



PRESS RELEASE

40th Cairo Climate Talks

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"Putting the Paris Agreement into Effect: Climate Change Action in Africa"

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Signed by 177 countries around the world since April, the Paris Agreement on climate change sets a clear ambition to limit global temperature increase to 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. Reached after weeks of intense negotiations at the United Nations Conference of the Parties in Paris in December, the accord defines clear national and global objectives to limit greenhouse gas emissions and move toward a more sustainable path.

So far, 46 African countries have signed the Paris Agreement and have pledged to reduce their emissions. But the case of Africa is quite exceptional; while the entire continent is responsible for as little as 4% of all greenhouse gas emissions, it will be one of the hardest hit by climate change. Indeed, it is already being affected by unprecedented heat waves, extreme weather events, desertification, sea level rise and poor agricultural outputs all caused by global warming.

To discuss where Africa stands in terms of climate action, a panel of experts from Egypt and Germany assembled for the 40th Cairo Climate Talks. Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany in Cairo H.E. Julius Georg Luy opened the discussion at the German Science Centre Tuesday evening by praising Germany and Egypt for signing the Paris Agreement. He also pledged support for Egypt's national climate change plan as part of the countries' long-standing cooperation in the fields of environment, climate and energy.

"Egypt will be among those countries most severely hit by climate change and global warming: Rising sea levels, desertification and water scarcity are only some of the dangers brought about by an increasing average temperature," the ambassador said. "Moreover, climate change has become a crucial challenge in international politics, a challenge for peace and stability and is, therefore, no longer limited to the sphere of environment but a highly political issue."

Some projections have established that climate change could cost Africa US\$40 billion annually, which is equivalent to 2.7% of the continent's GDP. But Africa is also home to enormous renewable energy resources, and since energy production is responsible for 60% of emissions worldwide, Africa could be at the forefront of the climate battle, provided the right enabling and implementing mechanisms are put in

place. It is estimated that the continent can source an additional 10 terawatts of solar energy, 1300 gigawatts of wind power, 350 gigawatts of hydroelectric and 15 gigawatts of geothermal energy.

Panelist Mohamed Khalil, Head of the Environment and Sustainable Development Affairs Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said Africa has come together over the years to negotiate as one group, which increases its power but also requires compromise from each nation. He highlighted the African Renewable Energy Initiative launched at the COP21 in Paris that aims to provide an additional 10GW of renewable energy on the continent and give more people access to electricity through off grid solutions. “We don’t want this to be just another initiative,” Khalil said. “We want it to have a real impact on people and populations, especially the most vulnerable.”

Khalil said Egypt’s climate change mitigation priorities are phasing out fossil fuel subsidies and relying increasingly on renewable energy and energy efficiency.

“In the Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) submitted by Egypt there was strong emphasis on adaptation and within this context emphasis on management of water resources in a more efficient and sustainable manner, ensuring agricultural security, protection of the coastal zone, health, tourism and cultural heritage,” he said.

Panelist Mariam Allam, the national coordinator of the Arab Youth Climate Movement (AYCM), said she was disappointed that the INDC Egypt submitted in Paris remains vague and fails to set specific targets for reducing emissions. Allam was Egypt’s civil society focal point at the Paris negotiations.

“The policy design in Egypt is moving forward; we now have three schemes for feed-in-tariffs for solar and wind, there’s a waste to energy tariff, there’s fossil fuel subsidy reform,” she said. “But for us as civil society it’s very saddening ... it amazes us that we couldn’t set numbers in our INDC on several things climate related, but we could set a target for 29% of coal in our electricity mix.”

The Paris Agreement itself includes vague language in order to win consensus from all nations, and additional details will have to be hammered out at COP22 in Morocco this year.

“It’s important for everyone to stay on their toes and watch the governments to see if they will keep up the spirit of Paris,” said panelist Ms. Lena Donat, fellow at Ecologic Institute in Germany.

“The broader outlook requires getting all actors on board to tackle climate change ... if we don’t act all together we won’t get to 1.5 or 2 degrees. It’s a radical shift of economy that we need. It’s not only moving away from fossil fuels, but redefining wealth, how do we want to live, what do we want to eat, do we want to fly all the time?”

Funding is available to help developing nations cope with climate change, but often the funds do not find bankable projects. Transportation is one area where cooperation between developing countries could help leverage funding and share knowledge, emphasized panelist Dr. Sybille Röhrkasten, who is an energy transition project coordinator at the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies in Potsdam, Germany.

“I think when we talk about emissions from energy sector we have a tendency to solely talk about electricity sector, but we need to tackle emissions from transport sector as well,” she said. “This is a huge challenge in Germany as well; we really focus on the electricity sector and in my opinion we don’t have a credible solution for the transport sector and this is where we really need innovation from cities.”

Background Information:

The Cairo Climate Talks are conceived, organized and hosted as a cooperation between the German Embassy in Cairo, the Egyptian Ministry of Environment, the German Science Center (DWZ), the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). For more information, please visit our [website](#) or contact press@cairoclimatetalks.net.