries, identifying channel funds for the development of new CRAIPs in Africa and mobilising funds for the implementation of existing CRAIPs in Africa.



Bus station in the City of Arusha, Tanzania (Getty Images)

3.2.5 Green and Resilient Cities

As Africa is rapidly urbanizing, there is a need to develop African sustainable urban planning models. Climate change has the potential to negatively impact tens of millions of city dwellers across Africa unless planning incorporates future risks.

Water security has traditionally been managed in siloes, with fragmented institutions and limited political will. Countries struggle to quantify and manage trade-offs across sectors, scales and beneficiaries with unforeseen and often negative impacts at other points across the water system.

There have been successes but taking these to scale has proved challenging. Innovation and new technologies provide more options but need finance and private sector engagement. Better evidence on the policies, regulations and other approaches needed to deliver water security at different levels (community, household, national etc) and embed at the centre of approaches to adaptation and resilience. In particular, understanding how to ensure that the poor can benefit from water security investments, policies and regulations is key to maximising the benefits for the most vulnerable/ marginalised.

Additionally, lessons learnt from COVID-19 have revealed gaps in the Information Communication and Technology (ICT) systems, bandwidth and data access which has implications for Africa's transition to the fourth industrial revolution (4IR). This needs to be addressed, with additional investments for Africa to fully and effectively engage with rest of the world in the digital era.

African cities are increasingly participating in Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs), whereby the implementation of the SDGs is measured at the level of local authorities, who often need the most support to address the key issue of water and sanitation. Mainstreaming this review process at local levels can enhance monitoring and evaluation of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and ensure policy coherence from the global to the national and sub-national levels.

Public green space urban planning with respect to transport systems (including ZEVs and necessary infrastructure) and traffic flows that minimise air pollution in African cities has a positive effect on biodiversity, climate, wellness and air quality. Additionally, parks with trees, shrubs, water basins and recreational areas as well as more extended forest lands surrounding urban centres can mitigate the consequences of climate change in urban areas, heath, weather, biodiversity, health and will also play a positive role in social cohesion. This impact ensures that cities are becoming better places to live and work.

As the continent urbanizes, mitigating the risks of disasters will play an important role in guaranteeing that African cities are socially and economically stable. Urbanisation offers huge opportunities for economic and human development for many African countries. However, these opportunities are also vulnerable to risks and losses from disaster events. Disasters have grown in the region since the 1970s with increases in human exposure to disaster risks largely driven by population growth particularly concentrated in cities, interwoven with the effects of fragility and climate change.

The Africa report for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2018) observes that many urban centres have experienced urban disasters in recent years, most particularly flooding and landslides. The report further observed that technological disasters occasioned by technical failure, system breakdown, human error, industrial accidents, fires, building collapse, oil spillage and transport accidents, have increased in frequency and severity on the continent. The growing trend of urban disasters means that national and local governments, city authorities and decentralised institutions including urban planning units, environmental management units and other social service providers at the city level will have to understand, commit and factor long-term climate and disaster resilient investments into urban planning and implementation processes based on practical information that is user friendly and easily understood by political and decision-making bodies at the local government level.

Intervention Areas

The translation of climate science into action on resilience and adaptation is the defining problem of the climate adaptation challenge we face today. In order to make climate science relevant and useable an understanding of the application context is required.

Under Green and Resilient cities, the Action Plan will aim to:

1	Promote the Africa Water Vision for 2025 and the implementation of the Sharm-El Sheikh Commitments: Equitable and Sustainable Use of Water for Socioeconomic Development through investing in improving management of water resources, such as river basin catchments, impoundments and lakes, enhancing water use efficiency as well as rain water harvesting and the modernization of irrigation systems to more water efficient systems in the domestication, integration and implementation of the Framework for Irrigation Development and Agricultural Water Management (IDAWM) in Africa.
2	Make progress on the challenges of water and sanitation infrastructure financing for increased water access for resilience of the populace to foster the Sharm El-Sheikh Commitment on Water and Sanitation for achievement of SDGs in realization of Agenda 2063.

3	Develop Climate Risk Narratives which outline possible climate and socio-economic futures for a city/country/region to communicate climate change and uncertainty and facilitate engagements. Applying a Decision-Making Under Uncertainty approach to provide decision makers with the tools to make decisions in a range of possible futures. Develop and apply the wide range of ground-breaking science knowledge and tools, such as high-resolution rainfall modelling, flood risk mapping and water management decision tools.
4	Implementing Urban Risk Management through accelerated implementation of the Africa Programme of Action for the implementation of Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and support progress on climate resilient infrastructure development.

4. Partnerships and Resource Mobilisation

A green economic transformation will require strong partnerships and coordination with public and private investors to deliver up to the magnitude proposed in the Green Recovery Action Plan. A deliberate partnership and resource mobilization strategy will be required to facilitate a coordinated approach of maximizing collaborative resource mobilization. The strategy to mobilize partnerships for resource mobilization foresees a phased approach as elaborated in Annex 1.

5. Implementation and Coordination Mechanism

The African Union Commission will provide coordination for the implementation of the Green Recovery Action Plan at the continental level, provide strategic guidance and facilitate domestication and implementation of the Green Recovery Action Plan. This is elaborated in Annex 2.

Countries will be encouraged to draw from the Green Recovery Action Plan, develop their national strategies and identify programmes and activities to implement this Action Plan. To ensure the effective implementation of the Action Plan, it is proposed that countries implement and provide information in the implementation of activities under the five intervention areas of the Green Recovery Action Plan:- (i) Supporting renewable energy, energy efficiency and national Just Transition programmes (ii) Nature-based Solutions and Biodiversity – Sustainable land management, forestry, oceans and ecotourism (iii) Resilient agriculture – focusing on economic development and green jobs (iv) Green and Resilient cities – with a focus on water (flooding and water resources) and enhancing information, communication and technology (v) Climate finance – increasing flows, their efficiency, and impact.

6. Monitoring, Reporting and Advocacy

Information on the implementation of the five intervention areas would be sought from Member States using the Table in Annex 3 (Monitoring Reporting and Advocacy). The table will be compiled and analysed in an implementation report.

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