

AEEP Energy Talks **Spotlight**

COP29 and Beyond: Strengthened AU-EU Cooperation for Financing and Implementing Africa's NDCs



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Key findings from the 17th AEEP Energy Talks on 09 December 2024

SUMMARY

The 17th AEEP Energy Talks on 9 December 2024 explored the outcomes from COP29 in Baku and what they mean for the development of energy infrastructure in Africa.

The webinar also highlighted ongoing collaboration to finance and support action to implement the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) in Africa, particularly through energy projects, and thus contributing to the achievement of SDG7.

Speakers included representatives from the African Union Commission (AUC), EU Delegation to the African Union, Climate Parliament, African Energy Commission (AFREC), UNFCCC Regional Collaboration Centre for West and Central Africa, Ministry of Energy of Malawi, and the research centre VITO.

The panellists concluded that COP29 was modestly successful. Even though governments agreed on a new collective annual climate finance goal that triples the current USD 100 billion a year goal to at least USD 300 billion annually by 2035, it is still far below the needs in Africa.

On NDCs the speakers agreed it is time for African countries to move beyond cosmetic targets towards realistic contributions that are based on robust data, enhanced technical capacity and project implementation in close collaboration with partners.

The AEEP Energy Talks highlighted AFREC's and VITO's joint effort to build capacity in African countries in support of designing and implementing the NDCs. Ms Chaona Kumbani noted that the Ministry of Energy of Malawi has greatly benefitted from these tailored trainings for accurate energy statistics. Furthermore, she and her fellow speakers stressed that African countries have a large potential in renewable energy generation and that collaboration with the private sector is critical to build up investments in the energy sector.

Introduction

From 11th to 22nd November 2024, climate change experts and leaders convened in Baku, Azerbaijan for the COP29 – the 29th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). A major focus of COP29 lied on the adoption of the ‘New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance’ ([NCQG](#)), which increases climate finance to USD 300 billion per year for developing countries by 2035.

Furthermore, COP29 aimed at "enhancing ambition", ensuring that countries commit to ambitious climate policies through the so-called Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). NDCs are an integral part of the [Paris Agreement](#), which was adopted at COP21 in 2015. They reflect each countries trajectory to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in order to collectively limit global warming to 1.5°C. These specific targets recognize country-specific circumstances and capabilities, while also including implementation strategies and timeframes to achieve these targets. The first update was in 2020, and the deadline to update these commitments again is February 2025 ([NDC 3.0](#)). The target is to achieve them by 2035.

The 17th AEEP Energy Talks served as a gauge of where Africa stands on NDC ambitions and expectations for 2025 amidst a rapidly evolving global landscape. The discussion shed light on how climate finance and international collaboration may contribute to not only meeting NDC targets on the continent but also driving sustainable development and reduce global inequalities.

Opening Remarks

Ms Sara Buzzoni, Programme and Policy Officer at the EU Delegation to the African Union, commenced the Energy Talks by affirming that energy is at the core of the Africa-EU relationship. This can be seen in the EU’s continued support to continental projects in Africa, such as the Africa Continental Power Systems Master Plan ([CMP](#)) and Africa Single Electricity Market ([AfSEM](#)). Furthermore, Ms Buzzoni explained that renewable energy is particularly important for the EU, which is why the EU directs EUR 150 billion ([Africa-Europe Investment Package](#)) towards projects on climate and energy through the [Global Gateway Strategy](#). Specifically, the Africa-EU Green Energy Initiative ([AEGEI](#)) mobilises 12 EU member states to support the sustainable energy transition in Africa. On the role of the AEEP, Ms Buzzoni said that the move of the AEEP Secretariat to Addis Ababa underlines how important mutual dialogue and collaboration is to the EU and its African partners. In addition, Ms Buzzoni highlighted the importance of further catalysing private investments, stating that the time is mature to move from policies to project implementation.

“We are building a partnership of equals between Africa and the EU, with energy at its heart. It’s crucial to catalyse investments and implement projects”.

– Sara Buzzoni



Panel Discussion on COP29 Results

A panel discussion in two parts followed with insights from **Mr Sanjay Kumar**, Chief Policy Advisor of the Climate Parliament, **Mr Rashid Ali Abdallah**, Executive Director of the African Energy Commission (AFREC), **Mr Philippe Missi Missi**, NDC Expert at the UN Framework Convention on

Climate Change Regional Collaboration Center for West and Central Africa (UNFCCC RCC WAC Africa) and **Ms Chaona Kumbani**, NDC Coordinator at the Ministry of Energy of Malawi.

The discussion was moderated by the Head of Secretariat for the AEEP, **Dr Towela Nyirenda-Jere**.

COP29 – ‘A Mixed Bag of Results’

Steering the conversation towards COP29, Dr Nyirenda-Jere asked the panellists how they perceive the results from COP29. **Mr Abdallah** argued that the negotiations reached modest success, highlighting that annual climate finance commitments tripled from USD 100 billion to USD 300 billion. This amount, however, is still far below what is needed. In addition, he mentioned that progress was made regarding the rules for carbon markets, which could bring more private resources to climate finance.

Mr Missi Missi agreed that the main success of COP29 was the increase in annual climate finance to USD 300 billion. He emphasised the importance to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the energy sector by increasing the share of renewable energy and developing sustainable solutions for transport. Both require large amounts of funding, which poses the question whether we can expect further increases in funding at next year’s COP30. He mentioned that a roadmap towards USD 1.3 trillion in climate funding by 2035 exists ([‘Baku Finance Goal’](#)), but its implementation is tricky.

“Many countries have the ambition to use NDCs to improve clean energy access. This can only be achieved by engaging partners to finance climate action in the region”.

– **Philippe Missi Missi**



Mr Kumar described the results from COP29 as a ‘mixed bag’. There is reason to be optimistic, however, as the pledge to contribute USD 300 billion annually gives more certainty to developing countries and showcases the willingness of multilateral and national development partners to create new finance instruments and to mobilise the private sector. He underlined that perceived risks in project development remains high in the African contexts, which leads to high costs of capital and thus is one of the largest obstacles for private investments. To alleviate this issue, he suggested to further implement specific financing instruments. Such instruments, for instance guarantees, could enable governments to establish important reforms in the power sector. He also presented the concept of ‘green zones’, a form of special economic zones where policy reforms and targeted exemptions could be implemented by national governments. Through such a provision, policymakers have more flexibility and may more easily mobilize investments. He mentioned that India has experienced quite some success with this approach, as policy reforms were able to drive down the average cost of capital significantly. The Climate Parliament is already working with 15 countries in Africa to build capacity with members of national parliaments to

“If we are able to go step by step, we can create a legislation for green energy zones, which could bring down the cost of capital in Africa”.

– **Dr Sanjay Kumar**



implement reforms in the power sector. He reiterated that innovative financing instruments are needed to mitigate both actual and perceived risk.

Mr Abdallah agreed that finance currently is a large obstacle for African countries. Thus, he argued that a reformed global finance structure is needed, stating that Africa cannot be expected to bear the cost of a green transition if its cost of capital is triple that of other countries. Importantly, he said that current finance pledges need to materialise before further finance instruments are discussed.

The Role of International Collaboration and Partnerships

Moving ahead, **Dr Nyirenda-Jere** inquired about the potential that lies in strengthened international collaboration to combine climate and energy efforts. **Mr Missi Missi** explained that international collaboration is crucial to enable all countries to establish and implement their NDCs. He also explained that progress on energy access stills lags in many African countries. While clean energy provides the opportunity to improve energy access quickly and affordably, project implementation is a hurdle difficult to overcome. He gave the example of the [Mitigation Action Facility](#), a platform that provides financial and technical support to climate projects worldwide, where so far only 1 out of 60 projects was implemented in the region of West and Central Africa. In such instances, international collaboration may assist through capacity building, as many national governments experience challenges in developing and establishing administrative frameworks such as sectoral plans or strategic papers.

Mr Abdallah argued that NDCs need to be based on reliable data and built on realistic models. He

“We need to integrate NDCs as a planning tool. They need to be realistic and based on accurate data”.

– Rashid Ali Abdallah



added that low rates of NDC implementation cannot be surprising given that most NDCs do not serve the purpose of painting a realistic picture of what is achievable.

Mr Kumar highlighted that Africa continues to lack access to electricity and clean cooking. Clean energy could tackle these issues given Africa’s abundant resources, while also increasing employment opportunities. He reiterated that ‘green zones’ could enable quicker development of clean energy as opposed to nation-wide macro level solutions that are more difficult to implement. To move ahead, suitable physical areas would have to be identified and legislation issues need to be addressed. These could be discussed at ‘green zone alliances’ where stakeholders could share their acquired knowledge and experience, thus emphasising the potential that lies in international cooperation.

NDC Support Centre Presentation

Mr Tahavori, Researcher at VITO and Coordinator for the NDC Support Center, gave insights into the challenges that countries face in developing NDCs, and how to tackle these issues. He emphasised that NDCs are crucial to establish and pursue climate targets, while also being an important tool to access climate finance. Many countries, however, face difficulties regarding technical capacity and knowledge, which is why they often hire external consultants for short term support. This, in turn, may lead to unrealistic outcomes that do not necessarily reflect the country-specific context, thus rendering the NDCs largely purposeless. VITO has launched the NDC Support Center, which aims to pursue a novel approach to capacity building.

“Collaboration is a critical element of capacity building programmes for climate action planning in Africa”.

– Amin Tahavori



The NDC Support Center aims to strengthen ownership in individual countries by training policy makers for the long-term, instead of merely providing technical assistance. Specifically, policy makers are accompanied to

better understand the process behind NDCs, an approach that aims for more realistic outcomes and higher degrees of implementation. Mr Tahavori particularly mentioned that we must move beyond a ‘one size fits all’ approach to meet each country’s unique requirements. Thus, the first step undertaken by the NDC Support Center is an assessment of the country’s situation. The second step is to increase cross-sectoral engagement, from governments and energy utilities to academia and other stakeholders. The third step is long-term support with data generation and management to create reliable statistical information and increase analytical understanding. Pilot projects of the NDC Support Center have already been established in Malawi, Uganda, Mozambique, and Morocco.

Panel Discussion on NDCs

Ms Kumbani provided insights into the collaboration between the NDC Support Center and the Ministry of Energy of Malawi. She explained that the NDC Support Center provided

“Through the NDC Support Center, the Government of Malawi was able to develop much more accurate NDCs”.

– Chaona Kumbani



trainings on energy statistics, which included data generation and management. The NDC Support Center also facilitates technical knowledge, such as optimising renewable energy integration into grids. Ms Kumbani stated that these collaborations effectively tackle current issues that African governments face such as data management and lack of technical capacity in analysis or modelling. Specifically, she mentioned that data consistency is a frequent issue, as it often is not aligned with international standards and thus hinders accurate modelling and planning. Ultimately, the Malawi government was able to develop a much more accurate climate strategy through the support it received from the NDC Support Center.

Mr Missi Missi spoke on Africa-EU collaboration in the field of NDCs. He said that historically, the EU has emitted the largest amounts of greenhouse gas emissions, which increases its responsibility in supporting the global energy transition. To achieve the ambitious climate targets, collaboration should not be limited to the continent level, but must also be strengthened between individual countries. Furthermore, he argued that Africa-EU collaboration should go beyond NDC planning and implementation, and instead aim for technology transfer and capacity building. When it comes to NDC planning, he emphasised that any collaboration efforts should span the entire process, from data generation and management to modelling and implementation.

Mr Abdallah explained that the partnership between AFREC and VITO is very valuable. While AFREC already has good data management capacity, VITO provides important assistance with NDC modelling. He agreed that NDCs have the potential to be a planning tool and should not be mistaken for hollow targets.

In closing, the panellists shared their ambitions and hopes for NDCs and future climate finance. **Mr Missi Missi** emphasised the potential of Africa-EU collaboration, stating that close partnerships enable African countries to develop and implement NDCs. Furthermore, he concluded that NDCs should be widely used as a planning tool, thereby contributing for a cleaner energy and climate future that benefits all. **Ms Kumbani** agreed that NDC support initiatives are crucial, as seen in the example of Malawi where such support led to the effective implementation of a national climate strategy. **Mr Abdallah** reiterated that the outcomes from COP29 must translate into real commitments and action on the ground. In addition, he too underlined that NDCs need to become an effective tool, which requires capacity building and accurate data generation and management. He agreed with the other panellists that effective partnerships are needed to achieve these results.

AEEP Energy Talk Conclusions – COP29 and Beyond: Strengthened AU-EU Cooperation for Financing and Implementing Africa’s NDCs

- **The results from COP29 were seen as a step in the right direction**, while simultaneously falling short of what is needed. All panellists acknowledged that **significantly higher efforts are required to close the climate finance gap**.
- **A data-based approach** is needed to develop and implement NDCs in African countries, which then provide the opportunity to be used as an effective planning tool at a country level.
- To unfold the potential of NDCs as a planning tool, **governments and other stakeholders need to be well-equipped and informed**. The collaboration between the Malawi government and the NDC Support Center has shown promising results, enabling Malawi to develop and implement its own climate strategy.

About

The Africa-EU Energy Partnership (AEEP) is Africa and Europe’s gateway for joint action on a green energy future. With an unmatched overview of the political processes and initiatives across both continents, the AEEP maps, monitors and convenes the actions and stakeholders that drive the African and European energy transformation. Providing a forum for political dialogue, knowledge sharing and peer connections, it enables Africa and Europe to make progress on their path to a sustainable energy future.

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