

A CYCLONE OF CLIMATE RHETORIC

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Climate change is becoming more and more a global reality and the implication of the on-going climate inaction on the vulnerable masses including the long-term projected impacts of climate change on future generations. The current global commitments on Climate change and Loss and Damage associated with adverse impacts of climate change is far from convincing and it is unfortunate that there is ever-growing climate rhetoric characterizing most of the UNFCCC processes. We cannot overemphasize the need for sincerity, accountability and proactiveness in addressing the climate crisis which, in all dimensions, is an injustice to the developing world i.e., the Global South.

Goal 13 of the Agenda 2030 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emphasizes the need to take urgent action to combat climate change and its associated impacts. The goal seeks to mobilize financing for climate action and strengthen resilience and build adaptive capacity to climate related hazards. Similarly, Article 2 of the Paris Agreement (PA) under the UNFCCC is pushing for strengthened global response to the threat of climate change in the context of sustainable development through; keeping global temperature to well below 2°C, enhancing adaptation and mobilization of climate finance. Article 8 (1) also of the PA asserts the need to consider loss and damage as one of the responses to climate change. However, progress in that direction has been slow and elusive to say the least.

Various studies are suggesting that climate change vulnerability is on the increase despite the existence of the UNFCCC acting as an international body to, among other things, improve the international coordination of climate change actions, ensure mitigation of GHGs emissions and improve the mobilization of climate finance. The 2023 IPCC report observes that there is a more than 50% chance that global temperature rise will reach or surpass 1.5°C between 2021 and 2040 and that some parts of the world, especially in the Global South, are already facing severe climate change impacts that can not be adapted, hence, losses and damages. [The economies](#) of the V20 have lost an estimated \$525 billion in the last 20 years due to the impacts of climate change. The 2023 IPCC report also estimates that Africa has already incurred losses of up to USD 7 billion per year from 2010 to 2019 and that at the current pace of climate action, losses and damages for Africa could rise to USD 50 billion by 2040.

Most African countries, which are already poor and vulnerable to climate change, continue to overstretch their economies in response to climate-induced disasters despite contributing insignificantly to global emissions. For instance, In April 2023,

Malawi was hit by cyclone Freddy which killed over a thousand people and rendered over half a million people displaced. Untold losses and damages were incurred in the form of infrastructure, livelihoods, ecosystem and other non-economic losses and damages. According to the government of Malawi, the country lost an estimated USD 500 million to cyclone Freddy and required over USD 700 million for recovery and rebuilding. This has been a similar case in several other countries in Africa including Kenya, Ethiopia, Mozambique and Somalia which have suffered losses and damages at the hands of extreme climate events in 2023. The prevailing climate inaction and a noticeable “cyclone of climate rhetoric” by developed countries in relation to climate finance, is a matter of concern. A journey that started in 2015 under the theme “leaving no one behind” is proceeding under a different theme, “leave some behind”.

In the meantime, there are no clear-cut financing arrangements for Loss and Damage apart from the existing financing streams towards Mitigation and Adaptation. The majority of existing funding mechanisms that are being promoted in Africa and most of the developing countries are humanitarian in nature, with primary focus on meeting the immediate needs of those affected. Funding mechanisms that restore damaged assets and compensate those suffering from climate-induced loss and damage are not available or limited. Even for humanitarian purposes, funding is dwindling, including at the global level. This implies that developing countries which are overly vulnerable to climate extremes, are paying the cost for a problem they did not cause. With parties to the UNFCCC agreeing on setting up a Loss and Damage Fund, the G7 will be critical in the capitalization of this Fund to ensure that countries like Malawi, which incur unprecedented losses and damages at the hands of climate-induced hazards, are able to recover and build back better. A consideration by the G7 to pay for the Climate debt through cancellation of debts owed by the Global South countries would go a long way in assisting these countries to invest in recovery, adaptation and resilience building.

It is pleasing to note that the G7 has already taken deliberate steps in pursuing climate action as evidenced by the endorsement of goals of an open and cooperative international Climate Club. However, it is of concern to note that some of the G7 member countries are undertaking fossil fuel projects in complete contrast to climate aspirations and commitments. [The USD8 billion](#) Willow project that has been recently approved by the United States of America is on record to be one of the most polluting projects to ever be considered in the wake of calls for a just energy transition. The world is hoping that the G7 will lead by example by refraining from empty rhetoric and investing in climate action to help lift the global community from the climate crisis and demonstrate accountability for the damages caused to the climate system.

The meeting of the G7 member countries is a great opportunity to demonstrate climate leadership by the G7 members. It is hoped that this summit will not be one

more episode in the “cyclone of climate rhetoric”. It will be imperative that before the summit get to a close, the G7 members will have considered the following; paying for the climate debt through debt cancellation, financing towards capitalization of the L&D Fund, agreeing on sincere commitments towards just energy transition with well laid out accountability mechanisms, and consider divestment from fossil fuels.

Visualizing the impact of cyclone in Malawi

Here is what loss and damage looks like for communities impacted by climate events such as cyclones in Malawi



Photo Credit: Jack McBrams



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