



30 YEARS

OF AFRICAN GROUP OF NEGOTIATORS
ON CLIMATE CHANGE

1995 - 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For three decades, the African Group of Negotiators on Climate Change (AGN) has embodied Africa's collective voice, conscience, and strategic leadership in the global climate regime. Formed in 1995 under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the AGN arose from a recognition that the fragmented participation of individual African states could never match the power of coordinated, continent-wide diplomacy. What began as a small circle of volunteer negotiators has evolved into one of the world's most disciplined and enduring multilateral coalitions uniting 54 countries under a single banner of equity, solidarity, and sustainable development.

Origins and Formation

The AGN's roots lie in the Rio Earth Summit of 1992, where African ministers, working through the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the newly established African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), helped to craft the equity principles embedded in the UNFCCC. When the Convention entered into force in 1994, Africa's negotiators realized that their structural vulnerabilities low emissions, high exposure, and limited institutional capacity required a unified approach. In 1995, between COP 1 (Berlin) and COP 2 (Geneva), they formally created the African Group of Negotiators, coordinated under AMCEN with the political guidance of what later became the Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSCC).

Early coordination was voluntary and under-resourced, but the spirit of solidarity prevailed. Morocco's inaugural chairmanship (1997 – 1998) professionalized the Group's work, introducing daily coordination meetings and thematic clusters. Burkina Faso's leadership (1999 – 2001) secured the Marrakesh Accords, which operationalized the Kyoto Protocol and created enduring instruments such as the Adaptation Fund and the Capacity-Building Framework. These achievements transformed Africa from a reactive participant to a proactive architect of solutions.

Consolidation and Growth (2005 – 2015)

By the mid-2000s, Africa's negotiating architecture had matured into a three-tiered system:

- 1. CAHOSCC** - Heads of State providing political vision;
- 2. AMCEN** - Ministers ensuring policy coherence;
- 3. AGN** - Technical negotiators translating mandates into UNFCCC outcomes.

This synergy enabled Africa to host and shape COP 12 (Nairobi, 2006), which produced the Nairobi Work Programme on Adaptation, the first global framework grounded in African realities. The Bali Action Plan (2007) then cemented Africa's call for balance among mitigation, adaptation, technology, and finance the “four pillars” of equity.

At COP 15 (Copenhagen, 2009), Africa's unity was tested. Excluded from closed-door discussions, the Group staged the historic “Copenhagen walk-out,” asserting that no agreement could be legitimate without Africa's participation. Though the outcome was politically fragile, the act restored multilateral integrity and propelled the creation of the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the USD 100 billion-per-year finance pledge.

Two years later, Africa hosted COP 17 (Durban, 2011), delivering the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action that paved the road to the Paris Agreement (2015). Durban reaffirmed Africa's role as bridge-builder and consensus-shaper where ambition met fairness.

Paris and the Institutional Maturity of the AGN

The Paris Agreement crowned two decades of African persistence. African negotiators secured three legacies that now define global climate governance:

- The Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA), establishing adaptation parity with mitigation;
- The reaffirmation of finance commitments as a condition of equity;
- The recognition of developing countries' differentiated capacities.

Article 7 (GGA) and Article 9 (finance) bear Africa's imprint. The Agreement institutionalized the principles Africa had defended since Rio 1992 equity, CBDR-RC, and the right to sustainable development. In the words of contemporary observers, Paris demonstrated that "Africa was no longer merely at the table it was shaping the table itself."

From Rulebook to Implementation (2016 – 2023)

Following Paris, African negotiators shifted focus from design to delivery. Through the Katowice Climate Package (2018), the AGN ensured that transparency, adaptation communication, and NDC guidelines incorporated flexibility for developing nations. At Warsaw (2013) and later Sharm el-Sheikh (2022), Africa championed the institutionalization and eventual establishment of the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage a victory rooted in decades of advocacy.

The COVID-19 pandemic (2020 – 2021) disrupted negotiations but not Africa's resolve. Virtual coordination kept adaptation, finance, and just transition high on the agenda. At Glasgow (2021), the AGN successfully pressed for doubling adaptation finance by 2025 and preserving the principle of equity in mitigation efforts.

Knowledge, Capacity and Inter-Generational Leadership

Behind these diplomatic milestones lies a human story of perseverance. Over thirty years, the AGN has trained and mentored hundreds of negotiators, scientists, and policymakers. Through collaboration with UNEP, UNDP, AfDB, UNITAR, and universities across the continent, Africa has cultivated an expert corps capable of engaging on legal, technical, and scientific fronts.

Institutions such as the African Group of Negotiators Experts Support (AGNES) and regional centers ICPAC, ACMAD, and the SADC Climate Services Centre have strengthened analytical capacity and data-driven negotiation. This ecosystem of expertise ensures continuity and credibility, bridging generations and sustaining Africa's influence within the UNFCCC's Subsidiary Bodies (SBI and SBSTA) and constituted bodies including the Adaptation Committee, Standing Committee on Finance, and Technology Executive Committee.

Alliances and South-South Cooperation

Africa's diplomacy thrives on coalition-building. Within the G77 + China, the AGN has forged enduring partnerships with the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), and the Like-Minded Developing Countries (LMDCs). Together, these alliances have reframed climate change from an environmental concern into a development and justice imperative.

This South-South cooperation extends beyond negotiation halls to knowledge networks and peer learning. Joint research initiatives, capacity-building programs, and climate-finance dialogues have deepened solidarity among developing regions, reinforcing Africa's moral authority as a champion of fairness and inclusion.

Institutionalization and Future Vision (2025 – 2035)

As the AGN commemorates its 30th Anniversary (1995 – 2025) under the chairmanship of the United Republic of Tanzania, it enters a new phase of consolidation and reform. Guided by AMCEN, CAHOSCC, and the African Union Commission, the Group is advancing plans to establish a permanent AGN Secretariat within the AU architecture an Africa-owned, Africa-financed institution ensuring technical excellence, transparency, and inter-generational leadership.

This institutionalization aims to:

- Guarantee sustainable resourcing for negotiation, research, and training;
- Strengthen alignment with continental policy frameworks such as the African Climate Change Strategy and the Green Recovery Action Plan;
- Enhance participation of youth, women, and academia through regional centers of excellence and fellowship programs.

The permanent Secretariat will anchor Africa's voice in perpetuity, bridging negotiation outcomes with domestic implementation and ensuring that the principles of equity and justice continue to shape global climate governance.

Africa at COP 30 – Belém and Beyond

As the world convenes in Belém, Brazil (2025) for COP 30 / CMP 20 / CMA 7, Africa arrives with a clear and united agenda. The Common African Position calls for:

- Adoption of a New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance of USD 1.3 trillion per year by 2035, with ≥ 50 percent for adaptation;
- Full operationalization and replenishment of the Loss and Damage Fund;
- Finalization of Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) indicators linked to finance and technology;
- Advancement of Just Transition Pathways that create jobs, protect sovereignty, and expand energy access.

Africa's priorities resonate with the COP 30 Presidency's six-pillar action agenda energy, forests and oceans, food systems, resilient cities, human development, and enablers while reaffirming that ambition must be matched by implementation support.

A Legacy of Unity, Justice and Hope

The AGN's 30-year history is not merely a chronicle of meetings and decisions; it is the story of a continent that turned marginalization into influence. From the early visionaries of Marrakech to today's technocrats in Belém, African negotiators have shown that diplomacy grounded in ethics and evidence can reshape global norms.

Their journey illustrates how collective negotiation can serve as an instrument of justice bridging divides between North and South, science and policy, ambition and equity. Through this legacy, the AGN has reaffirmed that Africa's development and the planet's stability are inseparable.

As climate challenges intensify, the AGN's guiding ethos One Africa, One Voice remains as relevant as ever. The next decade will demand courage, innovation, and unity to ensure that Africa's resilience and creativity continue to illuminate the path toward a just, inclusive, and sustainable global climate order.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The publication of “30 Years of Africa’s Climate Voice: The History of the African Group of Negotiators (1995–2025)” represents more than a commemoration it is a celebration of collective African resilience, solidarity, and excellence in global climate diplomacy. This historic achievement was made possible through the commitment, intellect, and perseverance of generations of African negotiators, ministers, scientists, and partners who have carried Africa’s banner of justice, equity, and sustainable development throughout three decades of the UNFCCC process.

The authors extend profound appreciation to all Chairs of the African Group of Negotiators (AGN) from 1991 to 2025, whose stewardship has built the institutional foundation and integrity of Africa’s climate diplomacy. From the pioneering leadership of early coordinating countries that steered the continent through the Kyoto Protocol, to the transformational guidance of those who led the AGN through the eras of Copenhagen, Durban, Paris, Sharm el-Sheikh, and Belém, each chairmanship has left a defining imprint on the continent’s negotiating architecture. Their unwavering unity and visionary leadership transformed Africa from an observer to a central architect of global climate governance.

Deep appreciation is also extended to the thematic coordinators, negotiators, and technical experts who have tirelessly advanced Africa’s priorities in adaptation, mitigation, finance, technology development and transfer, capacity-building, transparency, global stocktake, just transition, response measures, loss and damage, gender, and youth engagement. Their scientific acumen, analytical depth, and diplomatic skill have strengthened Africa’s credibility in every negotiating forum and ensured that the continent’s unique circumstances and aspirations are reflected in global decisions.

The AGN acknowledges with gratitude the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) and the Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSCC), whose political leadership and unwavering support have guided the Group’s mandate and ensured that Africa’s voice remains united, coherent, and influential. Their alignment with the African Union Commission (AUC) has anchored the AGN’s work within the broader continental vision of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, reinforcing the principle of African solutions to global challenges.

Special appreciation is conveyed to the African diplomatic community and member states, whose permanent missions in Bonn, Nairobi, Addis Ababa, Geneva, and New York have provided critical technical and logistical support. Their dedication has maintained the continuity of Africa’s participation across COPs, CMPs, CMAs, SBIs, and SBSTAs and in constituted bodies including the Adaptation Committee, Standing Committee on Finance, and Paris Committee on Capacity Building.

The authors recognize the enduring contributions of Africa’s development and knowledge partners multilateral institutions, UN agencies, development banks, regional organizations, research consortia, and civil society networks whose collaboration has strengthened Africa’s voice in global climate diplomacy. Their technical assistance, policy dialogue, and financial contributions have enhanced Africa’s capacity to engage effectively across all negotiation tracks, while promoting access to climate finance, technology transfer, and capacity development. Through these partnerships, the AGN has built an enduring legacy of evidence-based negotiation, shared learning, and South–South cooperation.

Sincere appreciation also goes to Africa’s scientific and academic community, whose research and innovation have grounded Africa’s positions in credible science and data. The African Climate Policy Centre (ACPC), African Group of Negotiators Experts Support (AGNES), regional climate centres, and universities have played an indispensable role in building a new generation of African negotiators, bridging science, policy, and diplomacy.

Equally, the AGN expresses gratitude to civil society, youth, and media actors who have amplified Africa’s message beyond negotiation halls. Their advocacy and outreach have deepened public understanding of the linkages between climate action, justice, and sustainable development, and ensured transparency and accountability in global processes. Their passion embodies the intergenerational spirit that sustains Africa’s leadership in climate action.

Finally, the authors extend heartfelt thanks to the editorial and drafting team led by Dr. Eng. Ladislaus K. Leonidas, working under the strategic guidance of Dr. Richard S. Muyungi, Chair of the African Group of Negotiators (2025). Their dedication to documenting Africa’s 30-year journey has ensured that the lessons, sacrifices, and triumphs of African negotiators are preserved for posterity. The support and contributions from all AGN members, experts, and national focal points during the preparation of this publication were invaluable. This book stands as both a tribute and a collective accomplishment an enduring record of Africa’s multilateral leadership and a source of inspiration for generations to come. It reminds us that unity, knowledge, and justice remain the pillars of Africa’s climate diplomacy, and that the spirit of “One Africa, One Voice” will continue to guide the continent toward a fair, inclusive, and sustainable global climate order.

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Authors

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AARINENA	Association of Agricultural Research Institutions in the Near East and North Africa
ACMAD	African Centre of Meteorological Applications for Development
ACPC	African Climate Policy Centre
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AF	Adaptation Fund
AfDB	African Development Bank
AGN	African Group of Negotiators on Climate Change
AGNES	African Group of Negotiators Experts Support
AMCEN	African Ministerial Conference on the Environment
AMCOMET	African Ministerial Conference on Meteorology
AOSIS	Alliance of Small Island States
AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
AWG-LCA	Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action
AWG-KP	Ad Hoc Working Group on the Kyoto Protocol
BAP	Bali Action Plan
CAHOSCC	Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change
CBDR-RC	Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities
CCA	Climate Change Adaptation
CCDA	Climate Change and Development in Africa Conference
CCS	Carbon Capture and Storage
CDM	Clean Development Mechanism
CMA	Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement
CMP	Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol
COP	Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC
CTCN	Climate Technology Centre and Network
DP	Durban Platform for Enhanced Action
ENB / IISD	Earth Negotiations Bulletin / International Institute for Sustainable Development
ETF	Enhanced Transparency Framework
EU	European Union
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GGA	Global Goal on Adaptation
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German Development Cooperation)
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GST	Global Stocktake
G77 + China	Group of 77 and China
ICCCAD	International Centre for Climate Change and Development
ICPAC	IGAD Climate Prediction and Applications Centre
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
ITMO	Internationally Transferred Mitigation Outcome

LDCs – Least Developed Countries
LMDCs – Like-Minded Developing Countries
LDCF – Least Developed Countries Fund
MRV – Measurable, Reportable and Verifiable
NAP – National Adaptation Plan
NAPA – National Adaptation Programme of Action
NDC – Nationally Determined Contribution
NCQG – New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance
NWP – Nairobi Work Programme
OAU – Organization of African Unity
OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PACJA – Pan-African Climate Justice Alliance
PPP – Public-Private Partnership
RCM – Regional Climate Model
RECs – Regional Economic Communities
REDD + – Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation, plus conservation, sustainable management and enhancement of carbon stocks
SBI – Subsidiary Body for Implementation
SBSTA – Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice
SCCF – Special Climate Change Fund
SCF – Standing Committee on Finance
SDG – Sustainable Development Goal
TEC – Technology Executive Committee
UN – United Nations
UNCCD – United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNCED – United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Earth Summit)
UNCTAD – United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP – United Nations Development Programme
UNECA – United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNEP – United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC – United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNGA – United Nations General Assembly
UNITAR – United Nations Institute for Training and Research
UNOSD – United Nations Office for Sustainable Development
USD – United States Dollar
WIM – Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage
WMO – World Meteorological Organization

TIMELINE OF MILESTONE (1995–2025)

1995–1998 — Founding and first footholds

Africa consolidates a single negotiating voice under the UNFCCC, formalizing the African Group of Negotiators (AGN) and embedding equity, CBDR-RC and the right to sustainable development as guiding pillars. The Group enters the Kyoto era aligned behind adaptation, finance, and technology transfer as existential priorities for the continent.

1999–2001 — From principles to practice (Marrakesh)

AGN steers Africa through the operationalization of the Kyoto Protocol at COP7 (Marrakesh Accords), advancing capacity-building, technology transfer and early adaptation instruments turning normative principles into programmatic workstreams that African Parties can use.

2005–2009 — Agenda-setting to turbulence (Nairobi → Bali → Copenhagen)

With Africa hosting COP12 (Nairobi) and entering the Bali Action Plan (2007), AGN elevates adaptation and means of implementation alongside mitigation. The turbulent COP15 (Copenhagen) tests unity; Africa defends CBDR-RC and insists on finance and fairness, strengthening internal coordination for the next phase.

2011–2015 — Durban mandate to the Paris moment

At COP17 (Durban), AGN helps secure the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action, launching negotiations toward a universal agreement. COP21 (Paris) crowns this arc: Africa's fingerprints are visible on the Global Goal on Adaptation, finance architecture, and recognition of special needs and circumstances anchoring justice within a universal regime.

2016–2019 — Making Paris operational (Rulebook years)

African negotiators drive clarity on transparency, NDC guidance and adaptation communication, culminating in the Katowice Climate Package (2018). The period also spotlights unfinished work on markets and integrity (Article 6) and persistent gaps on finance and loss & damage.

2020–2021 — Resilience in disruption; a pivot to delivery

Through the pandemic, AGN preserves negotiating momentum and keeps loss & damage and ambition prominent, positioning the continent for Glasgow's decisions and renewed focus on implementation, access and accountability.

2022–2023 — Breakthrough on Loss & Damage; strengthening adaptation

At COP27 (Sharm el-Sheikh) Parties agree to establish the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage and a transitional pathway to make it operational—an historic African ask linked to the lived realities of climate impacts. Work intensifies on framing the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) from targets to indicators.

2024 — From frameworks to metrics and access

AGN pushes to translate GGA outcomes into measurable indicators and insists on predictable, grant-heavy finance and accessible institutions; Africa's call for clear rules on counting/reporting finance and for lower cost of capital becomes more explicit across SBI/SBSTA tracks.

2025 — COP30 Belém: implementation, scale and justice

Under Tanzania's chairmanship, Africa arrives at COP30 (Belém, Brazil; 10–21 Nov 2025) focused on converting mandates into action: (i) securing a New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) trajectory toward ~US\$1.3 trillion annually by 2035 with $\geq 50\%$ for adaptation; (ii) fully operationalizing the Loss & Damage Fund (replenishment and easy access); (iii) finalizing GGA indicators linked to means of implementation; and (iv) advancing Just Transition Pathways that protect jobs, sovereignty and development space. The COP30 Presidency's six-pillar action agenda (energy/industry/transport; forests/oceans/biodiversity; food systems; resilient cities/infrastructure/water; human development; cross-cutting enablers) frames delivery. Africa's position is further grounded by advisory opinion on obligations in respect of climate change, reinforcing legality, equity and CBDR-RC.

Continental stewardship throughout

Across the 30-year arc, AGN's cohesion is underwritten by AMCEN and CAHOSCC under the African Union Commission, aligning technical asks with political mandate and Agenda 2063. Alliances with G77+China, LDCs and AOSIS amplify outcomes; UNFCCC archives trace the continuity of Africa's case for fairness, access and implementation.

INTRODUCTION

For three decades, the African Group of Negotiators on Climate Change (AGN) has stood at the forefront of Africa's collective response to one of humanity's greatest challenges. Established in 1995 under the framework of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the AGN embodies the continent's determination to engage the global community with unity, evidence, and principle. It is both an instrument of diplomacy and a symbol of Africa's resilience an enduring expression of the continent's moral leadership in the pursuit of climate justice, equity, and sustainable development.

Africa's Voice in a Changing World

The AGN emerged at a time when the global environmental order was still taking shape. The 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro established the UNFCCC as a universal compact to stabilize greenhouse-gas concentrations. Yet the early architecture of the Convention reflected asymmetries in power and capacity that left Africa vulnerable to both climate impacts and marginalization in decision-making. Recognizing this, African countries resolved to organize their participation in a coordinated, continental manner one that would amplify Africa's priorities and secure the implementation of the Convention's principles, particularly common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR-RC) and the right to sustainable development.

Since its formation, the AGN has transformed Africa from a fragmented collection of Parties into a cohesive negotiating bloc. It has become the principal platform through which Africa articulates and defends its collective interests across all negotiation tracks ranging from adaptation and finance to technology transfer and transparency. This unity has elevated Africa's position within the broader developing-country coalition of the Group of 77 and China (G77 + China) and enabled strategic partnerships with other alliances such as the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS).

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Why the AGN Matters

Africa's engagement in the climate regime is rooted in both vulnerability and vision. Although the continent contributes less than 4 percent of global greenhouse-gas emissions, it endures some of the most severe impacts of climate change prolonged droughts, erratic rainfall, flooding, coastal erosion, and threats to food and water security. This reality has endowed Africa with moral authority in the global climate discourse. From this moral base, the AGN has forged a diplomatic philosophy grounded in fairness, solidarity, and the inseparability of climate action and development.

Through persistent advocacy, the AGN has repositioned Africa not as a passive victim of climate injustice but as an active architect of solutions. Its coordinated interventions have redefined the narrative from one of vulnerability to one of opportunity emphasizing Africa's potential for renewable-energy transitions, sustainable agriculture, and nature-based resilience. As such, the AGN represents not only a negotiating platform but also a continental think-tank for climate governance.

AFRICA'S CLIMATE DIPLOMACY

Across three decades, Africa's leadership within the UNFCCC has left a lasting imprint on global climate policy:

COP 7
(Marrakesh, 2001)

Africa's coordinated diplomacy shaped the Marrakesh Accords, which operationalized the Kyoto Protocol and established frameworks for adaptation, capacity-building, and technology transfer core African priorities.

COP 17
(Durban, 2011)

The continent hosted a defining moment: the launch of the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action, which set the roadmap toward a universal agreement applicable to all Parties.

COP 21
(Paris, 2015)

African advocacy ensured that the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) was enshrined in the Paris Agreement and that the principle of equity remained central to its implementation.

COP 27
(Sharm el-Sheikh, 2022)

Africa's unity and persistence delivered a historic outcome: the establishment of a Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage, long demanded by vulnerable countries.

COP 30
(Belém, 2025)

Under Tanzania's chairmanship, Africa enters the implementation era, focusing on the New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance (NCQG) and equitable pathways for adaptation and just transition.

Each milestone tells a story of strategic endurance. From the early battles for recognition to the current push for transformational finance, the AGN has consistently positioned Africa as both a moral compass and a practical leader in the global climate architecture.

Collective Negotiation as an Instrument of Justice

The genius of the AGN lies in its institutional design. From the outset, African negotiators recognized that the complexity of multilateral processes demanded unity, specialization, and discipline. The AGN thus established internal coordination mechanisms daily strategy meetings, thematic clusters, and lead coordinators across negotiation streams to craft common positions that reflect Africa's shared priorities while respecting national circumstances.

This collective approach embodies Africa's broader philosophy of solidarity and shared responsibility. It transforms negotiation from a contest of interests into an exercise in cooperative justice. For Africa, climate negotiations are not merely about carbon—they are about people, development, and dignity. Through its coordinated diplomacy, the AGN ensures that climate ambition complements, rather than constrains, the continent's pursuit of industrialization, energy access, and poverty eradication.

The Group's advocacy for a Just Transition illustrates this vision. Africa's negotiators have insisted that the global transition to low-carbon economies must be fair, inclusive, and development-oriented anchored in the realities of access to energy, technology, and finance. As articulated in numerous AGN statements, climate finance is not charity but a matter of equity, accountability, and trust among nations.

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Partnerships, Knowledge, and Capacity

Behind the AGN's diplomatic achievements lies an equally powerful story of capacity development. In the mid-1990s, the continent had only a handful of trained climate negotiators. Over the years, through sustained collaboration with continental institutions, development partners, and the UNFCCC Secretariat, Africa has cultivated a new generation of negotiators who combine scientific literacy with political acumen. Regional workshops, simulation exercises, and the mentorship of senior negotiators have ensured continuity and institutional memory.

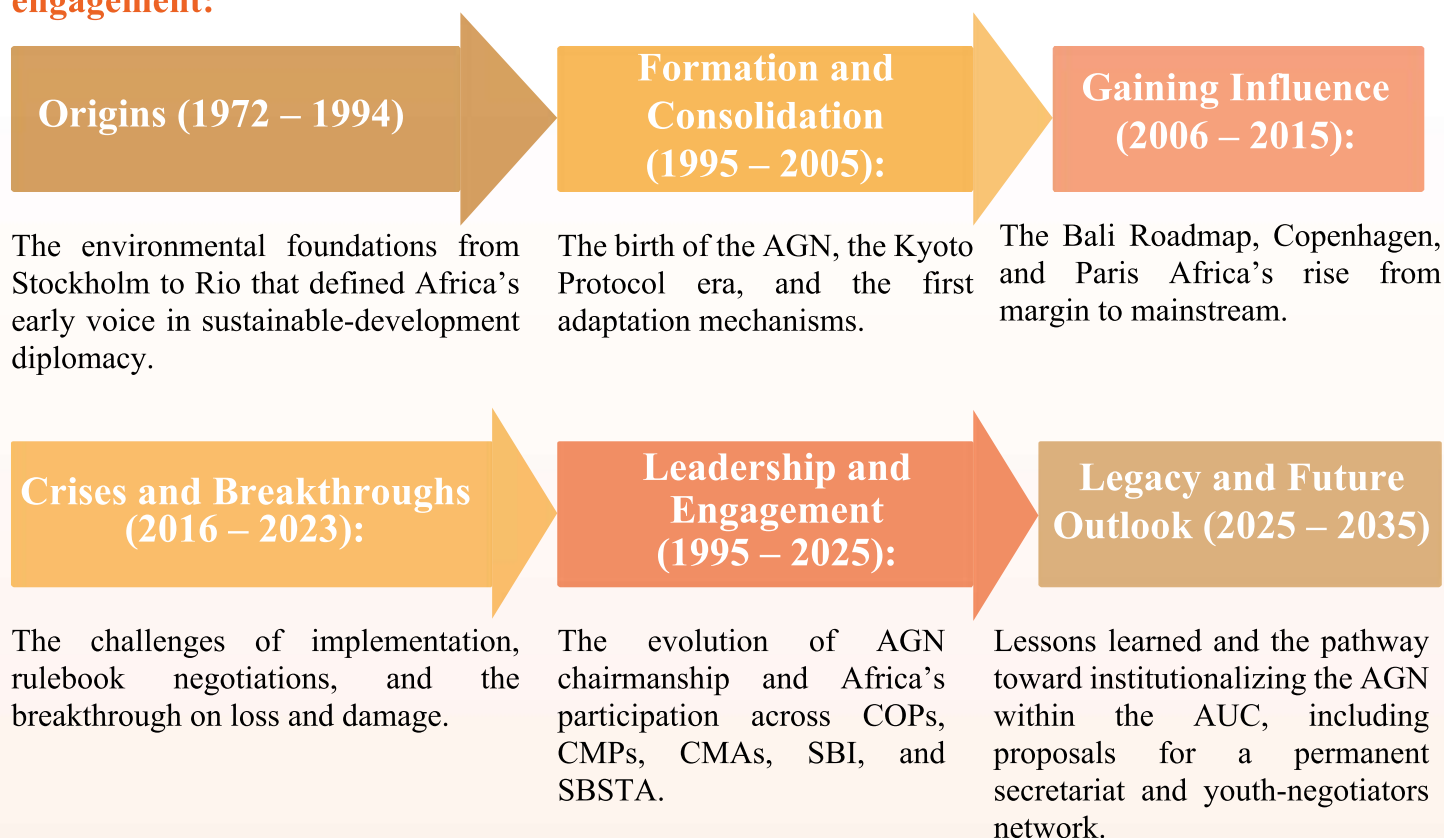
The AGN's cooperation with technical and academic partners has strengthened Africa's evidence base for negotiation. Joint initiatives with regional and international organizations have supported research on adaptation metrics, finance tracking, and technology needs. These partnerships have transformed the AGN into a hub of knowledge diplomacy where science and policy intersect to inform continental positions.

Beyond technical engagement, the AGN has nurtured dialogue with the media, youth, and civil-society organizations, recognizing their essential role in sustaining public awareness and accountability. Recent initiatives have positioned communication as a "catalyst for Africa's climate, peace, and security agenda," ensuring that Africa's climate narrative resonates beyond conference halls.

Methodology and Structure of the Book

This booklet has been prepared as both a diplomatic reference and a historical compendium of Africa's climate diplomacy. Its methodology combines archival research, policy analysis, and narrative storytelling. Primary sources include official UNFCCC documents decisions, submissions, and plenary statements as well as independent reporting from the Earth Negotiations Bulletin and policy instruments of the African Union Commission (AUC), the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), and the Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSCC). Statements and reflections from AGN Chairs and negotiators between 1995 and 2025 add human depth and institutional memory.

The structure of the booklet mirrors the evolution of Africa's engagement:



A Living Record of Unity and Vision

This publication seeks to do more than recount events. It captures the ethos of African climate diplomacy—its values, vision, and endurance. From early marginalization to leadership in shaping global agreements, the AGN's journey mirrors Africa's broader political renaissance. It reflects how cooperation, expertise, and moral clarity can transform vulnerability into power.

As the world approaches a decisive decade for climate action, the AGN's message remains clear: Africa's development and the planet's stability are inseparable. The principles of justice, solidarity, and shared prosperity that have guided the AGN since 1995 will continue to define its mission in the years ahead. This is the story of a continent that chose unity over isolation, conviction over complacency, and hope over despair and, in doing so, transformed the global conversation on climate change.

PART I

ORIGINS OF AFRICA'S CLIMATE DIPLOMACY (1972–1994)

Chapter 1: Seeds of Solidarity – Africa's Environmental Diplomacy Before the UNFCCC

1.1 The Dawn of Global Environmental Consciousness: Stockholm 1972

The story of Africa's climate diplomacy begins not in 1995 with the formation of the African Group of Negotiators (AGN), but in 1972, when the continent first entered the stage of global environmental governance. That year, the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment convened in Stockholm, marking the first time nations gathered to discuss the environmental consequences of industrial development.

For African countries most newly independent and navigating post-colonial development trajectories the Stockholm Conference was more than a technical meeting; it was a political awakening. Delegates from Africa articulated, with remarkable foresight, that environmental degradation and poverty were not separate crises but interlinked challenges. Their interventions emphasized that the right to development was inseparable from environmental protection a principle that would later echo in the UNFCCC's preamble and Article 3 on equity and sustainable development.

The Organization of African Unity (OAU), only nine years old at the time, supported a coordinated continental participation. Its member states framed the environment as a global commons that required shared responsibility, yet they warned against environmental conditionalities that might constrain the industrial and agricultural aspirations of developing countries. The Stockholm Declaration, particularly its Principles 10 and 11 on sovereignty and responsibility, reflected Africa's imprint, laying the conceptual foundation for what decades later would become the cornerstone of climate negotiations: Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC).

1.2 From Stockholm to Nairobi: The 1982 Declaration

A decade after Stockholm, the environmental debate had shifted southward. In 1982, African leaders hosted the Nairobi Conference on the Human Environment, which adopted the Nairobi Declaration a seminal document asserting the developing world's right to equitable growth. The Declaration reaffirmed the principles of sovereignty over natural resources and rejected one-size-fits-all environmental standards.

Nairobi marked a critical inflection point for Africa's diplomatic identity. The continent was no longer a passive participant but a norm-shaper. African diplomats, scientists, and ministers called for the creation of new institutional mechanisms to support environmental management in the developing world. Out of this political momentum was born the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), headquartered in Nairobi a global recognition of Africa's leadership.

The Nairobi Declaration also called for enhanced cooperation between the North and South, introducing a new vocabulary of equity, shared prosperity, and mutual responsibility. These ideas would later frame Africa's position in the Rio process of 1992 and the establishment of the UNFCCC.

1.3 The Brundtland Report and the Rise of Sustainable Development (1987)

By the mid-1980s, environmental diplomacy had evolved to embrace the notion of sustainable development, thanks in large part to the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), chaired by Gro Harlem Brundtland. The Brundtland Report (1987), titled "Our Common Future," introduced the now-universal definition of sustainable development: "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

African participation in the Brundtland process was both intellectual and political. Experts from Nigeria, Kenya, and Egypt contributed to discussions on energy, agriculture, and water. African leaders used the Report's findings to argue that the continent's development pathways must integrate environmental management, not as an external imposition but as an enabler of human progress.

The Report became a rallying document for the OAU, inspiring the creation of regional environmental frameworks, including the African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (revised in 1983). It also influenced the Lusaka Declaration (1985), which linked poverty alleviation to environmental stewardship a framing that would define Africa's negotiating stance at the 1992 Earth Summit.

1.4 The OAU's Early Environmental Institutions and Pan-African Collaboration

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the OAU recognized that environmental degradation threatened the very foundations of African development—food security, water, and health. The organization established the OAU Environmental Coordination Unit and, later, the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) in 1985, headquartered in Nairobi.

AMCEN became the first continental policy platform for aligning Africa's environmental priorities. It united ministers from all member states to deliberate on cross-border pollution, desertification, and drought—issues that transcended national boundaries. Early AMCEN declarations explicitly called for “a collective African environmental strategy” and advocated for the establishment of regional research centers, data-sharing networks, and integrated natural resource management systems.

These early institutions OAU's Environmental Division, AMCEN, and UNEP collectively formed the trinity of Africa's environmental governance architecture. They represented Africa's strategic transition from isolated national responses to coordinated multilateral engagement, laying the institutional foundations for Africa's later cohesion under the UNFCCC.

Chapter 2: Road to Rio – Building a Collective Voice (1988–1992)

2.1 The Emergence of Global Climate Awareness

The late 1980s witnessed the birth of modern climate diplomacy. In 1988, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was established jointly by UNEP and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), signaling a new era of science-based policy. African scientists contributed early observations linking droughts, changing rainfall patterns, and food insecurity to global climate change.

As the IPCC's first assessment reports underscored the urgency of coordinated global action, African policymakers began organizing around a central principle: climate change is not merely an environmental problem it is a development crisis. The continent's ministers of environment, through AMCEN, articulated that Africa's vulnerability stemmed from structural inequities low adaptive capacity, dependence on climate-sensitive sectors, and limited technology access.

2.2 Towards the 1992 Earth Summit – Africa's Preparations

The path to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) better known as the Rio Earth Summit (1992) was marked by intense intergovernmental negotiations. In 1990, African ministers met in Cairo and Abuja to define the African Common Position on Environment and Development, which would guide their engagement in Rio.

This Common Position was grounded in five cardinal principles that would later define Africa's role in the UNFCCC:

1. Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR-RC): Recognizing historical emissions as the moral and legal basis for differential obligations.
2. Adaptation as a Priority: Asserting that Africa's exposure to drought, desertification, and floods made adaptation not a luxury but a right.

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3. Finance and Technology Transfer: Calling for new, additional, predictable, and accessible financial resources from developed countries.
 4. Capacity Building: Demanding support for scientific institutions, early warning systems, and policy expertise.
 5. Equity and the Right to Development: Emphasizing that climate action must not constrain Africa's pursuit of industrialization and poverty reduction.

The Earth Negotiations Bulletin (IISD) archives record Africa's unified interventions in the preparatory committees (PrepComs) leading to Rio. Delegates from Nigeria, Kenya, and Egypt often spoke on behalf of the continent, stressing that "the climate problem is global, but its burdens are local," and that without addressing the structural inequalities of finance and technology, global cooperation would remain aspirational.

2.3 Africa at the Rio Earth Summit: Crafting the UNFCCC

When the Earth Summit opened in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992, Africa arrived with unprecedented unity. Forty-nine African states participated, coordinated through AMCEN and the OAU. Their statements in the plenary and contact groups shaped key sections of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), particularly Articles 3 and 4, which enshrine equity, CBDR-RC, adaptation, and capacity building.

African diplomats worked closely with the G77+China to ensure that the Convention recognized developing countries' special circumstances. The term "special needs and circumstances of developing countries, especially those in Africa" (Article 4.9) was inserted largely through African advocacy. Similarly, the financial mechanism (Article 11) was designed with Africa's insistence on accessibility and governance under the Conference of the Parties (COP).

The Rio Summit also led to the adoption of Agenda 21, a blueprint for sustainable development. African countries committed to integrating environment and development at national and regional levels. The Summit's outcomes catalyzed the creation of new institutions such as national environmental management authorities and climate change units across Africa.

2.4 Post-Rio: Building Capacity and Regional Cooperation (1992–1994)

In the years following Rio, Africa entered a phase of capacity building and institutional experimentation. Countries began preparing national communications, as required by the UNFCCC, even before the Convention entered into force in 1994. UNEP, UNECA, and AMCEN supported training workshops for negotiators, while the African Development Bank initiated climate-focused lending instruments.

The period also saw the establishment of subregional climate networks the IGAD Climate Prediction and Applications Centre (ICPAC), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Climate Services Centre, and the African Centre of Meteorological Applications for Development (ACMAD). These entities deepened scientific collaboration and strengthened Africa's negotiation preparedness.

Meanwhile, African ministers meeting under AMCEN repeatedly called for a unified African negotiating mechanism within the UNFCCC, noting that individual representation risked fragmentation. Their communiqués between 1993 and 1994 proposed the formation of a continental coordination body a vision realized in 1995 with the birth of the African Group of Negotiators (AGN).

PART II

FORMATION AND CONSOLIDATION (1995–2005)

Chapter 3: Birth of the African Group of Negotiators

3.1 Genesis – From Rio’s Promise to a Unified African Voice (1995)

The establishment of the African Group of Negotiators on Climate Change (AGN) in 1995 marked the institutional birth of Africa’s climate diplomacy under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The Rio Earth Summit of 1992 had delivered the UNFCCC as the first legally binding framework on climate cooperation, but as implementation began, African states realized that the architecture of global negotiation was complex, fragmented, and dominated by industrialized countries with vast technical resources.

The first Conference of the Parties (COP 1), held in Berlin in 1995, signaled this imbalance. African representatives participated actively within the broader Group of 77 and China (G77+China) but found that their unique vulnerabilities low emissions, high exposure to impacts, and weak institutional capacity were often subsumed under generic developing country narratives. In response, African ministers and negotiators meeting under the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) resolved to establish a coordinated negotiating bloc the AGN to consolidate Africa’s voice within the UNFCCC process.

Thus, in 1995, during the intersessional period after COP1, the African Group of Negotiators was formally created as a sub-coordination mechanism under the G77+China. It comprised all African Parties to the UNFCCC, representing 54 nations unified by shared principles of equity, common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR-RC), and the right to sustainable development.

3.3 Early Leadership and the Spirit of Volunteerism

By 1997, the AGN had its first officially recognized Chair Mr. Mohamed Elyazghi of Morocco coinciding with a decisive moment in global climate politics. Under Morocco’s coordination, the Group built internal discipline: daily coordination meetings, division of negotiators by thematic streams (adaptation, finance, mitigation, and technology), and consistent reporting back to national ministries.

This spirit of volunteerism was legendary. In the words of early negotiators, “one African delegate could move from one room to another and negotiate all issues” a testament to dedication amid limited resources. The lack of institutional funding meant that negotiators often covered personal expenses or relied on UNEP and UNDP assistance to attend sessions. Yet this constraint fostered an ethos of sacrifice and solidarity, hallmarks of the AGN’s diplomatic culture to this day.

3.2 Institutional Foundations and Early Coordination

The early AGN lacked formal infrastructure there was no permanent secretariat or budget, only determination and voluntary coordination. The Group relied on AMCEN and UNEP’s Nairobi office for logistical and technical support, while the OAU (later AU) provided the political framework. Coordination meetings were typically convened during the Subsidiary Bodies (SB) sessions in Bonn and COPs, often chaired by a volunteer lead negotiator from an African Party.

Mauritius (1995–1996) served as the first informal coordinator, with Mr. Sok Appadou guiding Africa’s initial interventions across mitigation, adaptation, and financial mechanisms. This period was one of learning and positioning: Africa was defining how to operate collectively, how to coordinate across regions, and how to build alliances within the G77+China family. The AGN’s early strategy focused on three pillars:

1. Advocating for recognition of Africa’s special needs and circumstances (UNFCCC Article 4.9).
2. Promoting capacity building and technology transfer as enablers of participation.
3. Framing adaptation as a moral and legal necessity, not an auxiliary issue.

Through early interventions at COP2 (Geneva, 1996) and the Ad Hoc Group on the Berlin Mandate (AGBM), African negotiators laid the groundwork for what would soon become the Kyoto Protocol.

3.4 The Political and Normative Context

Globally, the mid-1990s were defined by debates over differentiation, flexibility mechanisms, and compliance frameworks. Developed countries sought binding emission targets for themselves, while developing nations focused on equity, historical responsibility, and development space. The AGN positioned Africa as the moral conscience of the process: advocating that global rules must recognize Africa's negligible contribution to climate change and its disproportionate vulnerability to its impacts.

These early years also coincided with the evolution of the Kyoto Protocol (1997), which would become the central battleground for Africa's engagement during its first decade.

Chapter 4: Kyoto and Early Strategic Battles

4.1 Africa's Priorities in the Kyoto Era (1997–2001)

The Kyoto Protocol, adopted at COP3 in 1997, introduced binding emission reduction targets for developed (Annex I) countries and established the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) as a market-based tool to facilitate emission reductions through projects in developing nations. While the Protocol was hailed as a breakthrough, Africa's initial reaction was mixed.

African negotiators welcomed the CDM as a potential source of investment and technology transfer but immediately raised alarms over equitable access. The AGN's early interventions emphasized three imperatives:

1. Fair participation: Africa demanded simplified modalities for least developed countries (LDCs) to access CDM projects, arguing that market mechanisms should not replicate global inequalities.
2. Adaptation finance: The AGN championed the idea of an Adaptation Fund, financed through a levy on CDM transactions. This concept, later institutionalized under the Marrakesh Accords (COP7, 2001), was among Africa's earliest diplomatic victories.
3. Capacity building: Recognizing limited technical expertise across the continent, the AGN called for dedicated capacity-building frameworks under both the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) and the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA).

Under Morocco's leadership (1997–1998), the AGN built alliances with Latin American and Caribbean countries to defend the CBDR-RC principle against attempts by some industrialized countries to introduce voluntary commitments for developing nations.

4.2 Marrakesh Accords – From Principles to Practice (1999–2001)

Between 1999 and 2001, under the chairmanship of Mr. Mamadou Honadia (Burkina Faso), the AGN transitioned from normative advocacy to practical implementation. The Marrakesh Accords (COP7, 2001) operationalized the Kyoto Protocol by detailing rules for compliance, reporting, and funding mechanisms. Africa played a pivotal role in shaping these decisions:

- The Adaptation Fund, based on a 2% levy on CDM proceeds, was a direct result of African advocacy.
- The Capacity-Building Framework for Developing Countries incorporated African proposals emphasizing institutional strengthening and human capital.
- The Technology Transfer Framework reflected Africa's call for enhanced access to environmentally sound technologies.

These outcomes were achieved through disciplined coordination, often led by small teams of negotiators who multitasked across agenda items. Africa's interventions, as recorded in the Earth Negotiations Bulletin, consistently returned to a single message: "No climate solution is just if it leaves Africa behind."

4.3 Challenges of Equitable CDM Access

Despite Africa's advocacy, CDM implementation revealed systemic inequities. By 2005, over 70% of CDM projects were concentrated in Asia and Latin America, while Africa accounted for less than 3%. The barriers were structural: lack of baseline data, weak institutions, limited investor confidence, and high transaction costs. African negotiators, working with UNEP and the African Development Bank (AfDB), initiated capacity-building initiatives such as the CDM Capacity Development Programme for Sub-Saharan Africa (2003–2005). These efforts laid the groundwork for later instruments like the Africa Carbon Support Programme (ACSP) and the Africa Climate Policy Centre (ACPC) under UNECA.

4.4 Adaptation as Africa's Defining Issue

Throughout the Kyoto period, adaptation remained Africa's rallying point. The AGN's strategy was twofold:

- Institutional: pushing for the establishment of the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) and the Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF) under the Global Environment Facility (GEF).
- Normative: reframing adaptation as a global responsibility, not charity, rooted in the Convention's legal obligations.

Africa's leadership ensured that COP decisions repeatedly "recognized the special needs and circumstances of Africa." This recognition, secured through the AGN's persistence, created the political and legal basis for later mechanisms such as the Global Goal on Adaptation (Paris, 2015).

Chapter 5: Building Unity and Capacity – The First Decade (1995–2005)

5.1 The Institutional Landscape: Challenges and Partnerships

The first decade of the AGN was characterized by institutional fragility but remarkable perseverance. The Group operated without a secretariat, relying on rotational chairs, AMCEN's political endorsement, and UNEP's logistical support. Funding constraints meant that many African delegations to COPs were small—often one or two delegates covering multiple negotiation tracks.

Partnerships were therefore essential. UNEP, UNDP, and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) supported negotiation skills workshops; AMCEN provided political backing; and the African Union (AU) offered continental legitimacy. The AfDB began to integrate climate change into its operational agenda, funding early studies on adaptation and resilience.

These collaborations were crucial in building Africa's first generation of climate negotiators—a small cadre of diplomats, scientists, and lawyers who would shape the continent's climate diplomacy for decades.

5.2 The Pioneers: The First Generation of African Negotiators

Among the pioneers were Margaret Sangarwe (Zimbabwe), Emily Massawa (Kenya), Mamadou Honadia (Burkina Faso), and Kamal Djemouai (Algeria)—figures who embodied Africa's tenacity. They operated in an era when few negotiators had access to real-time information or research backstopping.

This generation institutionalized daily coordination meetings, developed the first African Common Position documents, and began a tradition of holding continental preparatory meetings ahead of COPs—now a cornerstone of AGN functioning. They also served as mentors for younger negotiators, establishing a culture of intergenerational learning that remains central to AGN identity.

5.3 Strategic Alliances and External Recognition

By the early 2000s, Africa's unity and discipline were earning recognition within the UNFCCC. The AGN became a respected interlocutor for other blocs. Its strategic alliances with LDCs, AOSIS, and the G77+China created a powerful moral and political coalition that often shifted the tone of negotiations.

Africa's emphasis on justice, balance, and development distinguished its interventions. As one ENB report from COP6 (The Hague, 2000) noted, "the African Group's interventions resonated across the developing world, reminding negotiators that fairness must remain the measure of climate ambition."

5.4 Institutional Consolidation (2002–2005)

Under Zimbabwe (2002–2003) and Kenya (2004–2005), the AGN entered a phase of consolidation. The focus shifted to deepening internal structures appointing thematic coordinators for key agenda items (adaptation, finance, technology, mitigation, capacity building, and response measures).

During this period, AMCEN and the African Union Commission (AUC) formally recognized the AGN as the continent's technical negotiation arm, establishing a clear mandate alignment between technical (AGN), ministerial (AMCEN), and political (CAHOSCC) organs. This triangular alignment became Africa's diplomatic backbone a system that persists to the present.

5.5 Capacity Building and Knowledge Systems

By 2005, Africa's negotiators had built a modest but growing capacity infrastructure. Training programs supported by UNEP, UNDP, and bilateral partners (DANIDA, GIZ, and DFID) produced a new cohort of negotiators capable of handling complex legal and scientific texts. The creation of the African Group of Negotiators Experts Support (AGNES) in later years would build upon these early experiences.

At the same time, African academic and research institutions, notably the University of Nairobi, University of Dar es Salaam, and Cairo University, began contributing policy analysis to inform national and regional negotiation positions.

5.6 Entering the Nairobi COP – Africa Hosts the World (2005)

The first decade culminated symbolically in COP12 (Nairobi, 2006), but the preparatory groundwork was laid in 2005 under Kenya's chairmanship. Hosting a COP in Africa represented recognition of the continent's maturity in the UNFCCC process. It provided a platform to highlight African priorities adaptation finance, equitable access to technology, and capacity building.

By this point, Africa had transitioned from a reactive bloc to a strategic actor able to shape agenda items, build coalitions, and defend principles. The first decade (1995–2005) thus established the institutional DNA of the AGN: solidarity, equity, technical competence, and moral leadership.

PART III

GAINING INFLUENCE AND SHAPING THE AGENDA (2005–2015)

Chapter 6: Bali Roadmap to Copenhagen – The Equity Imperative

6.1 COP 12 in Nairobi – Africa Takes Centre Stage

The year 2006 marked a watershed in Africa’s multilateral climate engagement. When the Twelfth Conference of the Parties (COP 12) convened in Nairobi, Kenya, the African continent did more than host the negotiations; it redefined the tone of global climate dialogue. The Nairobi COP, coupled with the Second Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP 2), symbolized the maturing of the African Group of Negotiators (AGN) as an intellectual and political force.

For the first time, Africa was not only a venue but a voice: framing discussions around adaptation, technology transfer, and equity. The Nairobi Work Programme on Impacts, Vulnerability and Adaptation to Climate Change, adopted at COP 12, bore Africa’s imprint. Proposed by AGN members and endorsed by AMCEN, the programme institutionalized adaptation as a structured workstream under the UNFCCC. It signalled a shift from rhetorical appeals to technical engagement placing Africa’s realities at the heart of global policy.

In the corridors of Nairobi’s Kenyatta International Conference Centre, Africa’s negotiators projected a new diplomatic posture: assertive yet cooperative. The AGN organized daily coordination meetings, issued joint statements through the G77 + China, and successfully inserted language recognizing “the special needs and circumstances of Africa.” This outcome resonated far beyond the COP: it confirmed Africa’s ability to shape the agenda, not merely respond to it.

6.2 From Nairobi to Bali – The Roadmap of Justice

Building on Nairobi’s momentum, the AGN entered COP 13 in Bali (2007) with a unified vision anchored in the conviction that climate justice and sustainable development were inseparable. The Bali Action Plan (BAP), adopted after marathon negotiations, became the blueprint for future global action. Africa, speaking through the AGN, insisted that any post-Kyoto agreement must be comprehensive, balanced, and equitable, addressing all four pillars: mitigation, adaptation, technology, and finance.

African ministers, guided by AMCEN and supported by CAHOSCC, articulated the “Equity Imperative” – a diplomatic doctrine asserting that historical responsibility and differentiated capability are moral and legal anchors of the Convention. In Bali’s contact groups, African delegates reminded Parties that climate change was not only a scientific challenge but a developmental fault line threatening livelihoods, sovereignty, and peace across the continent.

Africa’s delegation led by Sudan, Egypt, Kenya, and South Africa played a bridging role between developed and developing blocs, reinforcing the G77 + China cohesion when negotiations risked collapse. When the final gavel came down, the Bali Roadmap bore unmistakable African fingerprints: it elevated adaptation to parity with mitigation and explicitly referenced measurable, reportable, and verifiable (MRV) support to developing countries.

6.3 Strengthening Africa’s Mandate through AMCEN and CAHOSCC

Between 2007 and 2009, the AGN’s diplomatic depth grew through a structured partnership with Africa’s political organs. The African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) provided policy coherence, while the Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSCC), established by the African Union Assembly in 2009 (Decision Assembly/AU/Dec. 558 (XXIV)), offered top-level political guidance.

Under this framework, Africa's climate architecture became three-tiered:

01 CAHOSCC	02 AMCEN	03 AGN
Heads of State defining continental priorities and political vision;	Ministers ensuring technical and policy consistency;	Negotiators translating political mandates into UNFCCC outcomes.

This tri-level synergy transformed Africa's engagement. It meant that no negotiator spoke alone: every intervention in plenary carried the legitimacy of continental consensus. The AU Commission, through its Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture, institutionalized support functions for the AGN, enabling formal briefings to Heads of State and cross-sectoral linkages with finance, energy, and trade portfolios.

6.4 Copenhagen 2009 – Crisis and Courage

If Bali had marked ascent, Copenhagen (COP 15, 2009) tested the very soul of Africa's unity. Expectations were immense a new comprehensive agreement was anticipated to succeed Kyoto but the process faltered amid geopolitical mistrust. In the chaotic final days, Africa faced exclusion from key drafting rooms where a limited group of leaders negotiated the "Copenhagen Accord."

In an unprecedented show of solidarity, the African Group temporarily suspended participation in the plenary to protest marginalization a move later described in the Earth Negotiations Bulletin as "a defining act of moral courage." The walk-out, coordinated by Ethiopia's Prime Minister Meles Zenawi on behalf of CAHOSCC, compelled the Presidency to reopen the process.

Although the Copenhagen Accord was not formally adopted, Africa's unified stand achieved two lasting outcomes:

- It forced global recognition that no agreement was legitimate without Africa at the table.
- It entrenched adaptation and finance as political imperatives, leading to the creation of the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the Copenhagen Pledge of USD 100 billion per year by 2020.

Copenhagen thus became a paradox: diplomatically bruising but strategically empowering. It proved that Africa's collective diplomacy could change outcomes through moral leverage rather than numerical strength.

6.5 Post-Copenhagen – Recalibrating Africa's Strategy

After the turmoil of 2009, AMCEN convened an extraordinary session in Bamako (2010) to reassess Africa's pathway. The Bamako Declaration reaffirmed the continent's commitment to multilateralism under the UNFCCC and called for the strengthening of AGN coordination, capacity, and science-policy interface.

The AGN, now under Sudanese chairmanship, adopted a more structured working format creating thematic clusters on finance, adaptation, mitigation, technology, and legal matters. This institutional evolution positioned Africa to re-engage effectively in the rebuilding phase that led to Cancún (2010) and Durban (2011).

Chapter 7: Durban Platform and Strategic Consolidation

7.1 Cancún and the Re-emergence of Trust

COP 16 in Cancún (2010) represented a diplomatic healing moment. Africa, through disciplined negotiation, helped restore faith in the multilateral process. The Cancún Agreements anchored key Copenhagen outcomes within the UNFCCC legal framework, securing institutional homes for the GCF, the Technology Mechanism (TEC & CTCN), and the Adaptation Committee.

The AGN's interventions in Cancún, chronicled by the ENB, focused on ensuring that these new bodies reflected equitable governance and accessibility. Africa successfully advocated for developing-country representation on all boards and for prioritizing readiness and capacity support. These achievements positioned African experts in influential roles within the newly established mechanisms.

7.2 Durban 2011 – The Birth of the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action

The African continent once again became the stage for a defining moment in climate diplomacy when COP 17 was held in Durban, South Africa (2011). Under the leadership of the South African Presidency and with the AGN's close coordination, the conference delivered the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP) a decision that launched negotiations for a universal, legally binding agreement applicable to all Parties.

Africa's diplomacy in Durban was both technical and transformative. The AGN insisted that any future agreement must preserve equity and CBDR-RC while enhancing ambition. Negotiators such as Kamal Djemouai (Algeria), Fatima Denton (Gambia), and Richard Muyungi (Tanzania) ensured that the Durban Platform's language balanced the need for universality with respect for differentiation.

Durban also reinforced Africa's leadership credibility. The conference was logistically impeccable and politically successful, demonstrating that Africa could host and broker complex negotiations. The Durban outcomes also included the Long-Term Cooperative Action (LCA) work programme, further institutionalizing adaptation and finance discussions.

7.3 Institutional Consolidation and Technical Engagement

Following Durban, the AGN entered a period of strategic consolidation. Between 2012 and 2014, under Ethiopian and Ugandan chairmanships, the Group deepened its engagement in the Subsidiary Bodies (SBI and SBSTA). African experts increasingly served as Co-Chairs, Rapporteurs, and members of constituted bodies marking a shift from advocacy to agenda-setting.

- In SBI, African negotiators championed the Capacity-Building Framework (CBF) and advanced guidelines for National Adaptation Plans (NAPs).
- In SBSTA, African scientists contributed to methodological debates on REDD+, agriculture, and technology frameworks.
- In the Standing Committee on Finance (SCF), African members ensured that long-term finance remained on the agenda.

This institutional embedding created a new generation of African negotiators technically grounded, strategically agile, and globally respected.

7.4 CAHOSCC and AMCEN – Political Anchoring of Africa's Diplomacy

Parallel to technical progress, Africa's political coordination matured. CAHOSCC, chaired by Ethiopia, held regular briefings at AU Summits, ensuring Heads of State alignment with UNFCCC processes. AMCEN, under the stewardship of UNEP and the AU Commission, harmonized ministerial guidance through the Arusha and Gaborone Declarations (2012–2013), reaffirming the “One Africa, One Voice” principle.

These instruments called for the establishment of a permanent AGN support unit an idea later realized as the AGN Secretariat within the AU institutional framework. They also formalized Africa's Common Position on Climate Change, integrating priorities on adaptation, finance, technology, and loss & damage effectively a precursor to today's CAHOSCC-endorsed Common Position for COP 30 (2025).

7.5 Warsaw and Lima – From Finance to Loss and Damage

Between 2013 and 2014, the AGN faced new challenges and opportunities. At COP 19 in Warsaw, Africa played a central role in establishing the Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM) for Loss and Damage a concept African negotiators had championed since the early Kyoto years. The AGN framed the mechanism as a moral response to irreversible climate impacts and demanded predictable finance for its operation.

In Lima (2014), the AGN ensured that the Lima Call for Climate Action preserved differentiation while initiating work toward the 2015 agreement. African negotiators emphasized pre-2020 implementation and means of implementation as conditions for post-2020 ambition a negotiating logic later enshrined in the Paris Agreement's balanced architecture.

Chapter 8: Paris Agreement – Africa's Defining Moment

8.1 Setting the Stage for Paris

As the world prepared for COP 21 in Paris (2015), the AGN approached the negotiations with renewed confidence. Two decades after its formation, the Group had evolved from an informal coordination body into a disciplined continental mechanism with clear mandates, thematic expertise, and high-level political backing. Africa's objective in Paris was clear: an ambitious, equitable, and legally robust agreement that safeguarded the continent's development space while ensuring global solidarity. Through AMCEN consultations in Cairo (2015) and Addis Ababa (2015), the AGN refined the African Common Position emphasizing three deliverables:

1. Operationalizing a Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA);
2. Securing long-term, predictable climate finance;
3. Ensuring recognition of Africa's special needs and circumstances.

8.2 Africa's Negotiating Strategy and Coalition Building

Under the leadership of Dr. Tosi Mpanu-Mpanu (Democratic Republic of Congo), the AGN executed a sophisticated negotiation strategy grounded in coalition diplomacy. Africa maintained close alignment with the G77 + China, but also forged tactical alliances with:

- Least Developed Countries (LDCs) – on adaptation and capacity-building finance;
- Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) – on 1.5 °C ambition and loss & damage;
- Like-Minded Developing Countries (LMDCs) – on differentiation and equity; and
- Environmental Integrity Group (EIG) – on transparency and governance frameworks.

This web of alliances gave Africa unusual flexibility. While others negotiated defensively, the AGN advanced solutions drafting text proposals, mediating deadlocks, and providing intellectual leadership on adaptation metrics and climate finance architecture.

8.3 Defining Victories – Africa in the Paris Agreement

When the Paris Agreement was adopted on 12 December 2015, the hall erupted in applause; for Africa, it was more than a diplomatic success it was a validation of twenty years of persistence. The Agreement bore Africa's imprint across multiple articles:

1. Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) (Article 7): For the first time, adaptation achieved parity with mitigation. This was a long-standing African demand championed since Nairobi 2006.
2. Finance Commitments (Articles 9 & 13): Africa secured language requiring developed countries to provide scaled-up financial resources, building on the USD 100 billion pledge.
3. Transparency and Capacity Building (Articles 13 & 11): Provisions reflected Africa's insistence on flexibility and support for developing countries.
4. Loss and Damage (Article 8): Africa, in alliance with AOSIS and LDCs, ensured the mechanism's permanence under the Agreement.

Beyond the text, Paris represented a moral victory: it vindicated Africa's long advocacy for equity within universality. Africa went to Paris not to be heard but to be heeded.

8.4 The Rise of Non-State Actors and African Voices

Paris also marked the flowering of Africa's broader climate movement. Civil society, youth, academia, and the private sector converged under the Africa Pavilion, coordinated by the AU Commission and UNECA. Side-events showcased innovations from across the continent renewable-energy partnerships, adaptation technologies, and gender-responsive climate solutions.

The AGN embraced these voices, recognizing that diplomacy must be grounded in societal ownership. Partnerships with networks such as the Pan-African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA) and the African Group of Negotiators Experts Support (AGNES) bridged science, advocacy, and negotiation. The result was an emerging ecosystem of African climate diplomacy, where negotiators, researchers, and citizens worked in concert.

8.5 Reflections on the Paris Legacy

The Paris Agreement closed one chapter of Africa's climate diplomacy and opened another. It validated the AGN's strategy of constructive multilateralism, rooted in principles but oriented toward solutions. It also revealed persistent challenges: unfulfilled finance pledges, limited access to technology, and weak implementation capacity.

Yet, Africa's achievements were undeniable. In two decades, the continent had transformed from a peripheral participant to a principal architect of global climate governance. The AGN's journey from Nairobi 2006 to Paris 2015 demonstrated the potency of collective negotiation as a tool for justice and sustainable development. As the AU Commission later noted in its 2016 report to CAHOSCC, "Africa's unity in the UNFCCC process stands as one of the continent's most effective expressions of Pan-Africanism in multilateral diplomacy."

8.6 Continuity and Preparation for Implementation

In the immediate aftermath of Paris, the AGN, AMCEN, and CAHOSCC launched efforts to operationalize Africa's priorities within the Agreement's rulebook. Workshops in Addis Ababa, Nairobi, and Windhoek trained negotiators on modalities, procedures, and guidelines. The Africa Common Position later refined through successive AMCEN sessions and culminating in the Belém Roadmap (2025) traced its roots directly to the principles codified in Paris.

PART IV

CRISES, CHALLENGES, AND BREAKTHROUGHS (2009–2023)

Chapter 9: Moments of Struggle – Africa’s Toughest Negotiation Battles

9.1 Copenhagen COP15 (2009): The Breaking Point of Exclusion

The Copenhagen Climate Change Conference in 2009 was one of the most intense moments in modern climate diplomacy and for Africa, it was a defining episode of resistance and resolve. Hopes were high for a legally binding successor to the Kyoto Protocol. Yet as negotiations unfolded, procedural inequities and political power imbalances emerged starkly.

In closed rooms, a small group of developed and emerging economies began drafting a “Copenhagen Accord,” sidelining much of the G77 and, by extension, Africa. When word reached the plenary that Africa had been excluded, the African Group of Negotiators (AGN) staged a coordinated protest, temporarily suspending participation in the talks. This symbolic act known widely as the “Copenhagen walkout” echoed far beyond the conference halls. It was not a rejection of multilateralism, but rather a defense of it.

Under the political leadership of the Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSCC), chaired by Ethiopia’s Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, Africa demanded transparency, inclusiveness, and fairness. Although the final Copenhagen Accord was weak and non-binding, Africa’s moral position reshaped global perception: no agreement would be legitimate without Africa at the table.

Copenhagen also crystallized two enduring AGN priorities. First, adaptation and finance could no longer be secondary issues they were central to the continent’s survival. Second, the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR–RC) had to remain non-negotiable. From that moment, the AGN’s diplomacy became anchored in equity as both a principle and a strategy.

9.2 Warsaw COP19 (2013): The Battle for Loss and Damage

By the time of the Warsaw Climate Conference in 2013, the AGN had become technically sharper and politically seasoned. The central struggle in Warsaw

revolved around “loss and damage” a long-standing African and small island states’ demand for recognition of irreversible climate impacts that go beyond adaptation.

Africa’s negotiators led by seasoned diplomats from Burkina Faso, Tanzania, and the Democratic Republic of Congo entered Warsaw determined to institutionalize loss and damage as a distinct pillar under the UNFCCC. When attempts emerged to relegate the issue under adaptation, the AGN formed a united front with the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and the Least Developed Countries (LDCs). After long nights of negotiation, the Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM) for Loss and Damage was established a diplomatic triumph that owed much to Africa’s persistence.

However, the victory was bittersweet. The mechanism was approved without an immediate financial facility. The AGN left Warsaw with a critical lesson: recognition without resources is not justice. This realization would inform Africa’s strategy for the next decade demanding not only acknowledgment of vulnerability but also operational financing to address it.

9.3 Lima COP20 (2014): Contesting Differentiation and the Meaning of Equity

The Lima Conference in 2014 marked another conceptual turning point. Developed countries sought to reinterpret the CBDR–RC principle, introducing the notion of “common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in the light of different national circumstances.” Africa recognized the risk: if differentiation became fluid, the foundation of the Convention would erode.

The AGN’s strategy in Lima was therefore defensive yet principled. Negotiators insisted that flexibility should not dilute responsibility. They underscored that Africa’s capacity constraints were structural, not circumstantial. In Lima’s drafting rooms, the phrase “in the light of national circumstances” became the most contested semantic battlefield. African negotiators warned that this modification, while appearing benign, would shift the burden of action away from historical emitters.

Despite these challenges, the AGN succeeded in embedding pre-2020 action and the principle of balanced treatment for mitigation and adaptation within the Lima Call for Climate Action. Lima also set the stage for the Paris negotiations, reaffirming that Africa's unity remained its most powerful diplomatic instrument.

9.4 Paris COP21 (2015): Balancing Ambition and Equity

For Africa, Paris was both culmination and commencement. The Paris Agreement (2015) embodied decades of African advocacy for fairness, inclusion, and balance. It recognized adaptation as a global goal, institutionalized the principle of equity, and anchored climate finance as a continuing obligation for developed countries.

The AGN, led by Democratic Republic of Congo, played an influential role across negotiating tracks. Africa's insistence on the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) resulted in Article 7 of the Agreement—arguably the most visible imprint of African diplomacy. The Group's unity, reinforced by AMCEN and CAHOSCC, ensured that the text preserved differentiation while promoting universality.

Paris also marked the rise of a more inclusive African climate movement. Civil society networks, youth groups, and research institutions collaborated closely with the AGN. The “Africa Pavilion” at COP21 became a hub of innovation, showcasing the continent's solutions and reinforcing its role as both a moral and developmental actor.

9.5 Madrid COP25 (2019): Stalemates on Article 6

After Paris, Africa's focus shifted from agreement to implementation. Yet, by COP25 in Madrid, progress on key mechanisms especially Article 6 (carbon markets) had stalled. Africa's concern was clear: poorly designed markets could undermine environmental integrity and divert finance from genuine development priorities.

African negotiators advocated for robust safeguards, equitable distribution of benefits, and avoidance of double counting. The Group's stance was guided by the principle that carbon markets must serve, not exploit, developing nations. Despite prolonged talks, consensus was elusive, and Article 6 was deferred to later sessions.

This impasse frustrated many but also revealed Africa's increasing sophistication. Unlike in earlier decades, the continent no longer sought compromise at any cost. Instead, it prioritized integrity over expediency demonstrating maturity and strategic patience in the face of global pressure.

9.6 Glasgow COP26 (2021): Coal, COVID, and Climate Finance

The Glasgow Conference (2021) unfolded in the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic and deepened trust deficits. For Africa, it was a sobering reminder of persistent inequities. Developed nations had failed to deliver the USD 100 billion annual finance commitment by 2020. Meanwhile, ambitious mitigation pledges were being made without corresponding support for adaptation and capacity-building.

The AGN, led by Zambia, entered Glasgow with a clear message: Africa cannot decarbonize in darkness. The Group called for the doubling of adaptation finance, operationalization of the Global Goal on Adaptation, and equitable treatment of energy transitions that reflected Africa's development realities.

The Glasgow Climate Pact recognized, for the first time, the necessity of scaling up adaptation finance and urged developed countries to double their provision by 2025. However, Africa expressed deep disappointment with the last-minute change from “coal phase-out” to “coal phase-down” a linguistic alteration that reflected persistent asymmetry between ambition and equity.

Despite these frustrations, Glasgow underscored Africa's resilience. The AGN's leadership, coordination, and coalition-building particularly with LDCs and AOSIS demonstrated that Africa's unity remained unbroken, even amid global crises.

9.7 Lessons for Resilience and Reform

Across these years of turbulence, Africa learned that unity is not the absence of disagreement but the management of diversity through purpose. The AGN strengthened its internal governance, formalized thematic coordination, and deepened collaboration with AMCEN, CAHOSCC, and the African Union Commission.

From the ashes of exclusion in Copenhagen to the solidarity of Glasgow, Africa's negotiators forged a culture of perseverance and adaptive leadership.

They learned to combine moral authority with technical precision a combination that would define the continent's diplomatic identity for the decade ahead.

Chapter 10: Rulebook and Implementation – From Paris to Katowice

10.1 Africa's Leadership in Shaping the Paris Rulebook

Following the adoption of the Paris Agreement, the task shifted from text to implementation. The Katowice Climate Package (COP24, 2018) represented a monumental effort to translate Paris principles into operational guidelines. Africa played a leading role in this process, focusing on transparency, adaptation communication, and nationally determined contributions (NDCs).

The AGN's technical teams were instrumental in shaping the Modalities, Procedures, and Guidelines (MPGs) of the Enhanced Transparency Framework. African negotiators argued for flexibility mechanisms that respected different national capacities. The final text incorporated this approach, allowing developing countries to progressively enhance reporting as capacity improved.

10.2 Adaptation Communication and NDC Guidance

Africa's persistent advocacy ensured that adaptation was not treated as an afterthought. The AGN secured the inclusion of Adaptation Communication a formal vehicle for Parties to report progress and needs on adaptation. This mechanism elevated adaptation to the same institutional status as mitigation.

Equally significant were the guidelines for Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). Africa insisted that NDCs should reflect both mitigation and adaptation components, supported by finance, technology transfer, and capacity building. The final Katowice outcome reflected these principles, ensuring that African priorities were embedded within the global implementation framework.

10.3 Institutional Strengthening and Regional Support

During this phase, the African Union, UNEP, and UNFCCC Secretariat supported the AGN in establishing structured training programmes and regional dialogues. Initiatives such as the African Climate Policy Centre (ACPC) and the African Group of Negotiators Experts Support (AGNES) enhanced knowledge continuity. These platforms helped bridge science and policy, ensuring that negotiators were equipped with data-driven positions.

Africa's leadership in Katowice was not about confrontation it was about construction. The continent moved from being reactive to becoming an architect of implementation frameworks that respected both equity and practicality.

Chapter 11: Adaptation, Loss & Damage, and Finance Diplomacy

11.1 The Persistent Finance Gap

Even as the Paris Agreement entered its implementation phase, finance remained the central fault line. Africa repeatedly highlighted that climate ambition without resources was rhetorical. By 2020, global flows of climate finance remained below 25% of developing countries' needs, with adaptation receiving less than a third of total funds.

The AGN, working closely with AMCEN and CAHOSCC, demanded a new collective quantified goal (NCQG) on climate finance—anchored in needs-based assessments rather than political pledges. Africa's proposal for a post-2025 goal of USD 1.3 trillion annually reflected both urgency and realism.

11.2 The Santiago Network and the Path to Loss and Damage Fund

At COP25 (2019), Africa helped establish the Santiago Network for Loss and Damage, designed to catalyze technical assistance to vulnerable countries. Yet, the absence of dedicated finance continued to frustrate African states.

This impasse was finally broken at COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh (2022), hosted on African soil. Under Egypt's presidency and with the AGN's strategic coordination, Parties reached a historic decision to establish a Loss and Damage Fund. For Africa, this was the culmination of decades of diplomacy from Warsaw's moral plea to Sharm el-Sheikh's institutional reality.

The AGN ensured that the fund's governance structure prioritized developing-country representation and accessibility. The moment was celebrated across the continent as an example of Africa's enduring leadership in transforming justice into law.

11.3 Adaptation Breakthroughs and the Global Goal on Adaptation

Parallel to loss and damage, Africa continued its pursuit of operationalizing the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA). At COP26 (Glasgow) and COP27 (Sharm el-Sheikh), African negotiators secured the establishment of a two-year work programme on GGA, aimed at defining global metrics for measuring adaptation progress.

These achievements reflected Africa's holistic diplomacy rooted in the understanding that mitigation ambition must be matched by adaptation resilience and financial solidarity.

Chapter 12: Just Transition and the Global Stocktake

12.1 Framing the Just Transition

Africa's narrative on just transition evolved significantly between 2020 and 2023. While global discourse focused on phasing out fossil fuels, Africa reframed the concept around energy access, industrialization, and social justice. The AGN argued that just transition must not become a new conditionality for development.

Through AMCEN and the AU, Africa emphasized that a just transition in Africa means creating jobs, building industries, and achieving universal energy access not merely reducing emissions. This framing gained traction in global debates, culminating in the Work Programme on Just Transition Pathways adopted under Decision 1/CMA.4.

12.2 The Global Stocktake – Measuring Progress, Defining Gaps

The first Global Stocktake (GST) process, launched in 2022, provided an opportunity for Africa to assess collective progress and expose inequities. African experts contributed to technical dialogues, highlighting that less than 10% of climate finance reached the continent.

Africa's GST submissions emphasized adaptation finance, loss and damage, and the unfulfilled pre-2020 commitments of developed countries. By doing so, Africa reframed the GST as not only a measurement exercise but also a moral audit of global responsibility.

At COP28 (Dubai, 2023), Africa's interventions shaped the language of the GST outcome, which acknowledged gaps in finance, technology, and capacity. The AGN's persistence ensured that the final text reinforced equity and support as enablers of ambition.

Chapter 14: Alliances and Coalitions – Strengthening Africa's Hand

14.1 Coalition Diplomacy and South–South Solidarity

Throughout 2009–2023, Africa's negotiating strength derived from alliances. The AGN maintained its foundational partnership with the G77 + China, while deepening collaboration with LDCs, AOSIS, and the Like-Minded Developing Countries (LMDCs). These coalitions amplified Africa's leverage, allowing it to shape consensus positions and influence negotiation outcomes.

The AGN also engaged constructively with non-African actors—particularly the Environmental Integrity Group (EIG) and progressive developed-country partners on transparency, adaptation metrics, and finance predictability. This pragmatic coalition-building demonstrated Africa's capacity to balance principle with partnership.

14.2 Institutional Alliances within the Continent

Within Africa, alliances between the AGN, AMCEN, CAHOSCC, and the African Union Commission created a seamless governance ecosystem. The AGN provided technical expertise; AMCEN gave ministerial legitimacy; CAHOSCC offered political authority; and the AUC ensured institutional memory and resource mobilization.

This synergy allowed Africa to speak consistently, regardless of which country held the AGN chairmanship. It also inspired other regions to emulate Africa's model of continental coordination.

14.3 The Spirit of One Africa, One Voice

By 2023, the African Group of Negotiators had matured into one of the most disciplined, coherent, and respected blocs within the UNFCCC. From the walkouts of Copenhagen to the triumph of Sharm el-Sheikh, Africa's journey illustrated that diplomacy, when anchored in unity and justice, can bend history.

As the AGN approaches its 30th anniversary, its legacy is clear: Africa has moved from the margins of global negotiation to the moral and intellectual center of climate governance.

The continent's voice articulate, united, and principled became not merely a plea for survival but a call for transformation: for a global order where climate action and development are two sides of the same promise.

PART V

LEADERSHIP, PARTICIPATION, AND COMMITTEE ENGAGEMENT

Chapter 15 – Leadership Through the Decades: A Chronicle of AGN Chairmanship and Institutional Maturity

The African Group of Negotiators (AGN) emerged from a growing awareness across the continent that Africa required a single, coordinated voice in global climate diplomacy. Although the formal structure of the AGN was not constituted until 1995 under the umbrella of the Group of 77 and China, its roots trace back to the preparatory processes for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED 1992) and the early sessions of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for a Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Between 1991 and 1995, Zimbabwe provided informal coordination and technical leadership within the broader developing-country coalition. This pre-institutional period laid the intellectual and political foundations for what would become Africa's most enduring negotiation platform under the UNFCCC.

From **1995 to 1996**, Mauritius presided over the first formally recognized phase of the African Group of Negotiators. Its leadership helped define the Group's internal coordination methods and establish Africa's collective engagement framework within the Conference of the Parties (COP), Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA), and Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI). The Mauritian term focused on articulating Africa's priorities around adaptation, technology transfer, and financial support issues that would remain at the heart of Africa's climate agenda for decades.

From **1997 to 1998**, Morocco steered the Group through the landmark adoption of the Kyoto Protocol at COP 3 in Kyoto, Japan. Under Moroccan stewardship, the AGN consolidated its coordination mechanisms and secured early recognition of Africa's specific needs through the Convention's Articles 4.8 and 4.9. These provisions acknowledged the particular challenges faced by least-developed countries and those vulnerable to climate impacts a diplomatic success that echoed Africa's insistence on fairness and special circumstances.

Between **1999 and 2001**, Burkina Faso guided the Group during the formulation and adoption of the Marrakesh Accords, which operationalized the Kyoto Protocol and defined mechanisms such as the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), capacity-building frameworks, and adaptation funding modalities. This period marked Africa's transition from principle to practice turning early demands for equity into tangible, implementable decisions that would influence subsequent negotiations.

From **2002 to 2003**, **Zimbabwe** resumed the chairmanship, focusing on ensuring that Africa's priorities were preserved as the Marrakesh Accords were translated into operational work programmes. The country's leadership maintained political cohesion within the Group and defended Africa's call for equitable participation in emerging market mechanisms. This period consolidated Africa's position in the post-Marrakesh implementation phase and emphasized the capacity-building and technology transfer agendas.

In **2004 and 2005**, **Kenya** assumed the chairmanship and intensified coordination among African negotiators ahead of a new era of comprehensive negotiation processes. Kenya's leadership strengthened Africa's adaptation-first narrative, ensuring that the continent's developmental realities were central to ongoing SBI and SBSTA deliberations. This groundwork prepared Africa to enter the Bali Roadmap era with a coherent voice and consolidated negotiating architecture.

During **2006 and 2007**, **Nigeria** chaired the AGN and led the continent into one of the most defining processes of the decade the adoption of the Bali Action Plan (Decision 1/CP.13 of 2007). The Nigerian term achieved a major diplomatic success: elevating adaptation, finance, and technology to the same political level as mitigation within the global climate framework. This breakthrough reflected Africa's insistence that climate change solutions must integrate sustainable development and equity.

The **2008–2009** period under **Algeria** was dominated by the politically turbulent Copenhagen cycle. As Parties convened for COP 15 in 2009, Africa faced marginalization in closed-door political consultations. Algeria's leadership orchestrated a unified African response that included a temporary walk-out a moment that symbolized Africa's demand for transparency, inclusivity, and respect for multilateralism. Despite procedural setbacks, the Group left Copenhagen with renewed internal solidarity and a sharpened focus on adaptation finance and equitable participation in emerging mechanisms.

From **2010 to 2011**, the **Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)** took the mantle and presided over the historic Durban Conference (COP 17). Under its leadership, the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action was established, mandating the development of a universal agreement applicable to all Parties by 2015. The Durban outcome reflected Africa's persistent call for a legally balanced regime integrating mitigation, adaptation, finance, and technology thus laying the groundwork for the Paris Agreement.

Between **2012 and 2013**, **Eswatini** guided the Group through a technically complex phase that culminated in the establishment of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage (WIM) at COP 19. This was a long-standing African demand to recognize climate impacts that go beyond adaptation and to create an institutional space for addressing those irreversible losses. The period marked the deepening of Africa's technical and policy engagement across multiple UNFCCC bodies.

From **2014 to 2015**, **Sudan** chaired the AGN through the defining moment of the Paris Agreement's negotiation and adoption. The Sudanese term delivered on several long-standing African priorities: securing a Global Goal on Adaptation within the Agreement, ensuring the continued anchoring of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR-RC), and institutionalizing a predictable climate-finance framework. Africa's diplomacy during this phase demonstrated maturity and strategic coherence, translating its moral authority into concrete global outcomes.

The **2016–2017** chairmanship of **Mali** focused on the post-Paris implementation architecture, guiding Africa's contributions to the design of the Paris Rulebook. Mali emphasized the inclusion of adaptation communication, transparency frameworks,

and capacity-building arrangements that reflected the continent's priorities. This period also saw deeper cooperation with the African Union Commission and AMCEN, strengthening the bridge between continental policy organs and the global negotiation track.

In **2018 and 2019**, **Egypt** led the AGN during the crucial completion of the Katowice Climate Package the comprehensive set of modalities, procedures, and guidelines that operationalized the Paris Agreement. Africa's imprint on the Rulebook was visible in provisions on adaptation communication, finance transparency, and the flexibility mechanism for developing countries. Egypt's term further consolidated Africa's stature as a technically credible and diplomatically disciplined negotiation block.

Between **2020 and 2021**, **Gabon** guided the AGN through the unprecedented disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the global shutdown of in-person meetings, Gabon maintained momentum through virtual coordination, defending Africa's positions in finance, ambition, and Loss and Damage. This leadership ensured continuity of Africa's engagement and successfully re-elevated ambition and equity to the centre of post-pandemic negotiations, paving the way for the Glasgow outcomes.

The **2022–2023** term under **Zambia** marked a decisive breakthrough in Africa's climate diplomacy. At Sharm El-Sheikh (COP 27 in 2022), Parties agreed to establish a Loss and Damage Fund a victory decades in the making for Africa and other vulnerable regions. Zambia's leadership was instrumental in steering this outcome through the G77 and China coalition and in the creation of the Transitional Committee tasked with operationalizing the Fund. This achievement epitomized Africa's collective diplomacy and moral leverage.

In **2024**, **Kenya** assumed the chairmanship, emphasizing implementation and institutionalization. The Kenyan leadership advanced Africa's focus on operationalizing the Global Goal on Adaptation, shaping the design of the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) on climate finance, and ensuring Africa's voice remained central in SBI and SBSTA workstreams leading toward COP 30 in Belém. Kenya's tenure also strengthened Africa's engagement with emerging themes such as just transition, response measures, and carbon markets.

In **2025**, the **United Republic of Tanzania** holds the chairmanship. Tanzania's leadership has centred on consolidating Africa's collective package for COP 30, guided by the "Belém Mandate for Africa," which calls for ambition, access, and accountability. The Tanzanian term has emphasized the operationalization of the Loss and Damage Fund, the advancement of metrics for the Global Goal on Adaptation, and the institutionalization of the AGN Secretariat under the African Union Commission transforming the Group from an informal coordination mechanism into a permanent continental institution. This phase marks a symbolic culmination of three decades of Africa's climate diplomacy: from fragmented representation to a globally recognized, strategic, and unified voice.

Chapter 16 – Africa Across COPs, CMPs, CMAs, SBI and SBSTA

Building Presence in the Conference of the Parties (COP)

From the earliest COP sessions, Africa's engagement grew from modest delegations to a continent-wide presence influencing agenda-setting and decision text. In the late 1990s, Africa's interventions focused on securing recognition of vulnerability; by the 2000s, its positions shaped decisions on adaptation funding and capacity-building. The COP process became Africa's principal theatre of climate diplomacy where political messages of justice, equity and sustainable development resonated most powerfully.

By COP 12 in Nairobi (2006), the continent had demonstrated it could host and drive global deliberations. The Nairobi Work Programme on Impacts, Vulnerability and Adaptation to Climate Change was adopted there, reflecting Africa's scientific and policy leadership. Subsequent African-hosted conferences Durban (2011), Marrakesh (2016), and Sharm El-Sheikh (2022) each advanced a signature African contribution: the Durban Platform, the Marrakesh Partnership for Global Climate Action, and the Loss and Damage Fund respectively. These outcomes underscored Africa's evolution from agenda-taker to agenda-shaper within the COP process.

Engagement in the CMP and CMA

The Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP) provided Africa with a platform to address operational barriers to participation in Kyoto's mechanisms. African countries consistently argued for equitable access to the Clean Development Mechanism and for simplified approval procedures for least-developed countries. By the second commitment period, many African nations had established Designated National Authorities, enabling a steady increase in CDM projects and capacity.

With the advent of the Paris Agreement, the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA) became the new locus of decision-making. Africa entered this forum with decades of negotiation experience and a clear mandate: to ensure that implementation respects equity, delivers predictable finance, and strengthens adaptation. Within CMA sessions, African delegations have championed operational modalities for the Global Goal on Adaptation, transparency frameworks tailored to national capacities, and finance provisions under Articles 9 and 13. The CMA also became the arena where Africa advanced discussions on Article 6 market and non-market mechanisms ensuring environmental integrity and sustainable-development dividends.

The Subsidiary Bodies: Technical Diplomacy in Action

Africa's presence in the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) and the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) evolved from marginal observation to substantive leadership. African experts now regularly co-chair contact groups, draft decisions, and facilitate agenda items ranging from capacity-building to response measures.

Within SBI, Africa has been instrumental in designing transparency systems, revising reporting guidelines for developing countries, and mainstreaming adaptation communications. Through SBSTA, African negotiators contributed significantly to the Nairobi Work Programme, technology frameworks, and agriculture-related dialogues. This technical diplomacy grounded in evidence and cooperation has become the backbone of Africa's credibility in the UNFCCC process.

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Institutional Coordination: The Role of AMCEN and CAHOSCC

Africa's sustained presence across all UNFCCC bodies has been underpinned by coordination with continental institutions. The African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) provides political oversight and periodic endorsement of the AGN's negotiating priorities, while the Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSCC) elevates those positions to the highest political level. This dual arrangement ensures coherence between technical negotiations and continental policy, creating a continuum from expert rooms in Bonn to presidential summits at the African Union.

Chapter 17 – AGN in Constituted Bodies and Committees: Technical Diplomacy and Expert Leadership

Expanding Africa's Footprint in UNFCCC Institutions

Over three decades, African experts have come to occupy leadership roles across the UNFCCC's constituted bodies. This presence is both strategic and symbolic: it transforms Africa from a participant to a co-architect of global climate governance.

- 1. Adaptation Committee:** Africa has consistently championed metrics for assessing progress toward the Global Goal on Adaptation, ensuring that resilience and capacity-building are treated as quantifiable global objectives.
- 2. Standing Committee on Finance (SCF):** African members have driven calls for a fair distribution of climate finance, for improved access modalities for LDCs and African states, and for transparency in tracking climate-finance flows.
- 3. Technology Executive Committee (TEC) and Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN):** The continent has advocated south-south cooperation, regional innovation hubs, and technology needs assessments adapted to African contexts.
- 4. Paris Committee on Capacity Building (PCCB):** African representation has emphasized systematic capacity-building, alignment with national development plans, and recognition of capacity as an enabler of ambition.
- 5. Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage (ExCom):** Africa's experts were among the first to push for the establishment of the Santiago Network and later for the Loss and Damage Fund culminating in the Sharm El-Sheikh decision of 2022.
- 5. Katowice Committee of Experts on the Impacts of Response Measures (KCI):** African negotiators have highlighted just-transition and diversification strategies, ensuring that the socio-economic consequences of global mitigation are addressed.
- 7. Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform (LCIPP):** African participation has brought to the fore indigenous knowledge systems, community adaptation practices, and gender-responsive approaches.

Cross-Cutting Engagements: From GST to the Mitigation Work Programme

Beyond formal bodies, Africa has taken active roles in the Global Stocktake (GST) technical dialogues, the Mitigation Work Programme, and emerging cooperative frameworks. African submissions consistently stress the interlinkage between mitigation ambition and means of implementation. The continent's narrative is clear: without finance, technology and capacity, ambition remains theoretical. Through these processes, Africa has positioned itself as the conscience of the regime reminding the world that effectiveness and equity must advance together.

Institutionalization and Legacy

The maturation of Africa's technical diplomacy has naturally led to calls for institutional permanence. The ongoing effort to establish a Permanent AGN Secretariat under the African Union Commission marks a turning point. The Secretariat will serve as the repository of institutional memory, provide technical backstopping to negotiators, and ensure inter-sessional continuity. This initiative, supported by AMCEN, CAHOSCC, UNEP, AfDB and other partners, reflects Africa's resolve to professionalize its negotiation infrastructure for the decades ahead.

Partnerships and Continental Synergy

The AGN's engagement in global committees is sustained through partnerships with the UNFCCC Secretariat, UN Environment Programme (UNEP), African Development Bank (AfDB), United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), and regional centres of excellence. These alliances have delivered targeted training programmes, fellowship opportunities, and policy analyses that enhance Africa's technical depth. The result is a new generation of negotiators diverse, gender-balanced, and scientifically grounded capable of navigating the complexities of contemporary multilateralism.

From Technical Representation to Policy Influence

African experts now chair and co-facilitate agenda items on adaptation, finance and transparency, ensuring that the continent's experiences inform global rule-making. This transformation from peripheral observers in 1995 to agenda co-authors by 2025 epitomizes the power of consistency, coordination and continental unity. Africa's leadership in constituted bodies is not only a marker of technical proficiency; it is a diplomatic asset that reinforces Africa's credibility across the entire UNFCCC architecture.

PART VI

LEGACY, LESSONS, AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

Chapter 18: Africa's Legacy and Strategic Gains

A Continental Voice That Changed Global Climate Governance

Over the past three decades, the African Group of Negotiators (AGN) has evolved from a small technical coordination platform into a recognized pillar of multilateral climate governance. Its history is one of persistence, moral clarity, and strategic adaptation. The Group's interventions have shaped the language of equity, the design of the Kyoto Protocol's flexibility mechanisms, and the architecture of the Paris Agreement. The AGN's greatest legacy is its unwavering defence of the principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR-RC). This insistence ensured that, even as global ambition increased, the burden of climate response would not be unjustly shifted onto Africa and other developing regions. Through its advocacy, Africa embedded the idea that sustainable development and poverty eradication are integral to climate action not competing priorities.

Under Africa's collective voice, the UNFCCC process has progressively internalized concepts such as adaptation parity, means of implementation, and climate justice. These ideas, once peripheral, now frame every COP agenda. The AGN has consistently reminded the world that ambition divorced from support is inequitable; that transparency without capacity is unfair; and that mitigation without adaptation is unsustainable.

Landmark Diplomatic Achievements

From Kyoto to Paris to Sharm El-Sheikh, Africa's diplomacy has produced tangible results. Among its most enduring achievements are:

The Adaptation Agenda: Africa's leadership secured the establishment of the Nairobi Work Programme, the Adaptation Committee, and the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA). These platforms mainstreamed adaptation into the global regime.

The Finance Architecture: Africa was instrumental in creating the Least Developed Countries Fund, Special Climate Change Fund, Adaptation Fund, and the Green Climate Fund (GCF). Each mechanism bears the imprint of African advocacy for direct access, grant-based support, and country ownership.

Loss and Damage Recognition: Decades of consistent negotiation culminated in the Warsaw International Mechanism (2013) and, ultimately, the Loss and Damage Fund (2022) a landmark victory born of African persistence

Institutional Influence: African experts now serve in leadership roles across the UNFCCC's constituted bodies from the Standing Committee on Finance (SCF) and Paris Committee on Capacity-Building (PCCB) to the Katowice Committee on Response Measures (KCI) evidence of growing continental capacity and credibility.

Agenda Setting: Through AMCEN and CAHOSCC, the AGN has aligned negotiation priorities with AU policy frameworks, ensuring coherence between technical diplomacy and continental development objectives.

Paradigm Shifts and Normative Contributions

The AGN's contribution transcends procedural outcomes. It has redefined the very grammar of global climate discourse.

- **Justice as the Center of Climate Action:** Africa transformed climate justice from a moral plea into a structural principle of governance. This is reflected in Paris (2015), Sharm El-Sheikh (2022), and the continuing Baku-to-Belém Roadmap on Finance (2025)
- **Transparency and Accountability:** By 2025, African negotiators had positioned the Enhanced Transparency Framework (ETF) not as a procedural burden but as a lifeline for fairness and ambition linking data, finance, and trust.

- Ecological Sovereignty: Through its call for Ecologically Driven Development (EDD), Africa has asserted the right to determine how its lands, waters, energy, and biodiversity are managed anchoring climate action in sovereignty, not dependency
- Communication and Public Mobilization: The AGN has advanced Article 12 of the Paris Agreement on education and awareness, framing the media as a legally recognized partner in climate governance

A Continental Legacy of Unity

Perhaps the AGN's most profound achievement is its institutional unity. In a fragmented global landscape, Africa's "One Africa, One Voice" has remained constant. This unity has enabled the continent to secure balanced outcomes across mitigation, adaptation, and finance. It has also become a model for other regional groups within the UNFCCC, demonstrating that solidarity, when coupled with strategy, can overcome asymmetry.

Chapter 19: Persistent Challenges and Gaps

Financing Limitations and Dependence on Voluntary Support

Despite its achievements, the AGN's operations have often been constrained by unpredictable funding. Many of its technical activities rely on ad hoc contributions from partners such as UNEP, AfDB, GCF Readiness Programme, and bilateral donors. The absence of a sustainable financing mechanism has occasionally limited participation by least-developed delegations, especially in inter-sessional meetings and technical workshops.

The call for predictable, African-owned financing underpins the ongoing agenda to establish a permanent AGN Secretariat within the African Union Commission (AUC). The Secretariat will institutionalize budgetary provisions through AMCEN and the AU Peace and Security Council framework, ensuring continuity and reducing reliance on external support.

Coordination Complexities and Technical Gaps

Managing consensus across 54 Member States with diverse economic realities remains an enduring challenge. Differing national priorities from oil-exporting states to small island nations require careful diplomacy. The AGN's coordination mechanisms, though effective, depend heavily on voluntary lead coordinators juggling national and regional responsibilities.

The technical depth of negotiations, particularly under the Paris Rulebook and Article 6 mechanisms, has also tested Africa's capacity. Limited access to data, modelling tools, and technical review expertise constrains full participation in transparency and market discussions. The Enhanced Transparency Framework (ETF) initiative and the Africa Transparency Network are addressing these deficits, yet significant investment in national MRV systems is still required.

Institutional Memory and Knowledge Retention

A further challenge lies in preserving institutional memory. For years, negotiation archives were scattered among rotating Chairs and partner institutions. The result has been information loss, duplication of effort, and limited continuity between negotiation cycles. The ongoing digitization of AGN records and the establishment of an online Climate Diplomacy Repository under the AUC are vital steps to safeguard the Group's intellectual capital.

Geopolitical and Structural Pressures

Africa's climate diplomacy unfolds within an evolving geopolitical landscape marked by shifting alliances, global economic downturns, and competing agendas among major emitters. The continent's limited leverage in global finance and trade structures often undermines the implementation of agreed outcomes. For example, adaptation finance pledges remain far below Africa's needs, and climate debt instruments sometimes exacerbate fiscal vulnerability.

Furthermore, the growing role of non-state actors including multinational corporations and private finance poses new coordination demands. Africa must navigate these forces carefully to maintain sovereignty over its climate agenda while engaging constructively with emerging finance mechanisms.

Chapter 20: Lessons Learned – Diplomacy, Strategy and Unity

Strategic Patience and Consistency

Thirty years of experience reveal that Africa's success rests on strategic patience. The Group's achievements from the Nairobi Work Programme to the Loss and Damage Fund took years of persistent advocacy. Africa learned that incremental victories, sustained across negotiating cycles, can yield transformative results.

Unity as a Diplomatic Asset

Internal unity remains Africa's greatest leverage. The AGN's coordinated interventions carefully prepared through daily coordination meetings, regional caucuses, and ministerial briefings ensure that Africa speaks coherently even when positions differ. The "One Africa, One Voice" approach has not only amplified negotiating power but also enhanced credibility with partners and observers.

Evidence-Based Advocacy

Another key lesson is the value of science-policy integration. The AGN's increasing collaboration with African scientific networks such as AfSAB, UNECA, and PACJA has bridged the gap between technical evidence and diplomatic messaging.

By grounding its proposals in peer-reviewed data, Africa has repositioned itself from moral advocate to solution provider.

Institutional Partnerships and Coalition Building

The AGN's engagement with groups such as LDCs, AOSIS, LMDCs, and the Environmental Integrity Group demonstrates that South-South coalitions are powerful multipliers. These alliances have been critical in finance and adaptation debates, often determining the balance of decisions in COP plenaries. Africa's coalition diplomacy has taught that influence is not a function of emissions or GDP but of organization and principle.

Communication and Narrative Power

The AGN also learned that controlling the narrative is essential to shaping outcomes. By reframing discussions from vulnerability to opportunity, from charity to fairness, and from aid to rights, Africa has redefined global perceptions. The partnership with African and international media houses initiated during AMCEN-20 and the Second Africa Climate Summit continues to expand Africa's visibility in multilateral platforms.

Institutionalization and Succession

Finally, the AGN's durability depends on institutional rather than individual capacity. The introduction of mentorship schemes, youth fellowships, and gender-balanced negotiation teams has ensured generational renewal. This intergenerational strategy guarantees that Africa's voice will endure beyond personalities and political cycles.

Chapter 21: Vision 2035 – The Future of Africa's Climate Diplomacy

The Next Decade of Negotiation

Looking ahead to 2035, Africa envisions a climate diplomacy architecture that is continental in coordination, scientific in foundation, and equitable in outcome. The priorities emerging from the African Common Position for COP 30 and the Tripoli Declaration (2025) define the pathway:

- A needs-based New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) on finance;
- Full operationalization of the Fund responding to Loss and Damage;
- Concrete metrics for the Global Goal on Adaptation;
- Recognition of Africa's special needs and circumstances as a standing COP agenda item

NDC 3.0 and Post-2025 Finance

Africa's forthcoming NDC 3.0 framework will move beyond emission targets to holistic development plans integrating energy access, industrialization, and resilience. The framework aims to align national pledges with Agenda 2063 and the SDGs, turning NDCs into investment blueprints rather than compliance documents.

In parallel, Africa seeks a post-2025 finance architecture that is accessible, predictable, and Africa-owned. The Baku-to-Belém Roadmap proposes a global goal of USD 1.3 trillion per year by 2035, of which roughly USD 497 billion would represent Africa's fair share.

Achieving this will require reforms to the global financial system, enhanced domestic resource mobilization, and operational linkages between the AfDB, Afreximbank, and new climate funds.

Strengthening Adaptation Architecture

Africa's adaptation agenda is entering a new phase: implementation and accountability. The continent will champion a Continental Adaptation Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism linked to the ETF, ensuring data-driven tracking of adaptation progress. This will connect directly to the Global Stocktake 2 (GST2) process and inform future NDC cycles.

Institutionalizing the AGN within the AUC

A central pillar of Vision 2035 is the institutionalization of the AGN under the African Union Commission. The October 2025 AU Ministerial Committee decision championed during Tanzania's chairmanship endorsed the creation of a Permanent AGN Secretariat reporting to AMCEN and CAHOSCC. The Secretariat will:

1. Provide technical and legal support to Member States;
2. Coordinate capacity-building and knowledge management;
3. Serve as Africa's interface with the UNFCCC Secretariat and partners.

This institutional milestone fulfills a thirty-year aspiration: transforming the AGN from a voluntary coordination forum into a formal continental organ embedded in AU structures – a legacy of the United Republic of Tanzania's leadership.

African Youth Climate Negotiations Centre

Recognizing the importance of generational renewal, AMCEN and CAHOSCC, with support from UNEP and UNFCCC partners, have endorsed the establishment of an African Youth Climate Negotiations Centre (AYCNC). The Centre will serve as a continental hub for training, research, and mentorship, ensuring that young Africans master negotiation science, climate law, and multilateral processes. It will also anchor youth representation in the AGN's thematic coordination system – cementing inclusivity as a structural norm rather than an afterthought.

From Ecological Sovereignty to Global Leadership

Africa's diplomacy in the coming decade will move from asserting ecological sovereignty to exercising ecological leadership. The continent's strategic resources from critical minerals to vast renewable potential place it at the centre of global just-transition supply chains. The AGN will advocate frameworks that ensure these assets are developed sustainably and equitably, delivering prosperity at home while contributing to global decarbonization.

A Continental Call for Justice, Unity and Accountability

As the AGN approaches its fourth decade, its mission remains constant: to defend Africa's right to development, its ecological sovereignty, and its moral authority in shaping global climate governance. The future demands renewed unity between negotiators, ministers, scientists, civil society, youth and the media – a coalition anchored in African values of solidarity and justice.

The AGN's legacy, therefore, is not merely a chronicle of negotiations. It is a living institution of hope – proof that when Africa speaks with one voice, the world listens. From Berlin to Belém, from Kyoto to Sharm El-Sheikh, and from Durban to Addis Ababa, the AGN's story is one of resilience transformed into leadership. Its future – Vision 2035 is the continuation of that journey: a continent negotiating with confidence, implementing with integrity, and delivering with impact.

CONCLUSION

From the Margins to Leadership - Africa's Journey as Force for Climate Justice

Over three decades, the African Group of Negotiators on Climate Change (AGN) has transformed from a fledgling coalition of determined diplomats into one of the most coherent and respected negotiating blocs within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Its thirty-year odyssey from 1995 to 2025 captures not only the institutional evolution of a negotiating group but also the awakening of an entire continent to its power, agency, and responsibility in shaping the global climate order. The AGN's legacy is not written in isolation; it is intertwined with Africa's larger story of multilateral renaissance, Pan-African unity, and moral leadership in the pursuit of justice, equity, and sustainable development.

From the Periphery to the Centre of Global Climate Governance

When African ministers first convened under the banner of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) in the late 1980s, they faced a geopolitical landscape that largely ignored Africa's perspectives. Climate diplomacy was dominated by the industrialized North, whose technical capacity and financial resources dictated the pace and scope of negotiations. Yet, the continent's vulnerability to droughts, floods, and desertification soon became undeniable.

The establishment of the AGN in 1995 marked Africa's response to this imbalance. It was a bold act of self-assertion and an understanding that in the corridors of global negotiation, unity is leverage. Over time, Africa's coordinated interventions in Kyoto (1997), Marrakesh (2001), Bali (2007), Copenhagen (2009), Durban (2011), Paris (2015), Sharm el-Sheikh (2022), and Belém (2025) have redefined what it means for a developing region to lead in a system premised on consensus and cooperation.

Africa's evolution mirrors the transformation of the global climate regime itself. Once treated as a "recipient" of aid, the continent has become a rule-maker contributing not only to texts and decisions but to the moral compass of the Convention. Its principles of equity, historical responsibility, common but differentiated responsibilities, and respective capabilities (CBDR-RC) have become the foundation of every meaningful agreement since the UNFCCC's inception.

A Legacy of Paradigm Shifts and Strategic Gains

Across its 30-year trajectory, the AGN has registered a series of transformative achievements that collectively define Africa's diplomatic legacy.

Institutional gains: The recognition of Africa's "special needs and circumstances" in Article 4.9 of the UNFCCC and subsequent COP decisions remains one of the earliest victories of African diplomacy. Later, Africa's advocacy secured the establishment of the Adaptation Fund, the Green Climate Fund, and the Global Goal on Adaptation mechanisms born from African proposals and moral insistence.

Normative influence: Africa transformed the narrative of climate change from a purely environmental issue into a question of development, equity, and justice. Through the AGN, concepts such as "loss and damage," "means of implementation," and "just transition" were elevated from advocacy slogans into operational pillars of the climate regime.

Political leadership: Through AMCEN, CAHOSCC, and the African Union Commission (AUC), the AGN demonstrated a model of multilevel governance where technical negotiators, ministers, and Heads of State act in symphony. This architecture has enabled Africa to sustain coherent positions across decades, one of the few regions in the world to maintain such continuity.

Global credibility: Africa's consistent advocacy for fairness, ambition, and solidarity has earned it recognition far beyond its numerical weight. Whether in defending the inclusion of the 1.5 °C goal, securing adaptation parity, or championing predictable finance, the AGN has proven that moral authority can be as powerful as economic might.

Persistent Challenges and the Work Yet to Be Done

Yet, this legacy has not come without struggle. The AGN's history is equally a chronicle of structural and systemic challenges that continue to shape Africa's diplomatic realities.

Funding and capacity constraints: Limited and unpredictable resources have hindered Africa's ability to sustain large, expert delegations across simultaneous negotiating tracks. Dependence on external funding, while necessary, has often constrained autonomy and long-term capacity building.

Coordination complexities: Balancing national priorities with continental coherence remains a delicate task. Africa's diversity geographical, linguistic, and developmental requires continuous mediation to maintain unity of purpose.

Institutional memory: The rotation of negotiators and turnover of technical experts have exposed the need for a permanent, well-resourced secretariat to preserve institutional knowledge. This gap has prompted renewed calls for the AGN's formal integration within AUC structures, ensuring continuity beyond political cycles.

Geopolitical pressures: Global power asymmetries persist. The AGN operates in an environment where major economies old and new exert influence through trade, finance, and security linkages. Navigating these pressures while preserving Africa's collective integrity is an ongoing challenge that demands both strategic diplomacy and intellectual agility.

Lessons in Strategy, Diplomacy and Unity

The AGN's endurance offers profound lessons for both Africa and the wider international community.

First, unity is Africa's most potent diplomatic instrument. From the Copenhagen walk-out (2009) to the collective triumph at Sharm el-Sheikh (2022), Africa has repeatedly demonstrated that solidarity can overcome marginalization.

Second, knowledge is power. The AGN's investment in negotiation training, science-policy interfaces, and expert networks such as AGNES has professionalized Africa's diplomacy. This intellectual capital is now one of the continent's most valuable assets.

Third, leadership must be intergenerational. The success of Africa's climate diplomacy has relied not only on seasoned negotiators but on the deliberate mentoring of youth and women leaders. The planned establishment of the African Youth Climate Negotiations Centre reflects this forward-looking ethos.

Fourth, diplomacy must remain grounded in justice. Africa's credibility has always stemmed from the moral weight of its argument that those least responsible for the crisis deserve the greatest support. This principle, embedded in every African submission and statement, continues to resonate as a universal truth.



Vision 2035 — Institutionalizing Africa's Climate Future

Looking ahead, Africa's climate diplomacy enters a new phase defined by institutional consolidation, innovation, and foresight.

The African Union's endorsement (Tripoli Declaration, 2025) of the plan to embed the AGN permanently within the AU Commission marks a pivotal step toward sustainability. A permanent AGN Secretariat mandated by AMCEN and CAHOSCC will guarantee continuity, retain institutional memory, and provide a stable platform for policy coherence and technical excellence.

This institutionalization is not merely bureaucratic; it is a strategic necessity. It will align Africa's negotiation outcomes with continental initiatives such as the African Climate Change Strategy, the Green Recovery Action Plan, and the forthcoming Just Transition Framework. It will also ensure direct synergy between global commitments and domestic implementation, linking the UNFCCC process with the African Continental Free Trade Area, Agenda 2063, and the SDGs.

Vision 2035 foresees an Africa where climate diplomacy is fully integrated into the continent's governance architecture anchored in law, science and solidarity. By then, the AGN aims to:

- ▮ Advance Africa's leadership in NDC 3.0 the next generation of nationally determined contributions focused on resilience, low-carbon industrialization, and equitable finance;

- ▮ Advance Africa's leadership in NDC 3.0 the next generation of nationally determined contributions focused on resilience, low-carbon industrialization, and equitable finance;
- ▮ Drive the operationalization of the second Global Stocktake (GST2) as a tool for accountability, ensuring that global ambition reflects African priorities;
- ▮ Lead in shaping post-2025 climate finance through the New Collective Quantified Goal, targeting at least USD 1.3 trillion annually by 2035, with half for adaptation;
- ▮ Champion the full implementation of the Loss and Damage Fund, transforming it from a pledge into a pillar of global solidarity.

Africa's vision also embraces inclusivity: the creation of the African Youth Climate Negotiations Centre, the strengthening of the African Climate Information Service, and the promotion of gender-responsive climate diplomacy will ensure that future generations inherit not only a seat at the table but the tools to lead it

A Living Legacy of Unity and Justice

The story of the African Group of Negotiators is, above all, a story of belief belief that multilateralism can still serve justice, that science and solidarity can coexist, and that Africa's destiny need not be written by others. From the early days of exclusion in Berlin and Kyoto to the triumph of Paris and the breakthroughs of Sharm el-Sheikh, the AGN has shown that persistence and principle can bend the arc of global governance toward fairness.

As the world stands on the threshold of COP 30 in Belém and beyond, the AGN's message remains steadfast: climate action must be just, inclusive, and science-based. The legacy of thirty years calls not for complacency but for renewal. Africa's negotiators of tomorrow will inherit a continent better organized, more confident, and more united than ever before.

This conclusion, therefore, is not an epilogue it is a living covenant. It invites policymakers, diplomats, scientists, and citizens to carry forward the torch of "One Africa, One Voice." It urges the world to remember that the measure of progress is not only in emissions reduced but in lives improved, ecosystems restored, and justice upheld.

Annexes

Annex 1: Chronology of AGN Chairs and their terms Photos and key message/caption



For three decades, the African Group of Negotiators on Climate Change (AGN) has stood as the united voice of Africa in the global climate arena an enduring expression of solidarity, resilience, and justice. Established in 1995 within the framework of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the AGN emerged at a time when the principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities were being tested by widening global disparities. From the earliest Conferences of the Parties (COPs) to the dawn of the Paris era, Africa's negotiators have transformed vulnerability into vision, ensuring that the continent's priorities remain central to the multilateral climate process.

Guided by the political direction of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), under the leadership of the African Union (AU) and the Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSCC), the AGN has provided strategic coherence to Africa's engagement across all negotiating bodies COP, CMP, CMA, SBI, and SBSTA. Through determination and unity, Africa has advanced a narrative rooted in fairness, accountability, and the right to sustainable development. Our negotiators have tirelessly advocated for predictable and accessible climate finance, ambitious adaptation action, equitable technology transfer, and the recognition of Africa's special needs and circumstances.

This booklet captures the 30-year journey of the AGN from the historic Kyoto Protocol and the landmark Paris Agreement to Africa's leadership at Sharm el-Sheikh and the road to Belém. It celebrates the efforts of countless African experts, ministers, and diplomats who have safeguarded the continent's interests within the most complex global negotiations. Their collective voice has ensured that Africa's development aspirations are not traded off against climate ambition, but instead integrated into a just and inclusive transition.

As the AGN marks this milestone under the chairmanship of the United Republic of Tanzania, our vision is to consolidate Africa's negotiation machinery into a permanent Secretariat within the AU system an Africa-owned institution built on technical excellence, intergenerational leadership, and youth engagement. Let this 30-year commemoration not only honour the past but also chart the future: a future where Africa's unity, resilience, and ecological sovereignty continue to shape the international climate order in pursuit of justice, prosperity, and peace.

Dr. Richard S. Muyungi (PhD)

Chair, African Group of Negotiators in the UNFCCC process
Special Envoy and Advisor on Environment and Climate Change
to the President of the United Republic of Tanzania

It has been a long walk that start quite small. When the UNFCCC secretariat moved from Geneva to Bonn, most of the African Countries were greatly affected . This was because the support from our missions in Geneva could not be guaranteed and on top of that our Country Missions in Germany were moving from Bonn to Berlin.

In those days , delegations were small, usually one or two persons and with that move a number of countries to agreed that we needed to work as a group if we were to be effective in getting the continent have her rightful seat on the table and be heard. It was really challenging as the one mountain we had to overcome was language. But the necessity to survive brought down this mountain...hence we established The African Group of Negotiators. Challenges were many,

including formation of other smaller groups that almost broke our back! But those are stories for another day. That we became a force to be reckoned with was particularly in the negotiations for the Kyoto Protocol where made our first continental submissions. Coming up with positions on all the agenda items and hence a conference position paper Was the Naivasha Accord(The Group met in Naivasha Kenya).

But it was in December 1997, when the group realized that it had to have a leadership able to work with continental bodies(UNEP-AMCEN became the first, followed by African Development Bank and AU) and secure resources that would allow African delegations to be represented right up to the closing of the conferences, because for the first time the COP went beyond the agreed conference time and date .The Kyoto Protocol was adopted when the representatives from Africa had left Kyoto.Proud to say the AGN stood up and has grown into a formidable body.



**Emily Ojoo Massawa - AGN Chair
2004 - 2005 Kenya**

OUR SINCERE THANKS TO THE FORMER AGN CHAIRS



Mr. Mohamed Elyazghi
1997-1998
Morocco



Mr. Mamadou
Honadia
1999-2001
Burkina Faso



Ms. Margaret
Sangarwe
2002-2003
Zimbabwe



Ms. Emily Massawa
2004-2005
Kenya



Mr. Samuel
Adejuwon
2006-2007
Nigeria



Mr. Kamal Djemouai
2008-2009
Algeria



Mr. Tosi-Mpanu-Mpanu
2010-2011
DRC



Mr. Emmanuel
Dlamini
2012-2013
Eswatini



Mr. Mohamed Nasr
2018-2019
Egypt



Mr. Hussein A. Nafo
2016-2017
Mali



Mr. Nagmeldin
Elhassan
2014-2015
Sudan



Mr. Tanguy Ghouma
2020-2021
Gabon



Mr. Ephraim Shitima
2021-2023
Zambia



Mr. Ali Mohamed
2024-2024

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