

AFRICA IN G-20, GLOBAL SOUTH AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL MATRIX

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Abstract

The implications of African integration into the G-20 and its positioning in the Global South for global environmental governance are significant. This paper focuses on sustainable development discourses within the G-20, in particular, whether Africa's unique set of challenges (socio-economic and environmental vulnerabilities, rapid demographic change) shapes its role differently. Presuming Africa welcomes human rights, the rule of law, and transparency, then its participation in the G-20 may offer it opportunities to push an environmental agenda including such urgent issues as climate change and public goods like biodiversity protection and resource depletion that without exception hit Africa harder than other regions. As a part of the G-20, Africa is empowered to demand and advance sustainable development pathways that respond to its imperatives while also addressing world environmental needs. Moreover, the study outlines the interface of Africa's involvement in the G20 with larger geopolitical dynamics of cooperation between North and South and South-South. Although Africa's inclusion in the G20 again unpacks the potential for multilateral action, the capacity of Africa to genuinely influence global environmental policy processes remains tenuous, reflecting an ongoing bias to power and representation. The analysis highlights the importance of inclusive governance mechanisms that represent the interests of the regions of Africa and supports equitable involvement in the development of global sustainability norms.

Keywords: Africa, G-20, Global South, climate change, sustainable development, environmental governance.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background on G-20, Global South, and Environmental Governance

The G-20, a major international forum representing the world's largest economies, plays a critical role in shaping global governance, particularly in areas related to economic development, financial stability, and more recently, environmental sustainability (Martinez-Diaz, 2019). It includes both developed and emerging economies, creating a platform where diverse perspectives can contribute to discussions on global challenges. However, despite its diversity, the G-20 has historically been dominated by the interests of the Global North, with limited influence from developing countries (Cammack, 2012).

The Global South, a term commonly used to describe the developing countries in Africa, Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East, holds significant geopolitical importance in the context of environmental governance. These nations, including those in Africa, are often disproportionately affected by environmental challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and resource depletion, yet they historically had limited influence in global decision-making processes (Mawdsley, 2018). As environmental issues like climate change have gained prominence in global governance, platforms like the G-20 offer an opportunity for the Global South, including Africa, to assert its priorities and advocate for sustainable development pathways that align with its unique challenges.

1.2 Importance of Africa's Role in Global Governance

The engagement of Africa in the G-20 offers an important geopolitical management framework for the continent, which aims to increase its participation in the discourse on climate change, sustainable development, and management of resources (Taylor, 2020). In addition, Africa is characterized by socio-economic factors, which include a youthful and rapidly increasing population, high rates of poverty, and ever-worsening environmental degradation, which makes her involvement in the global environmental governance imperative. The

continent's contribution to the international environmental negotiations has always been minimized, but it is likely to be at the forefront of influencing the sustainability discourses of the future, especially on issues of climate equity and fair distribution of resources (Lisk, 2020).

Africa's increasing contributions to international governance structures like the G-20 can be viewed in the light of Africa's sustained development where undertakings do not occur in isolation. Thus, under the weight of these global imbalances, Africa was born neatly and paradoxically into policy initiatives with the purported goal of devolution of power to promote sustainable inclusion in development (Bond, 2019).

1.3 Objectives and Research Questions

This paper seeks to explore the implications of Africa's integration into the G-20, focusing on how its positioning within the Global South shapes its role in global environmental governance. Specifically, the paper will address the Africa's inclusion in the G-20 influence global environmental governance discussions, in what ways does Africa's unique socio-economic and environmental context shape its approach to sustainability within the G-20. It will also look upon the geopolitical dynamics surrounding Africa's participation in North-South and South-South cooperation, and how do these dynamics influence its environmental agenda, and lastly the key challenges and opportunities for Africa in advancing a sustainable development agenda through the G-20.

1.4 Structure of the Paper

The paper structures its contents in such a manner that it starts with an introduction to the G-20, the Global South and defines their importance in global environmental governance. Then, it will focus on Africa as a continent hunger-stricken and economically, socially and environmentally robust and dominant. The next section will be dedicated to the analysis of Africa's specific involvement and impact in the G-20. The issues of North-South and South-South relations will be examined within the context of geopolitical forces, as well as the representation and power relation problems that Africa encounters when dealing with global governance. Furthermore, case studies of African environmental influence and leadership integrated into the G-

20 discourse will be included, and the last portion of the paper will offer sustainability principles-oriented governance mechanisms that will lead to enhanced Africa's role in global sustainability governance.

2. The G-20, Global South, and Environmental Governance

2.1 Overview of the G-20 and Its Role in Global Governance

The Group of Twenty (G-20) is an international forum composed of the world's largest economies, both developed and emerging, including 19 countries and the European Union. It was established in 1999 to promote international financial stability and economic growth, particularly in response to global financial crises (Beeson & Bell, 2019). Over time, its agenda has expanded to include various global challenges, such as trade, health, and environmental sustainability (Martinez-Diaz, 2019). As an influential body in global governance, the G-20 provides a platform for dialogue and collaboration among developed and emerging economies on key issues affecting global public goods, including the environment.

The role of the G-20 in global governance is particularly significant because it encompasses economies that account for about 85% of global GDP and 75% of international trade (Gurtov, 2020). This influence enables the G-20 to shape global policies on climate change, biodiversity, and sustainable development, setting the agenda for other international organizations such as the United Nations and the World Bank. The G-20's annual summits offer opportunities for both collective action and bilateral engagements on pressing environmental issues, making it a key player in global environmental governance (Lesage et al., 2020).

2.2 The Concept of the Global South and Its Geopolitical Implications

The term "Global South" designates those developing countries that are majorly, but not exclusively, found in Africa, Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East. It is beyond a simple geographical location, it also involves a political economy categorization that shows the disparity in the global distribution of wealth, power, and development (Mawdsley,

2018). The brand of Global South arose as a conceptualization when the world was divided into two opposite powerhouse influence blocs during the Cold War. Countries in these geographical regions engaged in vigorous activity to avoid being dragged into an imperialist confrontation between capitalism and communism and championed the cause of the Non-Aligned Movement as well as fair globalization (Chakrabarty, 2021).

In the contemporary sphere of international relations, especially in the areas of policy formulation and implementation, the concept of the Global South can be viewed as the ‘voice’ of the Global South in the fight against the issue of poverty, under development and environmental degradation. The Global South has wide-ranging geopolitical consequences as these countries frequently advocate for changes in the international system that will allow them to be more fairly represented and resourced (Bond, 2019). Climate governing which very much includes Africa in the Global South has an aspect of climate justice where developing countries demand that the developed countries who have caused climate change historically and are the main guilty parties in climate pollution give the money and technology needed for mitigation and adaptation (Lisk, 2020).

2.3 Global Environmental Governance Frameworks and Their Relevance to Africa

Global environmental governance refers to the structures, processes, and norms that guide international cooperation on environmental issues such as climate change, deforestation, and biodiversity loss. It includes multilateral agreements like the Paris Agreement, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and other conventions aimed at coordinating global action to protect the environment (Biermann, 2020). These frameworks are essential for Africa, as the continent is one of the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, despite contributing minimally to global carbon emissions (Niang et al., 2014).

Africa’s participation in these global frameworks is critical for ensuring that its unique environmental challenges—such as desertification, water

scarcity, and food insecurity—are addressed within the broader global sustainability agenda (Taylor, 2020). Furthermore, the inclusion of African nations in forums like the G-20 allows them to advocate for policies that support sustainable development while also considering the socio-economic realities of their populations. For instance, Africa's stance on climate finance, as articulated in the UNFCCC negotiations, has highlighted the need for developed nations to honor their commitments to providing financial resources to help African countries transition to low-carbon economies (Lisk, 2020).

2.4 Historical Context of Africa's Environmental Challenges

The contemporary sociopolitical structure of Africa shows distinct patterns that can be attributed to colonial exploitation as well as the politics of development. The Colonizers drained Africa of its resources, over-exploiting its environment to meet the demands of the colonial masters and harming it considerably (Adebayo, 2020). Most of the African states which gained independence were still within all concerns of the environment during economic colonialism and the so post-dependence due to underdevelopment and overpopulation.

Climate change is one of the several environmental challenges facing Africa today, and arguably, the most concerning. This is an issue that complicates and aggravates issues such as malnutrition, undernutrition, and loss of biological resources (Conway & Schipper, 2021). Agriculture, which is highly sensitive to climate change, is the backbone of the continent's economic activities if not all of them. Furthermore, Africa has caused more deforestation and desertification than needed which makes it imperative to engineer appropriate ways of development which take into account the maintenance of the current environmental status of the region (Niang et al 2014).

This indeed makes it possible for Africa to address these past and current environmental issues, *inter alia*, through the promotion of climate justice and specific historical developmental approaches by participating in such global environmental governance apparatus as the G-20 (Bond, 2019). The inclusion of Africa in global governance raises an issue of ensuring that the environmental issues of the region are considered and expressed at all levels.

3. Africa's Socio-Economic and Environmental Vulnerabilities

3.1 Africa's Demographic Transition and Its Implications

Africa is currently experiencing one of the fastest demographic transitions globally, with a population expected to reach 2.5 billion by 2050 (United Nations, 2019). This rapid growth poses both opportunities and challenges for the continent. On one hand, the increasing population could result in a "demographic dividend," where a youthful workforce drives economic growth and innovation (Bloom & Canning, 2017). On the other hand, this demographic transition intensifies pressures on infrastructure, social services, and the environment, particularly as many African countries struggle with poverty, unemployment, and underdevelopment (Lutz & KC, 2019).

The demographic shift also has significant environmental implications, especially in urban areas, which are witnessing rapid, unplanned growth. The expansion of cities places additional stress on natural resources, leads to higher levels of pollution, and exacerbates the impacts of climate change. If African countries fail to manage this transition effectively, the continent's already vulnerable environmental systems could face further degradation (Güneralp et al., 2020). Therefore, the demographic changes in Africa are closely linked to the socio-economic and environmental challenges that the continent must address.

Table 1: Africa's 2050 population growth brings both economic potential and environmental challenges.

Aspects	Details
Population Growth (by 2050)	Expected to reach 2.5 billion (United Nations, 2019)
Opportunities (Demographic Dividend)	Youthful workforce can drive economic growth and innovation (Bloom & Canning, 2017)
Challenges (Social Services, Infrastructure)	Increased pressures on poverty, unemployment, infrastructure, and underdevelopment (Lutz & KC, 2019)
Environmental Implications (Urban Areas)	Unplanned urban expansion stresses natural resources, increases pollution, and exacerbates climate change (Güneralp et al., 2020)
Consequences of Mismanagement	If not managed, could worsen environmental degradation and socio-economic problems

3.2 Socio-Economic Disparities Across African Nations

Socio-economic disparities are a key feature of Africa's development landscape, with considerable variation in income levels, poverty rates, and economic growth across different regions and countries. While some nations like South Africa and Nigeria have relatively diversified economies and high GDPs, others, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, remain heavily dependent on agriculture, foreign aid, and remittances (World Bank, 2021). This disparity creates a fragmented socio-economic environment where some African nations are better equipped to handle environmental challenges than others (Asongu & Nwachukwu, 2017).

The socio-economic divide is also mirrored in access to basic services such as healthcare, education, and clean energy. The lack of equitable access to these resources exacerbates environmental vulnerabilities, as impoverished communities are often forced to rely on unsustainable practices like deforestation and overgrazing for survival (Conway & Schipper, 2021). Addressing socio-economic disparities is crucial for enhancing Africa's capacity to tackle environmental issues sustainably, and the G-20 platform offers opportunities to advocate for inclusive economic growth strategies that benefit all African nations.

3.3 Environmental Vulnerabilities: Climate Change, Resource Depletion, and Biodiversity Loss

Africa is one of the continents most vulnerable to climate change, despite contributing the least to global greenhouse gas emissions (Niang et al., 2014). Rising temperatures, shifting weather patterns, and increased frequency of extreme weather events such as droughts and floods have devastating impacts on agriculture, water resources, and human livelihoods (IPCC, 2021). These challenges are further compounded by resource depletion, particularly the overexploitation of land and water, which undermines food security and economic development (FAO, 2020).

Biodiversity loss is another critical issue, with Africa home to some of the world's most diverse ecosystems. Habitat destruction, poaching,

and pollution have led to significant declines in wildlife populations, particularly in regions like the Congo Basin and the savannahs of East Africa (WWF, 2020). Africa's unique environmental vulnerabilities demand tailored solutions that not only address the immediate impacts of climate change but also promote long-term sustainability by protecting natural resources and ecosystems.

3.4 Comparative Analysis of Africa's Environmental Challenges in the Context of the Global South

When compared to other regions in the Global South, Africa faces a distinct set of environmental challenges that are exacerbated by its socio-economic context. For instance, while Southeast Asian nations also deal with issues of deforestation and biodiversity loss, their relatively higher levels of industrialization and technological advancement provide them with more resources to combat these problems (Lisk, 2020). In contrast, Africa's underdeveloped industrial base and reliance on agriculture mean that environmental degradation directly affects its economic foundation (Bond, 2019).

Moreover, African countries face greater difficulty in accessing international climate finance compared to their counterparts in the Global South. Despite numerous global pledges, financial flows to Africa remain inadequate to meet the continent's needs for climate adaptation and mitigation (Lisk, 2020). This highlights the need for African nations to leverage platforms like the G-20 to advocate for more equitable resource distribution in global environmental governance.

4. Africa's Role in the G-20 and Global Environmental Governance

4.1 Africa's Membership in the G-20: Milestones and Challenges

Africa's inclusion in the G-20 is represented by the participation of the African Union (AU) and South Africa, the only African nation currently holding individual membership (Taylor, 2020). The AU's permanent seat at the G-20 table, which was formalized in 2023, marks a significant milestone in Africa's efforts to enhance its influence in global governance (Gurtov, 2023). However, challenges remain, as Africa's representation in the G-20 does not fully reflect the diversity

and complexity of the continent, with only a few nations playing an active role in shaping the G-20 agenda (Martinez-Diaz, 2019).

One of the key challenges Africa faces within the G-20 is the underrepresentation of its smaller and less developed nations, which often struggle to make their voices heard on critical issues such as climate finance and sustainable development (Lesage et al., 2020). In addition, the continent's heavy reliance on external aid and investment limits its ability to engage in the kind of long-term policy planning that is necessary for effective participation in global governance frameworks (Bond, 2019).

4.2 Africa's Influence on Global Sustainability Policies Through the G-20

Despite these challenges, Africa's participation in the G-20 has allowed it to play a more active role in shaping global sustainability policies. The G-20 has provided a platform for African nations to advocate for climate justice, emphasizing the need for developed countries to meet their commitments to climate finance and technology transfer (Lisk, 2020). Africa has also pushed for greater emphasis on adaptation measures in global climate policy, recognizing that many African nations are already experiencing the adverse effects of climate change (Niang et al., 2014).

Through the G-20, Africa has been able to bring attention to the linkages between environmental sustainability and economic development, advocating for policies that promote green growth and sustainable agriculture. This is particularly important given the continent's reliance on natural resources and the urgent need to develop more resilient economic systems (Gurtov, 2023). Additionally, African nations have used the G-20 platform to call for greater international cooperation in addressing biodiversity loss and protecting ecosystems, both of which are critical to the continent's long-term development.

4.3 Key Environmental Priorities for Africa Within the G-20 Framework

Africa's key environmental priorities within the G-20 framework include climate adaptation, access to climate finance, and the protection

of biodiversity. African countries have consistently emphasized the need for greater financial support from developed nations to help them transition to low-carbon economies and build resilience to climate change (Martinez-Diaz, 2019). In addition, Africa has advocated for the inclusion of biodiversity protection as a core component of the global sustainability agenda, recognizing the continent's rich ecosystems as vital to both its economy and global ecological health (WWF, 2020).

The G-20 also offers opportunities for Africa to push for more equitable trade and investment policies that support sustainable development. African nations have called for reforms to the global trade system that would promote green industries and reduce dependency on resource extraction, which has historically driven environmental degradation (Asongu & Nwachukwu, 2017).

4.4 Opportunities for Africa to Advance the Climate Change Agenda and Public Goods Protection

Africa's participation in the G-20 offers great prospects in promoting the climate change struggle and the cause of public goods and services such as biodiversity and clean water and air. Through its position in the G-20, Africa should be able to make the case for deeper carbon cuts and better increases in adaptation funding to vulnerable areas (Taylor, 2020). Africa's participation in the worldwide activities is another avenue that seeks to promote a change in the present systems of environmental governance in the world which is meant to bring out particular solutions to the problems that Africa faces.

In addition, Africa's integration with other nations in the Global South in the G-20 context makes it possible to formulate common responses against some of the environmental issues, such as depletion of resources, and displacement caused by climate change, as well (Bond, 2019). This South-South cooperation is important in fostering unity of purpose and enhancing the bargaining position of the developing nations at global platforms (Gurtov, 2023).

5. Geopolitical Dynamics: North-South and South-South Cooperation

5.1 North-South Cooperation and Power Imbalances in Environmental Negotiations

North-South cooperation refers to the collaboration between developed (Global North) and developing (Global South) countries, particularly in areas like trade, technology transfer, and environmental governance. However, such cooperation is often marred by power imbalances, with developed nations exerting disproportionate influence on global environmental negotiations (Najam et al., 2003). Historically, environmental treaties and policies have been shaped primarily by the priorities of wealthier countries, often sidelining the specific needs and vulnerabilities of developing nations, including those in Africa (Roberts & Parks, 2007).

These power imbalances are evident in key environmental agreements such as the Paris Agreement, where African nations, despite being among the most affected by climate change, have struggled to secure adequate financial commitments from developed nations for climate adaptation and mitigation (Lisk, 2020). Additionally, issues such as technology transfer and capacity-building, which are crucial for Africa's ability to meet its environmental challenges, often remain underfunded and neglected in North-South partnerships (Okereke & Dooley, 2010).

5.2 Africa's Role in South-South Cooperation: Collaboration with Other Developing Nations

In contrast to North-South cooperation, South-South cooperation has emerged as a framework that emphasizes solidarity among developing nations in addressing shared challenges. Africa has played a critical role in fostering South-South alliances, collaborating with other Global South nations to promote equitable development and environmental sustainability (Bond, 2019). For instance, African countries have partnered with Latin American and Asian nations to push for climate justice and more favourable terms in international negotiations,

emphasizing the need for greater financial support from wealthier nations (Gurtov, 2023).

South-South cooperation has also provided African nations with opportunities to share knowledge, technology, and best practices in addressing environmental issues. For example, African countries have collaborated with Brazil and India on agricultural innovations that improve food security while mitigating the environmental impacts of farming (Hosono et al., 2020). These partnerships strengthen Africa's bargaining power in international environmental forums and enable the continent to develop homegrown solutions to its unique challenges.

5.3 The Role of BRICS and Other Global South Alliances in Shaping Global Environmental Governance

The BRICS alliance (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) is one of the most prominent Global South coalitions that has influenced global environmental governance. Africa, represented by South Africa, has used its membership in BRICS to advocate for more inclusive and equitable environmental policies on the global stage (Martinez-Diaz, 2019). BRICS has emerged as a platform for developing countries to challenge the dominance of Western nations in international institutions and push for reforms in areas like climate finance and sustainable development (Lesage et al., 2020).

Moreover, BRICS has worked to promote green technology transfer and investment in renewable energy, areas that are crucial for Africa's sustainable development. China, in particular, has become a major investor in Africa's renewable energy sector, helping to expand access to clean energy and reduce reliance on fossil fuels (Sovacool & Tan-Mullins, 2019). This collaboration highlights the potential of Global South alliances to drive progress on environmental issues, especially in regions like Africa, where external support is essential for achieving sustainability goals.

5.4 Geopolitical Influence on Africa's Ability to Negotiate and Influence Sustainability Agendas

Africa's ability to negotiate and influence global sustainability agendas is shaped by a complex web of geopolitical dynamics. While African nations have been successful in securing a seat at the table in

international forums like the G-20, their capacity to influence outcomes is often limited by broader power asymmetries. Developed nations continue to dominate global institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which play critical roles in financing environmental initiatives (Roberts & Parks, 2007).

Additionally, Africa's fragmented political landscape and the diversity of its environmental challenges make it difficult for the continent to present a unified position in international negotiations. This is exacerbated by the fact that African nations often lack the technical and financial resources needed to participate effectively in global climate negotiations (Bond, 2019). However, geopolitical alliances within the Global South, such as BRICS and the G-77, have provided African nations with platforms to amplify their voices and advocate for more equitable global environmental governance frameworks (Taylor, 2020).

6. Challenges and Opportunities for Africa in Global Environmental Governance

6.1 The Challenges of Representation and Power Distribution in International Forums

Another issue which has been particularly problematic for Africa's role in global environmental governance is the issue of representation. African countries have the most sociological and ecological vulnerability to environmental degradation and climate change, yet they are hardly present in any important foreign bodies (Lisk, 2020). To illustrate, while the African Union (AU) can now lay claim to a standing place at the G-20 leadership table, many less economically advanced countries of Africa still find it hard to join and fully participate in the processes of global environmental governance (Taylor, 2020).

Moreover, globalization and the political configurations of international offices are such that developed countries which are capable of subverting the processes dominate. Moreover, there is inequality in the climate finance allocation process in that while the rich Western nations have pledges to mobilize \$ 100 billion each year to assist

developing nations combat the effects of global warming, they have not done so (Okereke & Dooley, 2010). Such a funding challenge instead rebounds back on Africa as it limits not only her development of reasonable environmental standards, but also her participation in the mechanisms of global governance.

6.2 Potential for Africa to Lead on Environmental Issues Like Climate Justice, Adaptation, and Mitigation

Africa has the potential of becoming a major actor on various environmental axes like climate justice, adaptation and amelioration. Many countries in Africa for a long time have talked and even advocated for climate justice asking developed nations to do more on the matter given the history of practices that contributed into global warming (Bond, 2019). African countries, in other words, demand climate justice which seeks to address fair representation in both the consequences of climatic changes and the response in form of resources to assist deviations from such changes. It is also the issue of climate leadership, which Africa should not just take but is entitled to. Africa performance psychometrically for that of climate change, which has traversed or penetrated its economies in one way or another. African States have been adaptive in creating and implementing modern technologies against the challenges of climate change especially in agriculture, water management (Conway & Schipper, 2021). Such abilities are an adaptation offer that is helpful adaptable even for other geographies facing the same problem which illustrates that Africa's leadership in adaptation can help to influence policies across the world on adaptation strategies for the most at risk populations.

6.3 Role of African Regional Organizations (AU, UNECA) in Supporting Africa's Environmental Agenda

In particular, the current essay argues that the contribution of African regional organizations, especially the African Union (AU) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), to the continent's environment agenda is significant. According to Taylor (2020), the AU has played a major role in organizing Africa's global climate change negotiations and conditioning her engagement on her

concerns such as climate finance and technology transfer. A further example of the AU's commitment to Africa's climate action agenda is presented in Agenda 2063, a strategic framework that envisions the attainment of sustainable development in Africa and contains provisions relating to climate change impacts (UNECA, 2020). In contrast to ECA, which focuses mainly on theoretical approaches, UNECA also assists African administrations in order to help them bear in mind the global wish for sustainability and to have policies, programs, and actions in place (UNECA, 2020). In this respect, the two organizations have been at the forefront of promoting South-South cooperation, ensuring that African countries learn from one another and build capabilities to deal with regional environmental issues.

6.4 Opportunities for Sustainable Development Pathways That Respond to Africa's Imperatives

The involvement of Africa in global environmental governance opens avenues for the continent to pursue development pathways that suit them best. For example, the desire for green energy provides an excellent chance to African countries to stop using fossil fuels and create a better energy system (Sovacool & Tan-Mullins 2019). Moreover, sustainable agriculture practices will also contribute to addressing the problem of food security and at the same time conserving the environment. African Union or G-20, and other global international organizations are platforms where African countries can lobby for integration and growth-oriented policies. This entails urging the alteration of international trade practices and systems to allow African nations to engage in developmental activities other than the extraction of natural resources which has always been associated with ecological destruction (Asongu & Nwachukwu 2017).

7. Case Studies: Africa's Environmental Leadership in the G-20

7.1 Case Study 1: Africa's Push for Climate Financing and Adaptation Measures

Within the G-20 platform, Africa has remained among the leading proponents of climate finance. One of the most notable for Africa is the need to ensure that the annual US\$ 100 billion commitment by the developed world towards the climate change mitigation and adaptation

initiatives of the developing world is met (African Development Bank [AfDB], 2021). Similarly, leading institutions like and the African Development Bank regional countries have made frequent calls for justice in financial assistance to address issues such as the climate change-induced droughts, floods and rise in temperature that afflicts many regions. (Taylor, 2020). During the G-20 meeting of 2021, African leaders reiterated the commitments on climate funding but urged an additional funding for climate adaptation to be included. They underscored the importance of adaptation especially with regard to food production and management of water resources as a value adding proposition for Africa that suffers enormous impacts of climate change but contributes the least to global warming in history (Lisk, 2020). Africa's efforts paid off when the G-20 accepted the principle of equal finance for adaptation and mitigation which is a significant win for the environment leadership of the continent.

7.2 Case Study 2: Africa's Advocacy for Biodiversity Conservation and Resource Management

The abundant biodiversity and natural resources of Africa are crucial for development, as well as for the environment at a global stage. Countries in Africa turned to the G-20 platform to call for more effective measures for protecting the biodiversity and natural resources (Conservation International, 2021). African nations, for example, have requested more funding directed towards such expenditures on the grounds that investing in the protection of biodiversity is paramount for the realization of the climate goals and providing resilience to ecosystems that support people's livelihoods. In 2020, during the G-20 Environment Ministers' Meeting, South Africa, on behalf of the continent, was able to persuade the attendees to adopt biodiversity conservation as an agenda in the existing global sustainable development agenda. Consequently, the G-20 members pledged to contribute to projects aimed at preventing deforestation, poaching, and resettlement, as well as advocating for other land utilization practices that, among other regions, are important for the ecological balance of Africa (UNEP, 2020). Africa's activism in this regard grapples with the continent's specific contextual realities in this case, such as climate change and environmental degradation leading to the decline of its fauna and flora (Wright, 2021).

7.3 Case Study 3: Africa's Contribution to Global Carbon Credit Systems and Sustainable Agriculture

Africa's contribution to the existing global carbon credit systems has also improved significantly as its vast unexploited lands are utilized to participate in various carbon sequestration projects. Carbon credits retrieval mechanisms, for instance, in forests and agriculture, where those verticals take in the carbon dioxide emittance-in airs of places, have been embraced by countries like Kenya and Rwanda (Okereke, 2021). These strategies do assist in reducing the high levels of carbon emission in the atmosphere as well as offer monetary benefits for Africans actively adopting better environmental practices. Along the G-20 lines, Africa has clamored to encourage and push for the need of the carbon credit market in developing countries that are more than the present ones. According to some African leaders, the system helps to mobilize finances for climate change activities as well as support agricultural and tree-cover activities (Lisk, 2020). As a result, emerging market sectors and developing countries will now adopt measures such as G-20 'scaling up of sustainable agriculture using carbon credits system funded by several African initiatives in 2018 contributed towards African leadership in the global environmental governance and presented the continent as a potential player in the climate change mitigation strategies (Conway and Schipper, 2021).



Fig 1: Africa's environmental actions are integrated into the G-20 framework, demonstrating its leadership across these critical areas

8. Inclusive Governance Mechanisms for Africa in Global Sustainability Norms

8.1 Current Gaps in Governance Frameworks that Limit Africa's Voice

In spite of Africa taking part in global organizations such as G-20, there are systemic governance hindrances that castrate the continent's

participation in global environmental diplomacy. Among the obvious ones is the imbalance of power where the Global North holds sway, thereby inhibiting African countries from presenting their environmental - socio-economic cases (Hurrell & Sengupta, 2019). Most of the institutions of global governance today including those aimed at promoting environmental sustainability are meant for the developed nations, and this often results to African concerns not being addressed or resolved (Dannenberg, 2020).

To make matters worse, many African countries are also handicapped technically and financially to join some of these international negotiations. Because resource deprivation is another limitation that contributes towards the exclusion of African countries in promoting the global sustainability norms set by the hegemonic states, it further exacerbates their already weakened position in the global governance structure (Stevenson & Dryzek, 2021). Reforms therefore become relevant in this case to make guarantees to the African states to participate more actively in the processes towards formulating any policies that affect their development and environmental sustainability.

8.2 The Importance of Human Rights, Rule of Law, and Transparency in Global Environmental Governance

In this era where achieving efficient environmental governance is paramount, Mother Africa who already suffers from social, economic and environmental problems faces further hurdles as even fundamental issues such as human rights, rule of law and transparency become key especially for developing countries. Transparency ensures that the global environmental politics that create these decisions are accountable and available for scrutiny and allows Africa to demand accountability from the bigger countries that are more ethnically and politically linked with them (Knox, 2018). Adopting environmental governance where human rights are endowed on Africa creates an opportunity for Africa to advocate for countervailing actions towards the communities that will most likely be affected by climate change, over exploitation of resources and loss or extinction of plants and animals (Lyster, 2021). This value chain also appreciates the need for law in the construction of such frameworks implying that all nations have to behave otherwise such nations will not succeed in bullying the rest of the world to accept their

sustainable policies. In this regard, the environmental governance discourse would imply that such new legal principles would ensure that the climatic action program that African countries participate in would not be externalized by any region but promoted instead (Boas et al, 2019).

8.3 Strategies for Improving African Representation and Equitable Participation in Global Sustainability Efforts

To resolve the issues already mentioned regarding policy implementation several strategies can be introduced to enhance the engagement of Africans into the global sustainability landscape. First, the capacity issues must be tackled so that African countries are able to negotiate for their interests at the global stage such as G-20. This could imply increasing funds appropriated for environmental negotiation attended by African delegates and promoting technical assistance to African countries in funding sustainable development goals (AfDB, 2021).

Second, through regional integration, the African Union (AU) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), among others, regional cooperation should be encouraged. These are among the institutions that help focus and promote the interest of Africans and call for more inclusive governance at the world scale. In this way, African countries can make their bid in the G20 and other platforms within which major environmental controversies have been resolved together (Lisk, 2020).

Lastly, it is important that the current global governance systems undergo changes in their structures to allow adequate representation. This means, among other things, enhancing the voting power of African countries in other international environmental decision-making regions and improving the decision making processes in those that work for the African countries needs and problems (Hurrell & Sengupta, 2019). These changes would guarantee that Africa will not merely passively agree to the global standards on sustainability but strive to construct and more importantly dictate them.

9. Conclusion

The significance of African countries' participation in the G-20 has very far reaching implications in ensuring global environmental governance.

Given the demographic and environmental challenges facing the continent, it becomes a vital participant in such matters as climate change, biodiversity and resource management. With Africa expanding its role in the G-20, the continent is also poised to be at the forefront of climate change issues geared towards justice, adaptation and mitigation within the Context of the Global South and its Developing Nations.

9.1 Key Findings on the Challenges and Opportunities for Africa's Leadership on Sustainability

In order to facilitate Africa's participation and ensure the priorities that concern the environment are catered for, a number of interventions aimed at ensuring systematic inclusion in governance should be embraced. Such include, reforms in the global governance framework so as to allow for fair representation, capacity building of African countries and enhanced cooperation through regional bodies such as the AU and UNECA. Furthermore, such global environmental governance should integrate human rights, accountability and the rule of law principles in environmental governance which will enable Africa's environmental agenda to be taken seriously (Knox, 2018).

9.2 Recommendations for Inclusive Governance and Equitable Participation for Africa in Global Forums

In as much as most environmental governance structures are benevolently lateral and Africa's view is sought without any stricture laid on its involvement, new possibilities also bring new challenges. The existing divisions, wherein the Global North has overpowering policy DOMINANCE over the Global South, continue to hinder Africa in making meaningful inputs into the policy frameworks. More representation and funding challenges prevent African countries from engaging in the global sustainability agenda appropriately. Still, there are major environmental topics such as climate change adaptation, biodiversity, and carbon credits where Africa can still be seen taking charge (Conway & Schipper, 2021).

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