



COUNT DOWN TO COP26: 15 DAYS OF CLIMATE ACTION

FROM WORDS TO ACTION:

MAKING DESERT to POWER INITIATIVE WORK FOR A JUST ENERGY TRANSITION AND ACCESS FOR THE AFRICAN PEOPLE.

October 27th 2021

1:00 PM-3:00 PM (West African Time)

Background

The energy landscape in Africa presents both challenges and opportunities for low carbon economies and sustainable development across the continent. In the first place, despite global progress in energy access, energy poverty rate on the continent is among the highest in the world. In 2017, more than 60% of the population in Sub-Sahara Africa (SSA) had no access to electricity. Some 80% of the continent's people rely on traditional, inefficient and climate sensitive energy sources, notably fuelwood, for heating, cooking and smoking.

While the main shift globally is away from fossil fuels, new oil and gas discoveries in several countries¹, mean that fossil fuels will continue to be the main source of energy for development in Africa in the foreseeable future. About 30% of oil discoveries between 2010 and 2014 were in SSA (Africa Energy Outlook, 2014). In the second instance, Africa presents a unique opportunity for shaping the future of energy. With less than 6% of global energy consumption and a high potential for renewable energy (solar, wind, geothermal, hydro), Africa is best predisposed than any other part of the world for a major energy shift.

In a climate-constrained World, the continent is at the crossroad on whether to remain locked in fossil fuel-based development models, or walk with the rest of the world to embrace renewables. Raging debate among African stakeholders, and opinion is widely divided, on whether we abandon exploration of fossil-fuels altogether and revert to renewables.

A section of stakeholders hold to the argument that the energy mix is what is required for Africa's development, and moving into renewable energy sources will not only be contributing to climate mitigation, but will also be making economic sense in a continent endowed with massive wind, solar

¹ Chad, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Sao Tome Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Togo, and Uganda

and geothermal. Yet, others feel that the industrialized countries should let developing countries exploit their fossil fuels to reach the level of development they attained, then open dialogue on the shift once they attain the same level of development.

All these contestations were silenced in Paris, and each country is a partner in the march towards low-carbon, climate-resilient green future. The PA ostensibly balanced the interests of the major economies and concerns of poor countries. And though opinion is divided on whether the NDCs are sufficient to meet the objective of the climate change Convention to preserve the health of the planet, it is essential to acknowledge the fact that in the environment of suspicion and non-south divide, atleast some framework to take the world forward is in place.

For Africa, the Paris Agreement and its key provision, the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) which forms the basis of ambitious climate actions eventually cemented in Poland under the Katowice Package presents a golden opportunity for highly-sought resources to support broader development agenda – AU's Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030 of the United Nations. With massive resources expected to flow from Donors to implement the NDCs in various countries in Africa mainly in the renewable energy sector, countries have put in place robust “readiness” mechanisms to optimize this potential transition.

Africa's energy transition, certainly, will comprise of a shift to cleaner and more sustainable sources, but this should be done in a way that guarantees just access and fostering inclusive development. The African Development Bank is championing multiple energy programmes aimed at addressing the energy challenges in Africa exist, but in recent times, one of the most notable is Desert to Power Initiative. Blessed with some of the highest levels of insolation in the world, the Sahel offers boundless potential to turn the sun into a veritable source of energy. That is why on 13 September 2019, at the G5 Sahel Summit in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, the President of the African Development Bank, Dr. Akinwumi A. Adesina announced the Bank's bold ambition to accelerate the development of grid-based and off-grid solar generation at unprecedented scale through its Desert-to-Power (DtP) Initiative.

Desert to Power (DtP), is the African Development Bank's flagship Initiative that aims to create the world's largest solar zone by turning the Sahel region into the powerhouse it ought to be. DtP aims to generate 10GW of additional generation capacity based on solar technology and to provide access to electricity to approximately 250 million people in the Sahel through grid and off-grid solutions. The Sahel faces tremendous challenges, including high levels of poverty, desertification, environmental degradation, unemployment and migration of many young men and women. The severe floods that hit Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and other countries in the Sahel in early September 2020, evidence the fragility of the region. In the process of addressing energy challenges, an intrinsic aspect of the DtP Initiative's ambition is to also resolve extreme poverty manifestations such as migration, gender-based violence, resource conflict, food insecurity and desertification. An inclusive approach is essential for the success of planning and implementation phases of the Initiative with the civil society, the public and private sectors.

A series of workshops (some hybrid and some digital) will be organize from November 2021 till COP 27 in 2022 in Egypt. To kick start this process a two hours digital (zoom) workshop will be organized, as part of the African Civil Society's count down to COP 26 activities on the 27th of October 2021.

This workshop, bringing together key stakeholders engaged in energy access and transition will be convened to discuss and chart the way forward of DtP and its contribution to climate ambition in Africa.

Objectives:

- (i) Provide a platform for exchange, sharing and learning on DtP and the role of various stakeholders in advancing its goal and objectives
- (ii) Prioritizing access to local communities productive use of energy under DtP
- (iii) Develop policy papers and agree on a recommendations to the DtP to AfDB and Governments concerned.
- (iv) Agree on the next actions, identify collective action and role of each stakeholder the collaborative effort in the advancement of RES.

Methodology

A two hours digital (zoom) workshop will be organized, as part of the African Civil Society's count down to COP 26 activities on the 27th of October 2021.

Participants

Participants will be drawn from Civil Society, Youth, Indigenous Peoples, Non-governmental organizations, Private Sector, Researchers, Women, etc. Government representatives and representatives from AfDB will be invited to share their perspectives.

Tentative Agenda

12.45 - 1 pm Registration and Check-In

Afanyu Yembe – PACJA/ACSEA

1 – 1.10 pm Welcome and Introduction (10 min)

Augustine B Njamnshi – African Coalition for Sustainable Energy and Access (ACSEA)

Mithika Mwenda – Pan African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA)

Fred Njehu – Christian Aid & The BigShift Campaign

1.10 – 1.30 pm Presentation 1: DtP Initiative : Goals, Objectives and Progress Report (20 min)

Franklin Gbedey, Manager, Renewable Energy, AfDB

Moderator: **James Morumbedzi** – UNECA (or Colleague tbc)

1.30 – 1.40 pm **Presentation 2: The Role of CSOs in Energy Cooperation in Africa (10 min)**

Augustine B NJAMNSHI - Continental Coordinator ACSEA

Moderator: **Charles Mwangi**- PACJA

1.40 – 1.50 pm **Presentation 3: DtP Initiative: What avenues for stakeholder participation (10 min)**

Regina Nesيامa Miller, Principal Renewable Energy Specialist

Moderator: **Chineye Anekwe** –Solar Sisters Nigeria

1.50 – 2.10 pm **Presentation 4: The importance of effective Communication for a just transition and Renewable Energy Access in Africa (20 minutes)**

EUGENE Nforngwa – ACSEA/PACJA

Moderator: **Atayi Babs** CS Dev.Net

2.10 – 2.55 pm **Q& A for panelists (10 min) and Discussion (35 min)**

Moderators:

Benson Ireri – WRI (tbc)

Mohamed Adow - Power Shift Africa

2.55 – 3.00 pm **Way Forward - Results and Next Steps**

Augustine B Njamnshi - ACSEA