

## **African Futures Lab Public Statement on the Draft Addis Ababa Declaration from the Second Africa Climate Summit**

**16/09/2025**

The Draft Addis Ababa Declaration, adopted at the Second Africa Climate Summit (ACS2) in Addis Ababa last week, is put forward as a continental blueprint for green transformation. It emphasizes Africa's potential to lead in renewable energy, innovation, and resilience. With the launch of the Africa Climate Innovation Compact, the Declaration commits to mobilizing 1,000 African-led climate solutions by 2030 and the establishment of an African Climate Facility to leverage US\$50 billion annually in catalytic climate finance. It highlights nature-based solutions such as the Great Green Wall and Ethiopia's Green Legacy Initiative as part of Africa's ecological response.

The political commitments reflected in the Addis Declaration seek to shift the narrative from Africa as primarily a site of vulnerability to a continent that asserts its agency in shaping climate solutions. Energy infrastructure, just transition pathways, adaptation measures, and the new Green Minerals Strategy all speak to a more proactive, Africa-centred climate agenda. **The insistence that climate finance is a legal obligation under the UNFCCC, not charity, is a crucial step forward.**

While Addis sharpens Africa's call for finance, innovation, and systemic reform, its ambition is undercut in two ways: First, a retreat from the stronger language on fossil fuels in the Nairobi Declaration of the First African Climate Summit in 2023, dropping commitments to phase down unabated coal and end subsidies, and instead stressing "transitional energy sources" and "national contexts," – a softening that prolongs extractive dependence. Secondly, the declaration omits reparations as a key vehicle of delivering transformative climate justice for Africa, even as the global legal and political momentum for reparative justice grows.

Ambition without reckoning is insufficient. African Leaders present at the summit missed the opportunity to use this declaration to firmly situate Africa's demands within the framework of climate reparations – especially at a moment when the African Union has designated 2025 the Year of Reparations and launched a Decade of Reparations running through 2036. Climate reparations are absent, even as the world enters a new era of legal recognition: the International Court of Justice, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea have all issued advisory opinions [affirming states' legal duties to prevent and remedy climate harm](#). A [petition](#) is also before the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, offering Africa the chance to assert reparations as a continental demand grounded in its own legal and institutional frameworks.

In our webinar “[From Courts to COP: Harnessing Legal Momentum for African Climate Reparations](#)” hosted jointly by African Futures Lab, AU ECOSOCC and Biophilic Conversations on 25 August, African jurists and civil society advocates underscored that reparations are no longer an abstract demand but a legal and political imperative.

The omission matters. Africa’s position at COP30 in Belém will be stronger if rooted not only in calls for fair financing and systemic reform but also in a clear recognition that **reparations are owed**. Reparative justice requires moving beyond concessional loans, incremental pledges, and vague commitments, toward concrete measures of restitution, compensation, and structural transformation.

There are additional risks. Without robust accountability and monitoring mechanisms, the Addis’s commitments such as the \$50 billion in annual finance risk remaining aspirational. It is unclear how communities will be able to track delivery, audit progress, or hold leaders and institutions accountable. Moreover, without safeguards, there is a danger that benefits will be captured by larger economies and elites within Africa, leaving vulnerable states, smallholder farmers, indigenous peoples, women, and youth behind. Reparations logic demands equity *within* as well as *beyond* Africa. This requires ensuring an equitable distribution of benefits across the continent, with special measures for LDCs, SIDS, indigenous peoples, women, and youth.

Furthermore, while Addis calls for reform of the international finance architecture – from debt to debt and tax frameworks to MDB governance and accessibility of climate finance – it does so largely within the parameters of existing institutions. What remains missing is a bolder articulation of African-led alternatives that move beyond reform at the margins. Reparative justice requires not only improving access within current systems but [reimagining global economic governance to address structural injustices](#).

Momentum for this shift is growing elsewhere. At the [Second Africa–CARICOM Summit](#), held on 7 September 2025, leaders from African nations and Caribbean states, and representatives from the global African diaspora, affirmed that reparations can be most effectively pursued through transcontinental partnership. Leaders stressed the need for Africa and the Caribbean to speak with one voice on the international stage, linking demands for reparations to reform of global financial and multilateral institutions, and grounding this agenda in Pan-African ideals. With CARICOM’s Reparations Commission at the forefront, the

summit underscored that reparations are not symbolic but essential to addressing the legacies of slavery, colonialism, and structural inequality.

The Addis Ababa Declaration should therefore be read in two registers. It marks some progress: a sign that Africa will not wait to be “supported” but will lead with innovation and resilience. But it also leaves the most urgent demand – reparations – unanswered.

**Without reparations at the core, Africa risks once again shouldering the costs of global ambition while being denied redress for the historical and ongoing harms it has suffered.**

African Futures Lab calls on African Leaders to ensure that at COP30 and beyond, the African position advances reparations as the principle that ties together finance, adaptation, energy security, and climate justice. As the declaration rightly notes, climate finance is not charity. Financing Africa's climate futures should not be framed as aid or investment opportunity, but as reparations rooted in the colonial past and present, compelled by law, and demanded by justice.

**What we advocate for:**

- **Embedding reparations in climate finance architecture:** Recognizing that climate finance for Africa must be framed not as aid or investment but as reparations, with binding obligations on historic polluters.
- **Operationalizing restitution for loss and damage:** Ensuring the Loss and Damage Fund provides significantly upscaled, direct, grant-based access for African states and communities, including for non-economic losses and climate-induced mobility.
- **Advancing AU–CARICOM alignment:** Building towards a joint Africa–Caribbean reparations platform to strengthen negotiating leverage at COP30 and beyond.
- **Shifting from extraction to transformation:** Implementing the Green Minerals Strategy with safeguards for communities, value addition on the continent, and strict accountability to avoid repeating colonial patterns of raw resource export.
- **Anchoring adaptation in justice:** Making adaptation a central part of just transition strategies, ensuring resources reach smallholder farmers, women, youth, and frontline communities.
- **Ensuring accountability and transparency:** Establishing independent monitoring and participatory mechanisms including African civil society oversight to track delivery of finance, innovation and just transition commitments.