Global Environmental Diplomacy and Climate Change Negotiations: Implications for Africa's Economies

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Abstract

After more than a decade, the pledge of US$100 billion by rich countries to poor countries for climate mitigation and adaptation measures since 2010 failed to materialize. The recent United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report 2023 emphasized the need to raise ambition to reduce human-induced carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere, muster the political will and provide the necessary finance. The United Nations Conference of Parties (COP) is continuously tilting towards an annual ritual with high expectations for climate finance from developed to developing countries. The lack of finance is hindering climate actions on mitigation and adaptation measures at national levels. The near absence of accountability by the rich or industrialized countries is eroding trust and solidarity. There is dearth of critical studies on the nature of the outcomes and how nations relate under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCC) in the climate change negotiations. Broadly, this paper explores the concept of environmental diplomacy to provide an in-depth study on the Earth Summit process and negotiations. It implicates the geopolitics of energy production and consumption and national socio-political realities as major reasons for the outcomes. By deploying a political ecology perspective of conflicts and contestations amongst social actors in the policy arena and as they compete for resources, it unravels the underlying factors driving participation, negotiations and outcomes. The paper contributes to knowledge on the role of science in Power Politics, rooted in the skewed imbalance of power relations between the rich and poor countries, and how these impinge on outcomes. Given the 'resource rich' global north and military superiority over the global South, very little can be achieved in terms of fairness and equity. The imprints of power imbalance in the COP process result in winners and losers, and have serious implications for the national economies, particularly in Nigeria and developing countries.

Key words: *climate change, participation, diplomacy, power, negotiations, winners, losers.*

Introduction

As part of the Paris Agreement during COP21 in 2015, developed countries committed to support climate change actions in mitigation and adaptation activities in developing countries. The pledge of financial support in initial US$100 billion a year until 2020 was agreed under the Green Climate Fund (GCF) financial mechanism. This is based on the fact that industrialized countries admitted responsibility for the carbon emissions released into the atmosphere, hence, will provide the finance and technology to address climate change actions in developing countries. Although the GCF was eventually funded by the rich countries it was less than 30% realized and a far cry of the expectations. According to the IPCC report, the industrialized countries have been responsible for 80% of carbon emissions released into the atmosphere with Africa contributing less than 4% (IPCC, 2018; 2023). At the time, the Paris Agreement was considered as ground breaking in recognition of Africa's vulnerability to climate change impacts and the polluter-pays principle for the remedy to climate change.

The recent IPCC report (2023) achieved greater clarity and confidence informed by science that human activities underline the carbon emissions released into the atmosphere and requiring accelerated human actions to cut back emissions. After more than a decade, the agreement for financial support for climate action remains a mirage. While these promises were yet to be realized, over time, there is shifting trends of emphasis in terms of priorities and actions to address climate change. This shifting trend is embedded in the concept of climate change diplomacy and negotiation in decision-making.

Since COP21 in Paris in 2015 to COP27 in Sharma El-Sheikh, Egypt in 2022 what has changed? Some critical appraisal of progress against commitments made could provide some insights. Some writers including the United Nations Climate Change COP statements agreed that significant agreements were reached including doubling of adaptation fund by 2025, and a provisional agreement for loss and damage fund, and about $105.6m in new funding pledged by some European states to low-income countries for climate actions (UNCC, 2022). Other commitments included the agreement for the First Global Stock take to evaluate progress on the implementation of the Paris Agreement (P.A) since 2010. COP27 Sharm El-Sheikh Implementation was also agreed to require at least $4-6 trillion per year for the global transformation to low carbon economy requiring national governments, business, and civil society groups to corporate.

Other writers and observers critical of the COP process said COP27 was a failure with very little achieved in terms of progress made (Tindall, et al., 2022). According to these writers, COP27 talks stalled because it failed to secure commitments to stop greenhouse gas (ghg) emissions from rising beyond thresholds that will lead to dangerous global warming, too pro-industry to the detriment of other perspectives and voices, and even a waste of time and resources. Again, as was the case in COP26, Glasgow, Scotland, the adaptation pledge has been pushed forward yet again to until 2025 with a catchy caveat of doubling of adaptation fund to be discussed in COP28. Almost a decade has passed since the pledge of US$100 billion despite a renewed hope and effort to hold the rich countries accountable during COP27. Thus, some participants argue that the Conference of Parties (COP) has become more or less an annual ritual attended with high hopes and expectations especially from the developing countries.

Since the rich countries are mainly responsible for the climate change they have defaulted in meeting their responsibilities. What is curious is that the poor countries who are the creditors are unable to assert the means to hold the debtor countries accountable. Why this situation and other incongruence persist? This paper deploys the concept of Climate change diplomacy to unpack the underlining factors related to the imbalance of power that is influencing agenda setting, stakeholders' participation, negotiations, and how these impact on the outcomes. The challenge posed by the skewed power relations is having devastating impact on Africa's economies.

Since climate change provides a development opportunity to exploring the nexus between climate change and development (Ojo, 2010), Africa governments should be inward looking to harnessing the comparative advantage of the continent and how best value can be added to its natural resources for national development and integration. Since the 1960s, the case of a *false start for Africa's development* has been made and requires a decolonization process by a fundamental shift toward a new model of relations that allows Africa on the path of self-discovery and set its priorities by enhancing regional integration of its resource development (Dumont, 1962; Ojo, 2013). Importantly, the COP conference needs to be a conference of equals conducting negotiations in a transparent and accountable ways to ensure fair and just decisions for climate change actions.

1. The methodology

The study deploys qualitative approach to research by using primary and secondary data complemented by the author's observations during the COP meetings especially since the Paris agreement during COP 16, through the Glasgow COP26 in 2021 and the recent CoP27 hosted in Egypt in 2022. It builds on earlier interrogation of power dynamics in the COP (Ojo, 2010; 2013). A growing corpus of literature on the COP is emerging but mostly on outcomes and possible climate actions without a corresponding focus on the critical aspects of the Conference of Parties (COP) processes, and how this affects informed participation and the role of power in negotiations (Robbins, 2004). Critical development studies and the concept of political ecology offer perspectives to uncover underlying factors underpinning negotiations (Ojo, 2012; Walker, 2006; Forsyth, 2008), and social actors narratives in contexts (Bryant, 1997). In particular, political ecology focuses on unequal power relations and the conflicts and contestations of social actors in the policy arena and probes the myth of consensus and a win-win situation in negotiations. The scholars argue that although there are trade-offs in negotiations with benefits, however, winners and losers emerge due to differing contexts, and unequal power relations.

The concept of unequal power is evident in the COP process as social actors compete on critical issues and ensuring that their reality and framing of climate issues gain priority. On the other hand, social actors may gravitate towards cooperation in deciding remedy and outcomes that result in trade-offs (Orsini, 2020). Therefore, contextual dimensions to negotiations and key elements of negotiation itself are critical in defining outcomes. While effort is being made to unbundle the unequal power relations and ensure broader representation and greater involvement of the poor nations in decision-making process, Africa's response to the climate change debacle within the UNFCCC process comes under scrutiny.

The shortcomings of the COP process is fueling skepticism and reinvigorating the impetus for inward looking. The question of failed expectations and delayed outcomes for the COP to attain the status of a binding mechanism rather than the current status of a mere convention that is more or less advisory is related to the power imbalance. Since the forum is not in favour of Africa what should be the response of the continent towards climate change actions and the overall plague of underdevelopment, poverty and insecurity in the continent? This paper contributes to knowledge by deploying multiple case studies, descriptive and analytical approaches to the multi-scalar issues and spaces to provide greater in-depth analysis and understanding of the critical issues defining the COP process and the implications for

national economies of developing countries especially for Nigeria and other African countries.

2. Defining Environmental Diplomacy

One of the earliest scholarly work on environmental diplomacy provided sketches in understanding the politics of global environmental policy (Hristova & Chankova, 2010; Otu, 2010; Ojo, 2013). Ojo (2013) argues that the conflicting interest between the global North and the global South is at the core of the negotiations. The concept of environmental diplomacy has been extended to governance and climate change. According to some authors, the term Environmental Diplomacy is nascent and contested in terms of definitions and scope, however, it is a practice related to 'negotiations between nation-states on environmental governance' (Ali & Vladich, 2016; Orsini, 2020). Similarly, Gupta (2015), defines Environmental Diplomacy as addressing issues and actions related to environmental security and involves a wide range of actors. Orsini broadly defines environmental diplomacy as "diplomacy that deals solely on environmental issues" (2020). Broadly, the authors extended the concept to other related themes such as climate change, food security and GMOs, trade in endangered species (CITES), intellectual property rights, and population.

To some extent, the above definitions capture the essence of environmental diplomacy. However, they are defective in providing clarity on the apolitical nature of environmental diplomacy. In contrast, and for practical purposes, this paper defines climate change diplomacy as the negotiations that occur between states and non-states actors with the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees development trajectory and towards a low carbon economy by 2050. We define environmental diplomacy perspective as the overarching relations of power by multi-stakeholders in multi-scalar spaces that govern participation, agenda setting, negotiations, decision-making in climate change policy and outcomes. By privileging dimensions of power and how it operates in contexts of the COP process uncovers significant imprints on process, content and outcomes.

3.1. Elements of Environmental Diplomacy

Environmental diplomacy has grown to develop certain features. According to the literature some emerging features of environmental diplomacy based on three broad areas involving, participation of social actors, negotiations and decision making

from the prism of power relations. Some of these elements are modified, broadened and applied to selective expository case studies to shed light on the subject.

A harvest of some environmental diplomacy in practice has been presented. According to the literature, environmental diplomacy is recent, only emerging as a distinct disciple from the 1970s. Several authors present historical overview of the United Nations (UN) conventions and treaties in various ways. Some discerning features began to emerge from the UN Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment in 1972 which draws the interlinkages between environment and development (Ali & Vladich, 2016; Orsini, 2020). The global effort resulted in a plan of action tagged Stockholm Agenda 21. Ever since, there have been hundreds of conventions emanating from the process which included the following, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio, Brazil in 1992; and 20 years later, Rio+20 Conference in 2012 on Sustainable Development which also emphasized Type II partnerships beyond states to include non-state actors including companies, intergovernmental organisations, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). Others are the Johannesburg conference which provided in-roads toward the green economy. Till date, there are nearly 750 environmental conventions such as the Convention for Biological Diversity (CBD), Convention on Desertification, Kyoto Protocol of 1997; Minimata Convention signed in 2013; and the Paris Agreement of 2015 (Orsini, 2020). This paper takes a narrow perspective on the environmental governance related to climate change.

4. Multi-Stakeholder Participation, Mapping Actors and their Spaces

Given its socio-political backdrop, a mapping of the social actors shows the COP uses multistakeholder approaches involving states and non-states actors. Importantly, state actors are the Conference of Parties (COP) held under the auspices of member states especially those who have ratified the UNFCCC treaty which came into effect in 1997 and the implementation of the Paris Agreement which came into effect in 2016. In the last decade, attendance of the COP is increasing with participants sharing ideas, solutions, building networks and partnerships. In the COP26, Glasgow, over 40,000 registered participants attended including 120 world leaders, 22,274 Party delegates, 14,124 Observers, and 3,886 media representatives

(UN, 2021), while in COp27 held in Egypt was over 45,000 participants with similar disaggregated data (UNCC, 2022).

The UNFCCC meetings are complex, cuts across and overlapping and are held under the COP serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA). The COP made up of member states to the Convention is the supreme decision making body supported by dozens of subsidiary groups and sub-committees including, the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI); Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA); Standing Committee on Finance (SCF) with financial mechanisms such as the Global Environment Facility, and the Green Climate Fund. The CMA is supported by a technical team of National Group of Negotiators (NGN) trained in negotiation skills and providing contextual evidences, priority needs and interests to their ministerial teams. In the African context, the Africa Group of Negotiators (AGN) drawn from all member states in Africa are providing inputs to the Chair of the Africa group of negotiators as the Chief Negotiator. The AGF comprised of all lead negotiators from the national levels negotiating on behalf of Africa.

The non-state actors comprised of all corporate bodies; business, civil society groups, indigenous people, environmentalists, lawyers, academia, women groups, farmers associations, trade unions, journalists and several other professional bodies all acting as Observes to the COP proceedings. Although they are not part of the decision making, nonetheless, they make their contributions by seeking to influence the agenda by influencing the negotiators who must table their demands for it to gain relevance. In most cases, their views and strategy of engagement amount to goose chasing, mostly peripheral and largely inconsequential compared to the resources and time expended. Nonetheless, they are essential voices to keep policy makers in check.

4.1. Multi-scalar Spaces and Participation in the Green and Blue Zones

Participation in the COP process is organized in multi-scalar spaces involving multi-stakeholders. As a result, there are limiting factors arising from the multi-level spaces. Participation is organized mainly from two broad areas called the Blue Zone or formal spaces, and the Green Zone or informal spaces.

The Green Zone is mostly dominated by CSOs, business representatives in hundreds of sideline events organized along the thematic areas. However, participation from Parties are encouraged. The Green zone tries to influence the draft statements from the COP by affirming, condemning, or providing alternative proposals to convince policy makers. Decisions do not come from the Green zone but from the blue zone. To some new comers especially from CSOs attending the COP for the first time, it was rather surprising to them that they could not access any

negotiation room of the Parties, but where restricted to follow proceedings from Overflow Rooms or even large screen Monitors at large halls set for the purpose.

The Blue Zone is where actual negotiations are carried out in plenary often restricted to Blue Badges for member states represented by Heads of governments, diplomats, and negotiators, the Green zone is free for all where both states and non-states actors interact. While the Blue badges can access almost any meeting halls the Green badges are restricted to only green spaces or open access plenary at the Blue zone.

The activities in the Blue Zone are organized on thematic areas and sub-themes. At the COP, debate and contributions occur at multi-scalar levels and often running in parallel and at national, regional and international levels. There is also the sub-regional blocs such as ECOWAS, SADAC, East and North Africa regions, and some political blocs such as G77 made up of China and developing countries, G7 and the super powers, European Bloc, Latin America bloc, Asian bloc, and economic blocs such as the Paris Club, International Monetary Fund, World Bank, Africa Development Bank, the BRICKs, MINT, and dozens of others trying to present ideas to influence policy.

In all, there are hundreds of meeting spaces, halls, hotels, Pavilions and exhibition centres covering about 2KM square. Although participation is open to all but access to speak is highly restricted and limited to Parties. Some of the discussions taking place in the Green zone filters into the discussion through the Chair of negotiators on thematic areas at the Blue Zone, or intelligence gathering and information from national representation or CSOs representatives embedded in their official national team as COP members. Since the Blue zone is where formal discussions and negotiations occur the critical issues are the quality of proposals and the nexus of being able to convince negotiators to include certain views into their submission for adoption. In one of the few review meetings organized by CSOs, participants flagged the failure of the COP in Egypt by the wide gap between African negotiators and CSOs demand that were hardly harmonized to provide quality inputs to the negotiations. Also, CSOs are far more critical and radical than the pragmatic approach of member states often working within the mainstream development model.

Case study: Managing multi-scalar spaces and challenges of participation

More than any other continent, African delegates to the COP often face challenges including visa restrictions and delays, exorbitant costs of transportation

and accommodation in hotels. In Glasgow some African countries from southern Africa were denied participation due to the Covid19 and its new variant Omicron and the pandemic with tons of restrictions saw the introduction of special badges restricting CSOs and even member states to the negotiations. These underlying factors have implications to quality participation.

To be effective in the COP process, attending meetings and participating in negotiations require deep pockets to support both quantity and quality representation who provides the expertise in the various thematic areas (See also Ojo, 2013). While rich countries delegates ranges from 30 to 400 well-resourced delegates per country, some poor countries only have between 2-10 delegates an can only cover very little. The implication of this is that rich countries are able to spread out to attend to diverse topics held in dozens of Sessions; bilateral and multilateral meetings, informal intelligence gathering, plenary, and side events occurring simultaneously almost round the clock. Some of these events commence in the morning and runs well into midnight. Also, sometimes the allotted time of 2 weeks intense negotiations may be extended by a day or two when agreements are not reached as was in the case with some previous cop including Egypt that was extended by 2 days.

The implication of this is that delegates from many poor countries especially Africa do not have the luxury of such flexibility in extending hotels and flight costs. While final touches to the decisions are being tinkered with at the last minute, many have no option but to return home. By this time thousands of the CSOs representatives observing the process are in their out bound flights or have also returned home. Whatever is agreed is on their behalf and it is binding.

4.2. Challenges to Participation, Agenda Setting and Negotiations in COP27

Since COP11 held in Durban, South Africa happened on African soil in 2011, COP27 in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt was welcomed with enthusiasm and seen as an opportunity to turn the COP away from talk shows. It was officially tagged the "COP of Implementation for climate actions" and daubed as the "African COP" or "Peoples COP" where their views and realities would be recognized as the basis of negotiations and actions. Once Egypt was announced as the host country to COP27, there was a glint of hope and optimism that the African COP in Africa soil would reflect its priority needs. To differentiate this from other earth summit, the COP of implementation will ensure that pending pledges for climate action would be fulfilled and concrete actions taken to advance the Paris Agreement implementation.

Usually, the presidency is zoned to the host country. Guided by high level technocrats at the UNFCCC secretariat, the President of the COP presides over Plenary sessions to set the agenda, rules and procedures, negotiation priorities and outcomes.

4.3. Case Study: Agenda Setting and Africa's Special Needs and Circumstance

A critical issue that attracted attention of the COP was that both member states and civil society groups in Africa and their allies agreed to propose an agenda point that Africa should be accorded special needs and circumstances status. The proposal was tabled but was promptly dismissed as unnecessary and a distraction because climate change is a global issue not peculiar to Africa. Continental and regional power blocs mainly from Asia and Latin America successfully blocked the agenda and argue that climate change and its impacts affect all regions and not peculiar to Africa. A formal inclusion of this to the agenda would mean that special focus is placed on Africa's special needs and circumstances to likely specify Africa realities of poverty, underdevelopment and tackling climate change as the fulcrum of negotiations. The negotiators from opposing countries and regions were representing their national and regional interests by blocking the COP process from focusing attention and resources mostly on Africa if it was to assume special needs and circumstances status that will by implication have special rights and privileges to draw on finance and technology for climate actions. Africa finds itself alone and the balance of power to influence this agenda item tilted towards the majority opposing it out of selfish interests and being protective of their national interests.

As a result, some African negotiators and CSOs went from lamenting to agonizingly weeping for the continent and stating that the COP was not an African COP and that African voices were effectively silenced even more than the case in previous COPs. It was found out that Africa need not make any case for the continent to be a special needs and circumstance status because this was already referenced and agreed as part of the Paris Agreement. However, operationalizing this provision or reinforcing it by introducing it to the agenda hit a brick wall of opposing groups and this was a big blow to building trust, consensus and solidarity.

4.4. Negotiations and Decision-making in the COP Process

There are protocols for engagement. Discussions and negotiations take the form of debates, propositions and counter-propositions over contestations of definitions of terms which by implication might privilege a particular proposed

outcome and remedy (). The conference of parties meeting is organized in thematic sequence and the proposals and rationale presented to COP or heads of governments and their representatives in closed or open sessions as the presidency of the Summit deemed fit. A lot of the grounds in the negotiation is covered during the specific thematic technical working groups with contact persons and countries designated as lead. Proposals on definition of key terms, declarative statements, and call for actions are presented. Usually, all aspects to the debate is recognized although there is a working understanding that "nothing is agreed until everything is agreed". The decision-making is based on the rule of consensus to encourage collective actions. The proportion that silence means consent applies. Voting is rare and unless there are serious issues, consensus vote is made.

Negotiations involved tradeoff and making compromise. The Glasgow COP26 approved texts observed that the outcome was a product of "intense negotiations", and "a compromise reflecting the interests, conditions, contradictions, and the state of political will" reflective of our world (UN, 2021). Although substantive issues are covered, however, national interests and economic considerations are strong elements driving negotiations. Thus, the negotiations process is risky, complex, involving cooperation, compromise and even acquiescing to propositions and trade-offs that could benefit the process or particular country. Some trade-off involves bilateral or multilateral partnership in side events to providing technical aid or development incentives either to close ranks or to break ranks with regional power blocs with the aim to scuttle negotiations (Hristova & Chankova, 2010).

The engagement practice is to question an idea and not the country proposing it, and this shields the country from "naming and shaming" in the plenary which however, can be taken up in the Green Zone dominated by CSOs by way of communiqué, banner headlines and protests. In many of the plenary this author have attended, it was surprising that no matter what a country may propose that is vexing and counter-productive there are always some participants and negotiators clapping and affirming such positions. This is because in most cases, issues are seen first from a national interest, and regional rather than global. In many instances, eco-diplomats deploy delay and frustrating tactics by maintaining a high liner position in order to show their aversion to certain proposal. The US did not only watered down the PA it also refused to ratify it by pulling out of it in 2016. While cooperation is key, yet most negotiators maintain a hardliner stand as part of their eco-diplomacy strategy, want to take the first step to cooperate hence the need for environmental diplomacy.

The key elements of consensus and cooperation are highly relevant to ensure collective actions and build trust. However, most of the key decisions have not been in the interests of the poor or developing countries, Nigeria and Africa in many respects. As already mentioned, challenges to participation, representation, and transparency of decisions remains major hurdles for the African negotiators. Environmental diplomacy is therefore, dependent on the nature of ecological politicization and power dynamics by the social actors, accommodating diverse national and corporate interests. Hence, there are bound to be winners and losers to the effect that the poor countries may have their say while the rich countries may have their way.

There has been a lack of coordination among the African member states at national levels and continental levels. Some negotiators and their CSOs representatives are meeting for the first time at the COP venue without a formal engagement back home. In most cases, the opinion of the CSOs are highly radical, futuristic and often at variance to that of the national negotiators interested in the low hanging fruits and quick gains to their national development. Where official national representation is slim it is an uphill task attempting to attend the various meetings at the blue and green zones. Some national delegates were just between 3-5 due to capacity and financial constraints hence they are not able to be effective in the process. In all, the nexus of interaction between the negotiators and CSOs is a central key to at least presenting such views to the plenary.

While it is difficult harnessing national level dialogue-building consensus at regional levels, it is even more challenging especially in Africa with poor resources and dysfunctional travel infrastructure. Reaching out to other regions and countries prior and during the COP is another space for environmental diplomats shuttling from country to country. Hence the game tilts in favour of rich countries with resources and capacity to conduct environmental diplomacy. For Africa, although environmental diplomacy is a necessity, it seems somewhat a luxury because of the huge costs and investment required.

For CSOs, they keep a keen ear to the ground on negotiations and proposals emanating from the plenary and the different side events. Their work is cut out, how to build synergy in the corridors of power around their central messaging on a given subject in support or against proposals coming from the plenary. CSOs strategy is to lobby policy makers at the national, regional, and continental levels by statements,

media briefing and communiqués expressing national or collective demands on a particular subject.

In many African countries, there are wide gaps of information and cooperation between their national governments and their CSOs representatives. However, in some countries such as South Africa, Nigeria and Kenya, there is a growing cooperation between CSOs and their national negotiators. For close to a decade, a Pan-African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA) or movement, more than any other group has been successful in harnessing the views of CSOs to building consensus with national governments and the African groups of negotiators. Like other CSOs, communiqué and demands from such broader groupings often received the attention of thematic Chairs or regional Chairs but there are no guarantees of any ideas being adopted which gives credence to their having their say while the Parties have their way.

To complicate issues, it is not surprising to see some CSOs in support of some proposals from the COP plenary while others are vehemently opposed to it. Several cases in point including the Carbon Trading and carbon offsetting, carbon storage engineering, and the REDD or REDD Plus. Hundreds of CSOs termed these as false solutions and favouring the global north in technological solutions. In particular, the REDD Plus which sought to set aside community pristine forests for carbon stocks in the name of addressing deforestation was so controversial and divisive due to its provisions encouraging planting of trees in the South to create room for the North to continue to pollute rather than cut back on emissions.

4.5. Environmental Diplomacy, Colonial Legacy and Power Imbalance in the COP Negotiations

Some historical and contextual dimensions prevalent in Africa relates to the legacy of colonialism and neocolonialism which continue to play out in defining Africa's priorities and development pathway (Dumont, 1962; Ojo, 2010). The concept of the countries of the Periphery out only to service the Core countries by providing raw materials for finished products by rich countries is another way of explaining power relations and technological gap between the rich and poor countries. Categorically, writers argue that the COP process and climate change negotiations between the rich and industralised countries and the poor countries is between two unequal parties (Kabemba, 2022). The rich countries with technological advancement, military superiority and affluence conducts negotiations from an advantage position of

choice making among several alternatives in contrast to the poor countries, having limited choices, low technology, widespread poverty, debt burden and migration.

Indeed, energy poverty is widespread in Africa. According to statistics from the International Energy Agency, from the current 1.4 billion population in Africa over 600 million people lack access to electricity and 1 billion people have no access to clean cooking energy (IEA, 2020). Energy poverty is a major structural cause of widespread poverty in Africa. Thus, tackling climate change vulnerabilities should combine with an economic strategy to redress access to clean energy in a just and equitable manner. However, although Africa has energy from the sun and a growing market, its lack of technology, the geopolitics of energy supply and global capital flow shape the development pathway of natural resource commoditization merely serving to expanding the rich countries products and market share.

Africa seems not to help matters going cap in hand to the north for financial support without a deeper reflection on the fate and future of the continent. According to some writers, since independence the West or rich countries promises to help Africa with its development have been an illusion. The West's approach in their cooperation with Africa has never been to cure the disease but rather to "keep the continent as a permanent patient that needs continuous support" (Kabemba, 2022:4; Dumont, 1962). The same pattern applies to climate change negotiations. Thus, a decoupling involving decolonization in all ramifications to rid itself from the label of "Africa as client of Europe" and evolved development for itself and on its own terms will be required to reorganize the productive sector (Dumont, 1966).

Here, power imbalance rooted in colonial legacy and imperialism remains to the advantage of the rich countries hence climate change negotiations is a reflection of the "old global aid architecture", where the most powerful lead the negotiations and decide when and how certain actions should take place (Kabemba, 2022:4). This is why there is lack of fairness and justice in the quest to provide limited finance for clean energy for the bulk of Africa that is clearly a priority far beyond other climes. Hence, in the COP process, the real priority needs of Africa and the resources to accomplish them do not gain priority attention.

5. An Emerging Campaign: Kick Polluters Out of the COP Process

In the COP negotiations the role of business mainly in coal, oil and gas is huge because although they are the major carbon emitters, they also wield high level political influence and economic power. They make humongous profits while passing environmental costs to people and the environment (CEO, 2022). Over the past

decade, companies continue to make huge profits which allows them to finance the climate talks. A study led by CEO shows that COP25 held in 2020, Spain was bankrolled by big polluters and this gives them undue influence over climate policy (CEO, 2020). In 2022, 5 companies namely, BP, Chevron, ExxonMobil, Shell, and Total Energies raked in almost $200 billion outrageous profit in spite of the world's energy crisis (Grantham-Philips, 2023). They have been labeled as culprits and ought not to seat at negotiations as arbiters for climate change since they are primarily big polluters.

Business is fighting back to renounce the toga of culprits and reinventing themselves as the solutions in the provision of finance and technology for innovative climate actions. From the literature there is growing armies of over 3000 trained corporate lobbyists from the oil and gas, coal, chemicals, transportation and agribusiness representing corporate interests in the climate talks. According to a study by global witness in 2021, over 503 corporate lobbyists affiliated to the world biggest polluting oil and gas giants such as Shell, and Gazprom and BP were granted access to COP26. The delegation was two dozen larger than any country delegation to the COP26. The study also shows that 27 official country delegations registered fossil fuels lobbyists including Canada, Russia, and Brazil with dozens of others under cover from a list of over 100 fossil fuel companies represented at the COP26. The fossil lobbyists at the COP26 was larger than the combined total of the eight delegations from the countries affected by climate change in the last decade naming, Puerto Rico, Myanmar, Haiti, Philippines, Mozambique, Bahamas, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. This includes thousands of corporate lobbyists covering transportation, chemicals and agribusiness seeking to influence the COP process as observers by engaging principally to minimize responsibility, limiting damages and protecting profits. Hence they engage in several side events, make their way to restricted Blue zone areas in the negotiations.

Corporate lobbyists are not only embedded in national negotiation teams sitting side by side with eco-diplomats, sometimes, they finance direct sponsorship of national governments or individuals as official negotiators to the COP as climate change assisted aid, some aspects of the COP process and provide generous fees for exhibitions and meeting halls. Although these non-state actors are observers, they are influential to maintain their stakes and stay in the business in the continued burning of fossil fuels. They come with all sorts of incentives including funding CSOs green washing, false solutions and sponsorship as diversionary tactics. In return, they gain

access to high-level negotiations at the COP, and are often embedded as party officials in some national governments and sitting side by side environmental diplomats and policy makers, to what some has described as COP as a "business fair" (Tindall, et. Al., 2022). This author has personally accosted a Shell staff during COP in Doha, donning a Nigerian Badge designated "Party" ostensibly negotiating on behalf of the Nigerian state at a time CSOs were stridently pushing for decarbonization, leave the oil in the soil and coal phase out (Ojo, 2010).

In the last decade, this has been the pattern of corporate lobbyists including the COP21 in Paris, COP26 in Glasgow and COP27 in Sharm El-Sheikh in Egypt in 2022. Interestingly, to a section of the COP, corporations remain relevant in the negotiations and in placing advertisements, providing generous donations and prices for exhibitions and other forms of disguised sponsorship.

The growing influence of business in the earth summit has been of concern to CSOs seeking to limit their influence and power. While the COP and the UNFCCC structures are calling for broad based consultations including businesses participation, CSOs are calling for their outright ban. A CSOs led global movement to 'kick polluters out of the COP process has waxed stronger to challenge the corporate capture of resources, the state and the UN structures (CEO, 2022). The campaigners draw a parallel to the successful ban on tobacco business and corporate bodies from the negotiations on tobacco control under article 4.2 on Tobacco framework which excludes tobacco companies in negotiations. So far, the campaign is gathering momentum to limiting the power and influence of corporations that were fast emerging as 'equals' to eco-diplomats in the negotiation table. That said, it is proving to be an uphill task due to their enormous power and influence they wield.

Already, COP28 to be hosted by UAE is currently enmeshed in controversy over the host country's nomination of its national oil giant Chief Executive Officer to head the COP presidency. While a wide spread condemnation of this went virile and as "amounting to asking arms dealers to lead peace talks", some others including the USA climate envoy has praised the nomination as a "terrific choice" (Guardian, 2023). A coordinated CSOs response condemned the nomination considered as "insensitive", "a slap in the face" that legitimizes fossil fuel industries as central in driving negotiations (XXX). Try hard as they can, it is doubtful if the agency of CSOs can change this nomination.

5.1. Environmental Diplomacy and Climate Change Mitigation: Coal Phase Out or Phase Down?

The COP process has been prolific in reeling out agreement and conventions to address climate change. There has been dozens of roadmaps in the last two decades distilled into the Paris Agreement and the Rule Book of implementation. Informed by science, there is consensus that climate change is due to anthropogenic actions responsible for amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere (IPCC, 2023; IPCC,). To address climate change, four broad thematic pillars were agreed; mitigation, adaptation, loss and damage, and the forth pillar is a cross cutting issue of finance and technology.

Briefly, mitigation measure is aim at cutting emissions at source while adaptation refers to the adaptive capacity, building resilience and other preventive measures to minimize the impacts of climate change (IPCC 2018). There are some indicators to suggest some gains during the COP 27 by policy actions designed to expanding on the Glasgow Climate Pact achieved during COP26. At least, COP27 reiterated the Glasgow commitment to mitigation actions and limit rising carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere to 1.5 degrees, coal phase down, and raising ambitions. There is the need for ambitious action on emission reduction by 2025 against the earth's temperature currently at 1.1 degrees. The PA also specified that each country make commitment towards reducing emissions through their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). However, a recent report assessing emission gap shows that GhG emissions must decline by 55% to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius by 2030 (UNEP, 2021). The report shows that if all the national government's NDCs were to be implemented currently less than 8%, it would fall short of target and keep the world on a track of hitting 2.5 temperature rise rather than the 1.5 degrees. The gap between the NDCs commitments and the actual targets is no more than a convenience of mutual deception to agree to a faulty solution that is nowhere in sight to meeting the set targets.

To some participants, it is baffling to agree that all countries must cut emissions especially given that Africa emits less than 4% of the GhG. Nigeria's, NDCs are ambitious to reduce carbon dioxide by 20% unconditionally and 45% conditionally. Still, countries like Namibia, Lesotho, and Malawi emits insignificant amounts of carbon, yet, they are made to show ambitions. The implication is that Africa is showing more ambitions in the NDCs, doing more than its fair shares, and

paying for the carbon debt of the rich who has the responsibility to address the problem they have caused.

Furthermore, the Russian-Ukraine war highlights the geopolitics of energy supply and is compounding the problem of mitigation as energy demands in Europe forced a reversal of transition from coal, oil and gas, nuclear energy. On paper, the commitment to coal power phased-down and phase out of fossil fuel and subsidies driving them is lofty (UN, 2021), but in reality, countries such as UK, USA, Germany, Poland, China, Russia have since reintroduced coal to supplement their energy mix rather than a phase out.

Importantly, Article 14 of the Paris Agreement provides to periodically conduct Global Stocktake and the First Global Stocktake is due to take place in COP28 in 2023 and subsequently in every five years to track progress on mitigation to evaluate the implementation of the PA and in particular, emission reductions and finance for climate actions (UNCC, 2022). Thus, COP28 has been designated escutcheons of war 'COP of accountability' on a country-by-country levels. Hence, carbon trade, carbon offsetting and net-zero issues that some see as false solutions allowing continuously will likely take the centre stage. Given the hot airs to end dirty energy, there are huge incentives for companies and national governments to continue to invest in dirty energy. There is an increasing profiteering from climate change "no action" by the continuous exploitation of fossil fuels.

5.2. Loss and Damage

As mentioned, one of the strong elements supported by Africa which gained priority attention during COP27 is the inclusion of proposal for Loss and Damage Financial Mechanism to address climate change catastrophic events leading to loss and damage. COP27 adopted the Loss and damage funding facility after almost two decades of painstaking work proposed by the Islands states and also set up a Loss and Damage Transitional Committee to make recommendations on how to operationalise it

to be considered at COP28. To realize this, some western nations gave up their resistance to loss and damage fund as a compromise (Tindall, et. al., 2022). It is also operationalization of the Santiago Network as a technical assistance committee to developing countries (UNCC, 2023). Those celebrating the new financial mechanism said it was groundbreaking and called for a well-resourced, more flexible and easily accessible financial mechanism for loss and damage.

Some other participants opined that there is nothing to cheer about another financial mechanism in the offing because there will even be stricter rules and framework of operations. For example, one hurdle is in defining the impacts, rules of inclusion and exclusion in Loss and damage that could be highly problematic and complex especially if it precludes loss and damage related to mitigation and adaptation measures for climate action. They expressed skepticism and doubts about a new financial mechanism when a plethora of existing ones are underfunded, underperforming, and largely inaccessible to developing countries. The bureaucratic bottlenecks weaved around the existing financial facilities are cumbersome.

Rather than sit back to celebrate an empty financial basket, Africa should take the lead in engaging its scientists and researchers for empirical data and the generation of knowledge to demonstrate climate change impacts and analyzing and quantifying the real and potential loss and damage and the means for remedy. This is crucial to fill this gap because most research is conducted or led by others outside the continent of Africa and published outside Africa mostly in US and Europe. The politics of publishing poses great obstacles to African scholars promoting African perspectives. Often, publications that addresses the COP process as successful will likely get published than those highly critical of the COP process implying Western dominance.

Once the framework for loss and damage are defined, rather than rely solely on political will and appeals to the rich countries for payment, there is the need to pursue a legally binding mechanism under the loss and damage mechanism to ensure responsibility, ensuring that the agreements are respected. Legislative actions at national contexts and judicial actions to compel rich countries to assume liability for climate change actions should not be foreclosed. Thus, a legally binding treaty rather than advisory conventions should be validated to ensure accountability and compliance, and build trust and solidarity.

5.3. Just Transition: Promoting Energy Democracy and Access

A Just Energy Transition paradigm offers great opportunity to redirect development in Africa. The current global energy architecture that relies on gigantic grid system will take several decades to cover both urban and rural areas. Already, most of the energy infrastructure relies on fossil fuels and are in deplorable state hence performing below optimal levels. Very few African countries can boast of an uninterrupted power supply from this system mainly from large scale hydro-dams.

An urgent decoupling from the present energy system and the dominant carbonized economy to a just energy transition that is decentralized and people-centered is required. The concept of free, prior, informed consent (FPIC) has been applied to energy transition framework to promote local participation and involvement in decision-making (Kabemba, 2022). As part of this decoupling, domestic resource mobilization and regional integration has been proposed. Building a bottom-up approach to in a decentralized energy model will allow individuals and community involvement to building local resilience and technological innovations for climate action.

An energy transition model that is socially controlled through community energy cooperatives is required to deliver clean energy at household and community levels in standalone mini-grids and off-grid systems. This energy transition architecture should be built on our teeming and upcoming youths as resourceful entrepreneurs with savvy ICT competence that requires harnessing for national development. Again, a reordering of the school curriculum to focus on Africa's technological gap through mass education to deliver on technological innovation should be paramount.

5.4. Africa's Resources for Africa

Across Africa, there are differing strands of the debate on how it should move forward to addressing climate actions, poverty and underdevelopment. The debate ranges from placing actual premium on the continent natural resources, the costs and impacts of decarbonisation, and what alternatives available in the near and immediate future. The test around Africa's decarbonisation is currently posing serious challenges toward building consensus on a clear pathway for a low carbon economy.

On the one hand, some scholars argue that Africa's energy transition should be pursued vigorously through domestic resource mobilization and regional integration in the extraction and use of the huge mineral deposits and extraction in the continent. They question what Africa is transiting to when most of the countries emit negligible GHG and yet have no uninterrupted electricity supply. Addressing the energy poverty through available resources in the short term means that majority of the Africans still without electricity should be adequately supplied. Further, they draw a parallel to the recent Europe political somersault to jettisoning the transition from fossil fuels heightened by the Russian-Ukrainian war as a major exigency to intensify coal, oil,

and gas consumption rather than phase down imminently and phase out in the near future. Although this western standpoint may be defective because it is retrogressive and stands against the collective vision, yet, they claim to be acting on existentialism and reducing energy costs for the welfare of the people.

Given this scenario, there is serious concern for Africa not to undo itself on taking action for climate change. This is because African states are at various levels of development and some countries such as Nigeria, Angola, Mozambique, South Africa, Kenya and Zambia are already experiencing heavy reliance on dirty energy such as coal, oil and gas. Other countries with less iconic but capital assets in the extractive sector shows dependence fossil fuels accounting for over 70% of their foreign exchange earnings. Besides, since Africa's contribution to the greenhouse gas emissions is less than 4%, its mitigation efforts pales into insignificance although cumulative impacts of potential oil and gas expansion could pose serious problems to climate change.

Indeed, rich countries have shortchanged the rest of the world by using these dirty energy resources or "carbon space" to build their industrial and infrastructure hence the higher standard of living. They surmised that there is nothing stopping Africa not to utilize its current natural resources while seeking the technology for renewable energy. Notably, Africa's statement was unequivocal that it will "continue to deploy all forms of its abundant energy resources" including renewable and non-renewable energy to address energy demand. "Natural gas, green and low carbon hydrogen nuclear energy will therefore be expected to play a crucial role in expanding the modern energy access while enhancing the uptake of renewable in the long term for low carbon and climate-resilient trajectory" (African Union, 2022). Similarly, a recent study by Bloomberg argues that it is more cost effective to produce electric cars in the DRC or Africa than in Europe where these products are manufactured. The real value on these products should be enforced and to benefit the miners in better working conditions.

On the other hand, calls to halt fossil fuel extractions for the benefit of climate change could be the right thing to do but what alternatives are immediately available to them? Some writers are unequivocal that it is time to transit from oil and gas to avoid climate change catastrophic impact. Thus, Nigeria and indeed African countries are willing to sacrifice its capital assets (oil, gas, coal) provided that the industrialized countries are willing to provide the monetary value of such resources. Thus, to help speedy and drastic climate action, Africa is willing to sacrifice its capital assets in

coal, oil, gas, and other iconic dirty energy sources provided there is a corresponding financial package on the table to account for the potential losses. This should pose no difficulty since the value of the world's natural resources are fairly computed and valued. Specifically, a recent study on Africa's proven fossil fuels reserve conservatively estimates $15.2 trillion with a yearly contribution to Africa's GDP valued at $152.2 billion (PWC, 2021). For Nigeria, for example, about 32 billion barrels in proven oil reserve and about 1.8mbpd at about US$100 per barrel over a time frame could translate into direct compensation to account for the potential capital stranded assets to generate the much needed funds for national development.

In this way, the so-called stranded assets when accounted for will ensure that potential environmental human rights violations, dispossessions, and cumulative GHG emissions are avoided to the benefit of people and the environment. Since Africa is responsible for less than 4% of the GHG emissions and the G20 for 80% emissions released into the atmosphere the polluter pays principle and "common but differentiated responsibility" falls heavy on industrialized countries to take action on climate change. But the rich countries for several decades continued to display unwillingness to finance Africa renewable energy transition or to remove the patent for the renewable energy technologies so that local manufacturer can take advantage of the enterprise to provide greater clean energy access to the people. They are less likely to be underwriters for Africa's potential stranded capital assets.

Both sides of the debate have valid points best understood in a continuum of short and long term basis. In the short term, the challenge for Africa in the just energy transition is how to ensure that violence, pillaging and environmental degradation and poverty that is the aftermath of the oil and gas exploitation should not be replicated in the sites of exploitation of the new minerals driving renewable energy. Already, there is intensified conflicts and wars fueled by the intensification of extraction of these minerals mainly for external markets resulting in "blood batteries" with high human rights violations (Trivedi, 2023). Extractivism in the new mineral frontiers ignites old wounds and damages from coal, oil and gas extraction transfused in sophisticated scale to mining renewable energy minerals to extend a history of "blood oil", "blood diamonds", and now "blood batteries". The cobalt, lithium and bauxite which are key minerals for electric motor, ion batteries, and smart phones are mainly located in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and few other countries in central Africa. Many do not have access to electricity, smart phones or electric cars. They are poorly paid, and resources exploited at poverty level. Natural resource governance should be

geared towards domestic resource mobilization to boost local economies rather than concentration for external markets.

On the long-term basis, coal, oil and gas will eventually outlive their usefulness and be left in the ground. Irrespective of the debate, a consensus could be reached to the effect that natural resource governance should be geared towards domestic resource mobilization to boost local economies rather than concentration for external markets.

Given these complexities and diverse scenarios, negotiations take the form of safeguarding national socio-economic interests and existentialism. Both the rich and the poor countries agreed on a watered down consensus document from COP27 negotiations because environmental diplomacy is at play. In the negotiations, the rich countries with resources acquiesce tacitly to exploitation of oil, gas and coal for the benefits of Africa whereas, in reality, the rich countries are the forces at play pushing for investments and a continuous supply of these resources to the international markets. It is easy for the national interest of countries such as Kenya, Mozambique, Uganda, Tanzania and others currently developing their coal, oil and gas sectors to support this choice even though the bulk of the investments is traceable to western governments and their allied companies.

Conversely, to halt dirty energy in Africa will lead to price hikes in the international markets, however, it would mean more business in increased Africa's public finance for Europe in terms of renewable energy technologies. At the same time, a continuous dependence on fossils would lock in Africa to poverty and creates a lee way for Europe to continue to invest in dirty energy technology irrespective of climate change impacts. Thus, while both the rich and poor countries may claim to have their way, either way, it is the industralised countries that emerge in a winner takes it all. Head or tail, whether there a shifting of the needle towards renewable energy or maintaining Africa's dependence on fossil fuels all play into the hands of western market expansion backed by its technology for energy production.

5.5.Technologically Bereft Forever?

Evidently, science and technology are inextricably connected in the development process. However, science and technology do not exist merely in a process of modernization but are "absolutely contingent on the contours of inequality and social, political and economic problems that shape our world" (Smith, 2009: 126). Thus, the advantage of technology for solving problems is crucial to development and confers political and economic benefits and supremacy.

The greatest undoing of Africa is its technological backwardness. However, why Africa seems bereft of indigenous or western technologies is hardly interrogated. Therefore, it is necessary to reset the educational curriculum away from neocolonialism and focus on the challenges facing Africa to take advantage of its abundant natural resources including sunlight for solar. Perhaps, the technological advancement of Europe over Africa and the seemingly unwillingness for Africans to overcome this challenge remains the controlling reins of colonial legacy and neocolonialism that has maintained the dichotomy of countries of the raw materials and end-users and countries of technological innovation to transform raw materials to finished products. Indeed, the current practice of importation or dumping of renewable energy solar panels and storage batteries as finished products in Africa amounts to dumping and expansion of economic frontiers of industrialized countries out to make profit at the detriment of poor people. Renewable technology presents huge potentials for Africa to address energy transition toward low carbon economy, access to energy, underdevelopment and poverty.

6. Conclusion

The paper has applied the concept of environmental diplomacy to unravel the underlying factors driving climate change negotiations at the COP. Clearly, every COP is wrapped in intensive eco-diplomacy that goes far beyond climate change to national interests and socio-political considerations as underlying factors in the negotiations. Such geopolitical underlying factors in national and continental contexts play key role in negotiations and decision-making, hence, the outcome is often a compromise of a watered down statements and commitments.

Since the financial pledges fail to materialize, the real problem is that the creditors or poor countries are unable to assert the means to hold the debtors or rich countries to fulfill their pledges. This is because of the unequal power relations with the rich countries exacting greater political and economic powers over and above the poor countries with less power to influence decisions.

Not surprisingly, rich countries with adequate human and material resources are able to provide quality logistics for participation to hundreds of meeting sessions including climate envoys in diverse spaces at bilateral and multilateral political and economic power blocs within and outside the COP process. This paper argues that these underlying factors overwhelmingly disallows for a win-win situation. Rather than the professing of a win-win situation by consensus, the rich countries are the decisive winners and the poor countries are the visible losers. This has adverse

implications for national economies and development in Africa. Thus, the COP needs to transform to a conference of equals conducting negotiations in a transparent and accountable ways to ensure fair and just decisions for climate change actions.

The paper presents some diverse strands of the debate in the climate change negotiations. While climate change, underdevelopment and poverty continue to be the challenges in Africa, a decoupling from the present development and economic model to strongly advocate for a just energy transition that is decentralised and people-centered is required. An energy transition replicating recycled forms of injustices and reinforcing old tradition of extraction in the mining of cobalt and lithium is an affront to Africa's sensibilities.

Whether to leave fossils underground or to utilize them for national development, a consensus seems to emerge which is to build an energy transition by a focusing on domestic resource mobilization and regional integration. This should form the fulcrum of demand and strategy towards COP28. Financing Africa's energy poverty and removing barriers to innovative renewable energy technologies should gain centre stage at every environment and development fora and subsequent COPs if only to influence the COP process and attract priority action for Africa's special needs and circumstances status.

Finally, since the COP process is the only UN organ to address climate change, it is important that African nations continue to engage rather than disengage. However, there is no pragmatic reason to put all the eggs in one basket. Therefore, a renewed inward-looking based on local organizing and engagement is essential for national dialogue and on a regional level. Unfortunately, most African leaders attend the COP without having to consult adequately with the poor rural communities. It is rather superfluous to talk about transition from dirty energy to clean energy when they have no access to electricity. Rather than being led by the nose, or chasing shadows, a refocusing on Africa priorities will help deliver on addressing climate change, underdevelopment and poverty.

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