

# Latest COPs on climate change, desertification and biodiversity

Key outcomes for Africa  
(2024-2025)



## Key messages

- COP29 in Baku (November 2024) produced mixed results: developed countries' climate finance pledges for developing countries were raised to \$300 billion a year by 2035, tripling the amount previously set in 2009, yet still remain below the demands that developing nations had raised.
- As indicated in latest NDC submissions, Africa's total climate finance needs (mitigation, adaptation, loss & damage and cross-cutting) add up to \$1.6-\$1.9 trillion until 2030.
- While COP29 finalised the institutional setup of the Fund for Responding to Loss & Damage (FRLD) under the auspices of the World Bank and committed to starting payouts in 2026, pledges to the FRLD currently only cover \$700 million, equivalent to only 0.6% of climate-related damages Africa is estimated to face by 2030.
- Framework negotiations to track the Global Goal on Adaptation outlined in Article 7 of the Paris Agreement, which gained traction at COP28, have stalled with no final agreement to date.
- While talks at COP16 in Riyadh (December 2024) focused on finance for restoration and land degradation neutrality, the UNCCD's estimated financing gap is still sitting at a total of \$2.6 trillion by 2030.
- Despite incremental progress, COP16 failed to deliver a long-awaited binding agreement on tackling drought worldwide. Decisions were instead deferred to COP17, scheduled to take place in Mongolia in 2026.
- After being suspended in November 2024 before Parties could reach an agreement on resource mobilisation, COP16 on biodiversity successfully resumed in February 2025 in Rome.
- In a landmark agreement, participating nations agreed in Rome to mobilise at least \$200 billion a year by 2030 to close the biodiversity finance gap.

## Governing global climate & environmental policy: the three Rio conventions

The 1992 Rio Earth Summit in Brazil produced three UN conventions that govern global climate and environmental policy today: the Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). These three conventions are addressed in three separate annual or bi-annual meetings which last took place between October 2024 and February 2025. All UN member states, including the 54 African countries, have ratified the conventions<sup>1</sup>.

	Focus points	Key documents	Last COP meeting
UNFCCC	Stabilising GHG levels & limiting global warming to 2°C, climate adaptation, sustainable economic development	Paris Agreement (2016)	COP29, 11-22 November 2024 Baku, Azerbaijan
UNCCD	Desertification, drought & land degradation, particularly in Africa	New Delhi Declaration (2014)	COP16, 2-13 December 2024 Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
CBD	Conservation, biosafety, equitable sharing of benefits of using genetic resources	Cartagena Protocol (2003) Nagoya Protocol (2014)	COP16, 21 October – 2 November 2024 & 25-28 February 2025 Cali, Colombia & Rome, Italy

### UNFCCC, UNCCD and CBD acknowledge specific needs of developing countries, especially Least Developed Countries (LDCs)<sup>2</sup>

UNFCCC: In its Articles 2 and 9, the Paris Agreement recognises “common but differentiated responsibilities [...] in the light of different national circumstances” and states that developed countries shall provide financial resources to aid developing countries with climate mitigation and adaptation efforts.

UNCCD: Of the three Conventions, UNCCD is the only one particularly concerned with Africa. Its Article 7 specifies that priority should be given to affected African countries given their heightened vulnerability.

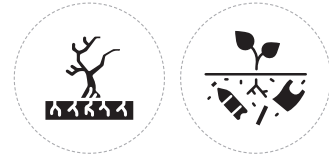
CBD: The Cartagena Protocol on biosafety procedures calls for capacity building, knowledge sharing and financial assistance for economies in transition. The Nagoya Protocol, which is concerned with the equitable sharing of benefits from research or treatments developed from genetic resources (pharmaceuticals, seeds, horticulture etc.), urges parties to ensure that indigenous communities share the profits of genetic resource use, and that parties prioritise access for vulnerable countries and groups.

<sup>1</sup> The only exceptions being the Holy See and the United States of America which have not ratified the CBD.

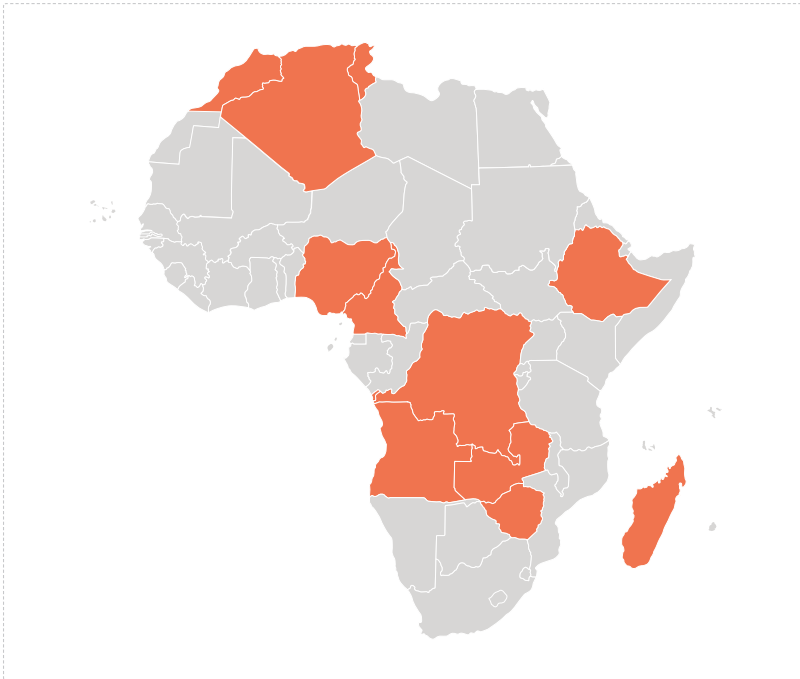
<sup>2</sup> There are currently 45 countries classified as LDCs, making them eligible for aid, special technical assistance, preferential market access and other concessions. African countries in this group are Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, DR Congo, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Rwanda, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda and Zambia.

## Africa is the world's region most vulnerable to drought, desertification and land degradation

Two thirds of Africa is desert or dryland, vital for agriculture and food production but especially vulnerable to droughts, desertification and land degradation. The continent has seen a temperature increase higher than the global average (around +0.3°C per decade since 1991), with the highest temperature anomalies of 2023 recorded in North-Western Africa. North-Western Sahara, the Horn of Africa, South-Central Africa and Madagascar have also seen record-low rainfall levels in 2023, negatively affecting at least 681 million citizens.



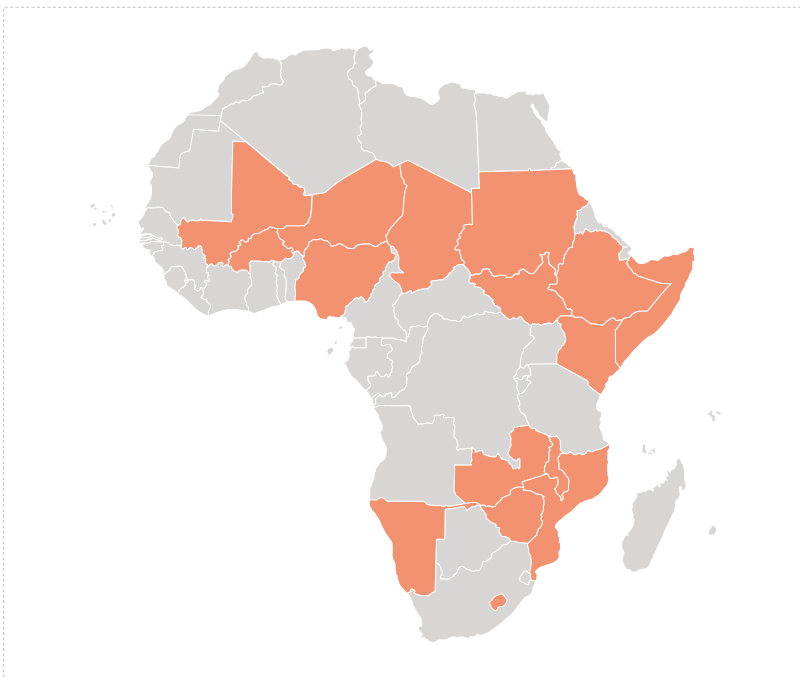
### Africa: countries experiencing severe drought in 2023



● Countries experiencing severe drought in 2023

Source: MIF based on World Meteorological Organization (2024)

### Africa: early warning 'hunger hotspots' in 2025



● Early warning 'hunger hotspots' in 2025

Source: MIF based on Food & Agriculture Organization and World Food Programme (2024)

Drought and desertification have a devastating impact on food security and systems, both long- and short-term. Of the 19 'hunger hotspots' identified by early warning systems for 2025, 16 are located across Eastern and Southern Africa and the Sahel where, in many cases, environmental factors are exacerbated by ongoing conflict and political instability. A total of 115.7 million people are facing acute food insecurity in these countries, affecting up to 56% and 45% of the population in South Sudan and Sudan alone.

The 2024 Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG) also shows a worrying picture for *Food Security*: the continental average has declined by -1.9 since 2014 and registers increasing deterioration, meaning the decline has been faster in the second half of the decade than the first. According to the IIAG, the situation is particularly dire in the lowest ranked countries (Central African Republic, Madagascar, Mozambique and Somalia) while Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mauritania, Nigeria and Uganda have also seen double-digit ten-year deteriorations in *Food Security*.

### **Looking back at the 2024 and 2025 summits: mixed results at COP29 in Baku, COP16 in Riyadh and COP16 in Cali**

Last year's COP29 climate conference in Azerbaijan concluded with a mix of hope and disappointment, delivering some decisions that had long been lobbied for while remaining undecided on others. Two major aims of the summit were to deliver new climate finance commitments, replacing the previously agreed \$100 billion annual goal set in 2009, and to update emission targets, quantified in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement.

UNCCD's COP16 in Saudi Arabia was highly anticipated, being the first summit held in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), a region highly vulnerable to drought. It was also the largest UNCCD summit to date, with over 20,000 participants representing almost 200 countries. Despite this, the conference finalised without a binding agreement on drought response.

Similarly, the CBD's COP16 in Colombia was expected to be the biggest of its kind yet and intended to deliver roadmaps for the implementation of targets set out two years prior at COP15. Unfortunately, the conference was suspended and postponed on 2 November 2024 after wealthier nations blocked a proposal designed to help poorer countries restore their natural environments.

### **COP29 – the good: progress on a new collective goal, loss & damage payouts, and carbon markets**

- In a New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) decision from 24 November 2024, the final day of the summit, the COP29 presidency called on all actors to scale up climate finance for developing countries to at least \$1.3 trillion per year by 2035.
- The same text specified that developed countries' climate finance for developing countries shall be raised to \$300 billion a year by 2035, tripling the amount previously set in 2009.
- Following years of promises, and a firm commitment at COP28 in Dubai, Parties finalised the paperwork creating the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD)<sup>3</sup> which will be hosted in the Philippines under

<sup>3</sup> In UN climate negotiations, 'loss and damage' generally refers to the consequences of climate change that go beyond what people can adapt to, e.g. the loss of lives, homes or heritage sites due to rising sea levels or extreme weather events.

the institutional auspices of the World Bank, and committed to starting payouts to affected countries in 2026. Former UN-Assistant Secretary General and former head of the African Risk Capacity Group Ibrahima Cheikh Diong was appointed as the Fund's Executive Director.

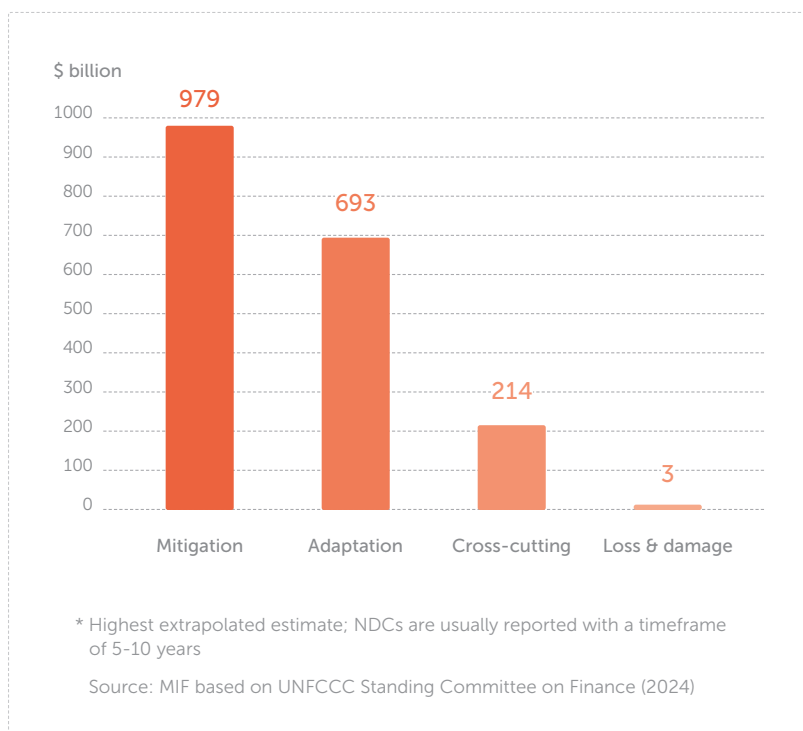
- After years of negotiations, the summit agreed on international carbon market standards under Article 6.4 of the Paris Agreement. This presents additional avenues for Africa to internationally trade CO<sub>2</sub> certificates with heavy emitters and thereby capitalise on its low per capita emissions and carbon sinks.

### Africa's biggest concern is and remains the climate finance gap

Africa is uniquely positioned as the continent historically least responsible for climate change, yet hosting 15 of the world's 20 most climate-vulnerable countries. This has created a growing demand for long-term concessional climate finance in Africa with a special emphasis on adaptation.

The gap in adaptation finance for developing countries currently sits at around \$187-\$359 billion per year while African countries' NDCs alone indicate climate finance needs of \$1.6-\$1.9 trillion in total until 2030.

#### Africa: costed needs by type as reported in NDC submissions (2024)\*



Despite progress made in 2022 at COP27 in Sharm El-Sheikh and in 2023 at COP28 in Dubai, pledges to the FRLD currently cover only 0.1% of the total up to \$580 billion in climate-related damages developing countries<sup>4</sup> are estimated to face by 2030; \$112 billion needed by sub-Saharan Africa alone.

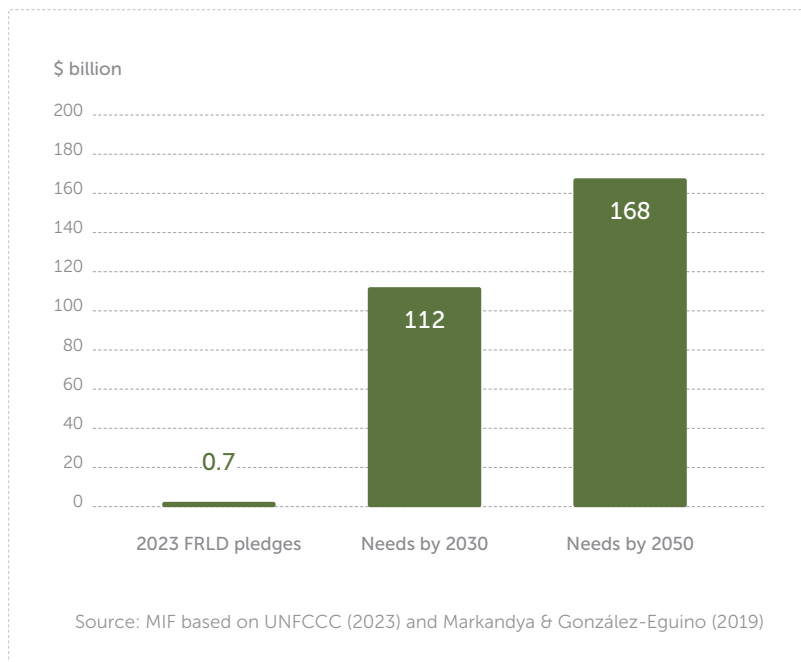


**Climate finance is not a handout – it is the moral and economic imperative of our age.**

*African Group of Negotiators closing statement at COP29*

<sup>4</sup> In this case, 'developing countries' refers to non-Annex I countries as per the UNFCCC, including a diverse group of LDCs, emerging economies and heavy emitters like China and India.

## Loss and damage pledges compared to sub-Saharan Africa's needs (\$ billion)



There is also growing concern that an increased focus on climate finance could crowd out resources intended for development. In 2015, the UN General Assembly agreed that climate finance should be 'new and additional' and should not come at the expense of other development targets or simply reclassify already-existing development finance commitments as green or climate-focused. Despite this, only 7% of climate finance provided between 2011 and 2020 was found to be 'new and additional' to high-income countries' existing Official Development Assistance (ODA) commitments.



Africa is at a pivotal moment to shape an ambitious and pragmatic energy future. With vast renewable resources, the continent has a unique opportunity to drive economic growth while expanding energy access and strengthening resilience. A locally driven approach is key. Millions still lack electricity, while industries require reliable power. Scaling up solar and wind – alongside modernising grids, deploying storage, and advancing regional energy integration where practical – will accelerate progress. Off-grid and decentralised solutions, including mini-grids powered by renewables, provide a faster, more effective means of reaching some of the harder-to-reach, underserved communities. Financing remains the key enabler. Global pledges and commitments must translate into tangible, streamlined financial flows, while Africa advances its own funding innovations. Strengthening technology collaboration and local renewable energy supply chains will enable the continent not only to adopt clean energy, but to lead in its innovation and production. A just transition must deliver tangible benefits – affordable power, job creation, and industrial growth – ensuring Africa's economic transformation is powered by clean energy. With the right investments and policies, Africa can fully harness its renewable potential to build a resilient, competitive economy that meets the needs of its people and industries.

*Ujunwa Ojemeni, Senior Policy Advisor at E3G & MIF Now Generation Network member*



## COP29 – the bad and the undecided: ‘polluter pays’ principle falls short

- Despite having outlined a NCQG, the decisions made at COP29 lack enforceable mechanisms to make polluters pay – a core priority the African Group of Negotiators (AGN)<sup>5</sup> brought to this year’s summit.
- Negotiators from developing and developed countries have not seen eye to eye about the \$300 billion annual target, with one side arguing that it will be difficult to achieve without broadening its contributor base to include emerging economies like China, and the other arguing that it still falls short of needs and responsibility – partly because the majority is supposed to come from non-concessional loans, private investments and alternative sources such as levies instead of grants.
- The LDC bloc had asked to receive \$220 billion per year, while the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)<sup>6</sup> wanted \$39 billion – demands that were opposed by other developing nations and did not appear in the final decision of COP29.
- Framework negotiations to track the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) outlined in Article 7 of the Paris Agreement, which gained traction at COP28, have stalled with no final agreement to date. A draft decision from the last day of the summit outlines that the United Arab Emirates-Belém<sup>7</sup> work programme shall have no more than 100 globally applicable indicators, which are yet to be specified.
- An African negotiator supposed to lead COP29’s response measures track was dropped and replaced by a facilitator more in favour of the EU’s Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM). CBAM is unpopular with developing countries because it represents an additional obstacle to accessing the EU market.

### CBAM could reduce Africa’s exports to the EU by almost 6%

CBAM works by imposing tariffs on carbon-intensive products imported into the EU single market to prevent the risk of carbon leakage and encourage trade partners to adopt green practices. Because many African exporters are unable to fulfil the environmental or reporting requirements of CBAM, they would effectively be further excluded from the European market when the mechanism becomes fully operational in 2026.

Altogether, estimates suggest that CBAM could cost Africa 1.1% of annual GDP and decrease exports to Europe by 5.7%, especially in aluminium, iron and steel. Eleven of the 33 LDCs in Africa could be impacted even further and experience GDP losses between 1.5% and 8.4%. Observers have called for less restrictive applications or grace periods for African exporters to secure access to the EU market and not endanger long-term industrialisation targets in countries of origin.

<sup>5</sup> The AGN is comprised of experts, senior officials and negotiators from 54 African countries under the leadership of Chairperson Ali Mohamed, Special Climate Envoy of Kenya’s President, and is tasked with formulating and advancing a common African position during UNFCCC summits and negotiations.

<sup>6</sup> African members of AOSIS are Cabo Verde, Comoros, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritius, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Seychelles.

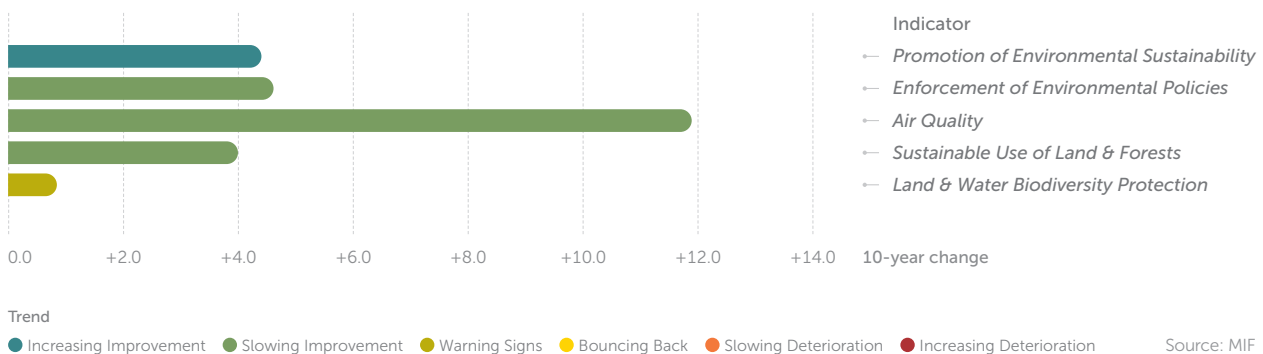
<sup>7</sup> The first GGA stocktake at COP28 in Dubai revealed existing gaps in the data landscape and assessment of adaptation measures. To help operationalise this, a two-year work programme tasked with defining indicators to measure adaptation progress was established, dubbed the UAE-Belém programme after the two hosts of COP28 and COP30.

## The Global Goal on Adaptation: a crucial lack of relevant data

For Africa and other low emitters, adaptation, (adjustments in social, economic and ecological systems to respond to climate change effects) is of greater relevance than mitigation, i.e. the curtailing of greenhouse gas emissions. Central to the negotiations around adaptation has been the difficulty of defining and tracking progress in enhancing adaptive capacities and resilience.

This challenge is mirrored in the IAG's assessment of *Sustainable Environment* as a core governance dimension. To date, the most relevant proxy indicators available focus on environmental policies and biodiversity protection as opposed to large-scale climate emissions and adaptation measures. Hence, tremendous improvements in *Sustainable Environment*, while cause for careful optimism, should not cloud the continent's immense challenges when it comes to coping with the disastrous effects of climate change.

### Africa: *Sustainable Environment* indicators, 10-year changes & trends (2014-2023)



## COP29 recommendations going forward: too little too late?

Despite being dubbed the 'finance COP', Baku still fell short on developing countries' and specifically Africa's climate finance needs. The AGN condemned the agreed targets as "too little too late" and "totally inadequate [...] leading to unacceptable loss of life in Africa and elsewhere."

Negotiators and observers noted that incrementalism and repeated failure to take concerns of the Global South seriously have shown once more that climate summits are skewed towards the interests of developed countries, for example by still prioritising mitigation efforts in the NQCG, even though adaptation is of much greater importance for Africa. Going forward, calls were made for even more ambitious goals and commitments:

- The G77 coalition of developing countries have called for financial contributions by developed countries of least \$500 billion annually instead.
- Countries must submit new NDCs by February 2025. In an effort to reduce emissions by up to 81% from 1990 levels to 2035, Brazil, the UAE and the UK already set ambitious targets at COP29, which other Parties should follow.
- Africa's carbon sinks should be regulated to avoid being abused just to offset polluters' emissions.

- Proposals for a more sincere and outcome-oriented process include scrapping the consensus principle, which makes decision too easy to veto, and requiring more detailed, technical updates on NDCs.<sup>8</sup>
- Additionally, observers have advocated for curbing the attendance of oil and gas lobbyists and ending the sidelining of negotiators and experts from the most affected regions, including Africa.



In Baku, Riyadh and Cali, ministers negotiated the price of survival against climate change. They have announced \$300 billion per year by 2035 – will this even reach the communities that need it the most? What will it take to put Global South leaders to the front, and should there even be any more UN COPs if they never live up to the task? With hundreds of millions spent on convening tens of thousands of us in a different capital every year, is this not corporate tourism in disguise?! Every decision made now is going to determine whether Africa has the resources to adapt, recover and transition or not. It is crucial for us to hold that line of \$1.3 trillion and to remind leaders of what is at stake. We will continue to represent our communities at the frontlines of the climate crisis occupied by the world's youngest populations, and ask that future generations are central to the process moving forward.

*Michael Kakande, Chairperson of Resilient40 & MIF Now Generation Network member*

## COP16 in Riyadh: high expectations, few binding outcomes

- Saudi Arabia's presidency launched the Riyadh Action Agenda to bolster existing or foster new initiatives combatting desertification and land degradation together with the private sector, multilateral organisations and civil society.
- More than \$12 billion were pledged under the inaugural Riyadh Global Drought Resilience Partnership, launched to help the world's 80 most vulnerable countries tackle drought and desertification.
- The Great Green Wall, an African initiative aimed at restoring 100 million hectares of degraded land in the Sahel, also mobilised about \$15 million from the governments of Italy and Austria.
- Led by the US government, investments were announced of \$70 million into the Vision for Adapted Crops and Soils, working towards more resilient food systems.
- Two major agreements resulted in the creation of the Caucus for Indigenous People and the Caucus for Local Communities to ensure their specific perspectives, needs and challenges are adequately represented in future negotiations.

<sup>8</sup> Such process reforms of the consensus principle could include a population coefficient in which voting power is given to countries according to their respective share of world population instead of the 'one country, one vote' rule while retaining mechanisms for ensuring the adequate representation of very small (island) states. Because developed countries can usually afford to send much larger delegations than countries of the Global South to international climate summits, another reform could limit the number of negotiators per country to even out that imbalance.

- The International Drought Resilience Observatory was set up, the first Artificial Intelligence-driven platform to help countries assess and strengthen drought resilience capacities.
- While talks focused on finance for restoration and land degradation neutrality, the UNCCD's estimated financing gap is still sitting at a total of \$2.6 trillion by 2030.
- Despite incremental progress, COP16 failed to deliver a long-awaited binding agreement on tackling drought worldwide. Decisions were instead deferred to COP17, scheduled to take place in Mongolia in 2026.



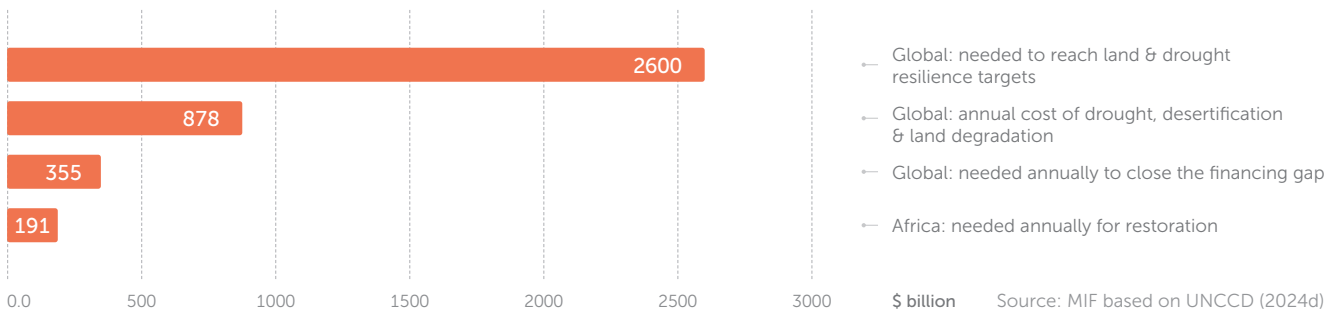
**Every dollar invested in healthy land is a dollar invested in biodiversity, climate and food security.**

*Ibrahima Thiaw, Executive Secretary of UNCCD*

### The finance gap persists: trillions needed to tackle desertification

On 3 December 2024, the second day of the summit, UNCCD launched a new report *Investing in Land's Future: Financial Needs Assessment for UNCCD*. It is the first ever assessment of its kind carried out for UNCCD and states that at least \$2.6 trillion is needed globally until 2030 to restore over one billion hectares of degraded land and enhance drought resilience worldwide.

#### Financing needs to combat drought, desertification & land degradation until 2030



### COP16: a major blow for poorer nations in Cali, but an agreement was reached in Rome

- Parties adopted a decision on the use of biological genetic information. While it includes the setup of a fund to reallocate profits made from such information from companies to the countries origin, contributions to the fund remain voluntary.
- Talks further established a subsidiary body for Indigenous Peoples and officially recognised people of African descent as biodiversity custodians.
- Wealthier nations (UK, Germany, Denmark, Norway, New Zealand, Austria and France) together pledged a total of \$163 million for the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund. However, this falls way short of the \$20 billion target for developed countries' contributions, set out in the Kunming-Montreal Agreement at COP15 in 2022.
- In the biggest blow dealt to the Global South, COP16 failed to conclude with a binding agreement and detailed funding plan to reach the targets

set out in 2022. Developing nations had insisted on creating a designated biodiversity fund to help with implementing the Kunming-Montreal targets in poorer countries. This was opposed by the EU, Japan and Canada, arguing it would complicate the funding landscape without actually generating more money.

- The Global North-South divide and failure to reach a quorum caused the Colombian presidency to suspend and postpone the conference on 2 November 2024.
- The summit resumed on 25-28 February 2025 in Rome where Parties agreed in a landmark decision to mobilise \$200 billion annually by 2030 to close the biodiversity finance gap, including \$30 billion in international finance flows.
- Parties also strengthened the Kunming-Montreal Agreement's monitoring framework, agreeing on indicators used to measure its four goals and 23 targets, leading up to a global stocktake at COP17.
- While the road from Cali to Rome has shown clear progress, many developing countries, the BRICS and the African Group criticised the resumed talks and final agreement for "lack of ambition" and "missing urgency". Negotiations were still characterised by a North-South divide, although a compromise was struck between the Global South's demand for new financing mechanisms and the Global North's preference for reforming existing ones.

#### **Emerging biodiversity credit landscape offers opportunities to invest in conservation**

Similar to the more established carbon credit market, biodiversity credits are one of many instruments to encourage companies to offset their environmental footprint by purchasing credits from protection, conservation or restoration agencies and NGOs. While the value of nascent global biodiversity credits is currently estimated at between \$2 to \$8 million, Africa's vast natural landscapes and wildlife offer a unique starting point to expand such credit schemes and trade credits akin to international carbon markets. If developed effectively, the demand for biodiversity credits could reach \$2 billion by 2030 and \$69 billion by 2050, presenting a huge financial opportunity for the African continent.



**The \$20 billion target is the most imminent of all the targets in the agreement. It is critical to drive protection, restoration and sustainable management policies in our countries.**

*Ministerial Alliance for Ambition on Nature Finance<sup>9</sup>*

<sup>9</sup> This alliance is comprised of ministers from 20 African, Pacific and South Asian countries. African members include Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Liberia, Madagascar, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Togo and Zambia.

## **MIF remains committed to the fault lines of global climate and environment negotiations: more, but above all, smarter money**

A common thread uniting the COP summits in 2024 and 2025, and dominating international discourse over past years, has been the need for more and better money allocated to developing nations to implement their green transitions, cope with the impacts of climate change and help reach their development goals.

In our 2024 Forum Report *Financing Africa: where is the money?*, the Mo Ibrahim Foundation detailed financial needs to reach Africa's Sustainable Development Goals as well as the NDCs under the Paris Agreement. We outlined further the necessary reforms of the international financial architecture and current processes, debt restructuring, making FDIs into Africa more attractive and leveraging domestic assets through tax reforms, curbing illicit financial flows and innovative financing instruments.

In 2025, we will stay committed to fostering dialogue on the topic. In Marrakech from 1-3 June, we will convene with leaders, researchers and other stakeholders to discuss how to close Africa's financing gap in a sustainable and equitable way. The 2025 Ibrahim Governance Weekend will take place a few weeks ahead of the 4th International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4) in Seville, Spain. Together with our partners, we aim to formulate a joint African position in the lead-up to FfD4 to maximise favourable outcomes for the continent.

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