



PAN AFRICAN CLIMATE JUSTICE ALLIANCE

Let us keep alive the dreams from our fathers

Dear Mr. President,

We write to you with great pride and respect for your leadership. You are known throughout our continent as the 'son of Africa.'

We are your brothers and sisters from Africa – we represent an Alliance of civil society organizations in 43 countries across Africa that brings together a diverse group of people who share a common concern for our continent and the growing catastrophe of climate change.

In your inaugural address to the presidency of the world's most powerful nation, you affirmed your commitment to help the world's poor by saying:

To the people of poor nations, we pledge to work alongside you to make your farms flourish and let clean waters flow; to nourish starved bodies and feed hungry minds... And to those nations like ours that enjoy relative plenty, we say we can no longer afford indifference to the suffering outside our borders, nor can we consume the world's resources without regard to effect.

We take these pledges seriously. And we intend to hold you to your word.

Our rivers are drying. Our crops are turning to dust. An unrelenting sun scorches our land while other areas are ravaged by storms and diseases. Scientists now say the world could warm by 6°C – and by more in Africa. This threatens nothing less than the collapse of our continent.

Today Africa grapples with a challenge that is not of our making – impacts we had little role in causing. We find no alternative but to look to those nations that contributed most to causing climate change, and to call on them to lead by example.

As the world's largest contributor to greenhouse gas concentrations, and as the world's wealthiest nation, the United States has a singular duty to ensure that

Africa is kept safe from the rising impacts of climate change. Yet we find it failing in this duty. Along with other leaders of developed nations you have proposed:

- That global average temperatures be limited to below 2°C, yet this threatens catastrophic harm to Africa, which will likely warm by around 1.5 times this global average;
- That global emissions be limited to 50% of 1990 levels by 2050, yet this risks a 50% chance of exceeding 2°C; and
- That Annex I countries cut their emissions by 80% by 2050, which would rob Africa of its fair share of atmospheric space and limit our prospects of development while we grapple with a more hostile climate.

You are coming to Europe to receive a Nobel Prize in Oslo and to attend the UN Climate Change Summit in Copenhagen. You must live up to the dignity of the Nobel Prize when you come to Copenhagen. You must listen to the voices of other countries, including Africa.

Our greatest single concern is that the United States seems to be seeking to continue domestic pollution well into the future by “offsetting” its emissions in Africa, further transferring the burden of curbing climate change to those people who had little role in causing it.

Furthermore, we are concerned that the United States, by insisting on remaining outside the Kyoto Protocol, has become a pretext for other developed countries to seek to evade, rather than implement, their legally binding obligations under the Kyoto Protocol. This undermines the only international agreement that establishes binding international targets for developed countries.

These positions are as unjust as they are unsustainable. We call on the United States and other developed countries to recognize their historical responsibilities for the causes and adverse consequences of climate change and to repay their climate debts to Africa and other developing countries.

Allowing temperatures to rise by up to 2 degrees globally, and thus to 3 degrees in Africa, is a death sentence to literally millions of Africans. We fear for our mothers and fathers, our sisters and brothers – your uncles, aunts and cousins. Your policy on climate change threatens not only our families but also your own.

We implore you not to crush the dreams from our fathers.

Sincerely,

Mithika Mwenda
PACJA Coordinator