

# Report

## Climate Justice Symposium



Sustaining Women's Leadership



## Introduction:

The Climate Justice Symposium, held on Thursday 16th May at Makerere University, brought together a diverse group of experts, policymakers, activists, and stakeholders to discuss and address the pressing issue of climate justice. The symposium aimed to provide a platform for climate-vulnerable communities to amplify their voices to influence and shape climate discussions and decisions at local, national, regional, and international levels under the theme **“FROM WORDS TO ACTION”**. This report provides an overview of the key discussions, themes, and recommendations that emerged during the symposium.

### Key Events:

## 1. Climate Justice Walk from City Square Kampala to Makerere University



Participants take part in the Climate Justice March

On the first day of the symposium, a solidarity Climate Justice Walk was organized, starting from City Square Kampala and culminating at Makerere University. The walk aimed to raise awareness about the urgency of climate justice and mobilize public support for inclusive and equitable climate action. Participants from diverse backgrounds including activists, and community members, joined the walk, carrying banners and chanting slogans calling for climate justice. The walk symbolized a collective commitment to addressing climate change and its social justice implications.

## 2. Launch of the Global Justice Campaign

The symposium's opening day featured the launch of the “Fund the Future” Campaign, a collaborative initiative aimed at advocating for climate justice on a global scale. The campaign seeks to amplify the voices of marginalized communities affected by climate change, promote policy alternatives that prioritize equity and justice, and mobilize grassroots movements for climate action. The launch event included speeches by prominent activists, policymakers, and representatives from civil society organizations, who emphasized the importance of collective action and solidarity in addressing climate justice.



ActionAid International Uganda, Country Director, Xavier Ejoyi, Speaks at the Symposium

## Key Themes Explored:

### Climate Justice as a political question



Prof. Julius Kiiza gives the keynote address at the symposium

The Keynote speaker of the symposium, Professor Julius Kiiza delivered a compelling presentation that emphasized the inherently political nature of climate justice. Drawing on the definition provided by the Intergovernmental

Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Professor Kiiza highlighted that climate change encompasses identifiable variations in weather patterns that persist over an extended period, ultimately impacting ecosystems and societies.

This definition underscores the urgency and severity of the challenges we currently face. Moreover, Professor Kiiza's presentation addressed the need to recognize the tangible and devastating impacts of climate change on vulnerable regions, as highlighted by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2011.

Events such as flash floods, widespread flooding in Asia and Africa, heatwaves and droughts in Russia, mudslides in China, and severe droughts in sub-Saharan Africa were cited as concrete examples. These events are stark reminders of the urgent need to address climate change and its consequences.

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*One critical aspect to consider is the disproportionate impact of climate change on the African continent.*

While emphasizing the Climate change challenges faced by Africa, Professor Julius stressed that one critical aspect to consider is the disproportionate impact of climate change on the African continent. Africa is perhaps more vulnerable to the effects of climate change than any other continent, including rising temperatures, unpredictable rainfall, droughts, and extreme weather events. These climate impacts threaten agriculture, food and water security, public health, and economic development across the continent.

It's a fact that African nations have contributed the least to global greenhouse gas emissions that drive climate change. Addressing this climate injustice and ensuring equitable climate solutions for Africa must be central to the climate justice movement. This includes calls for greater climate finance and technology transfer from wealthy, high-emitting countries to support African adaptation and mitigation efforts. Ultimately, climate justice is inherently a political issue that requires global cooperation and a reckoning with historical

responsibility and power imbalances. Centering the African experience is crucial to advancing a comprehensive approach to tackling the climate crisis. The subsequent discussions at the symposium shed light on the limited attention given to addressing the root causes of the climate crisis, which are inherently political and economic.

Acknowledging this critical aspect can foster a deeper understanding of the systemic factors that contribute to climate change. This understanding is essential in developing transformative solutions that address the underlying political and economic structures perpetuating climate injustice.

In summary, Professor Kiiza's presentation and the subsequent discussions at the symposium emphasized that climate justice is inherently political. Addressing climate change and achieving justice requires acknowledging the political and economic dimensions of the issue and working towards transformative solutions that challenge and change the existing power dynamics.



Delegates chant climate justice slogans at the symposium

## Key Themes Explored:

# Climate Change as a Social Justice Issue: Stories of Human and Environmental Rights Defenders

*Despite the President of Uganda issuing an executive order in May 2023, based on Article 99(2) of the 1995 constitution, to ban the influx, commercial production, and trade of charcoal in Northern Uganda, the implementation of this order has encountered numerous obstacles.*



Betty Ocwee shares her story at the symposium

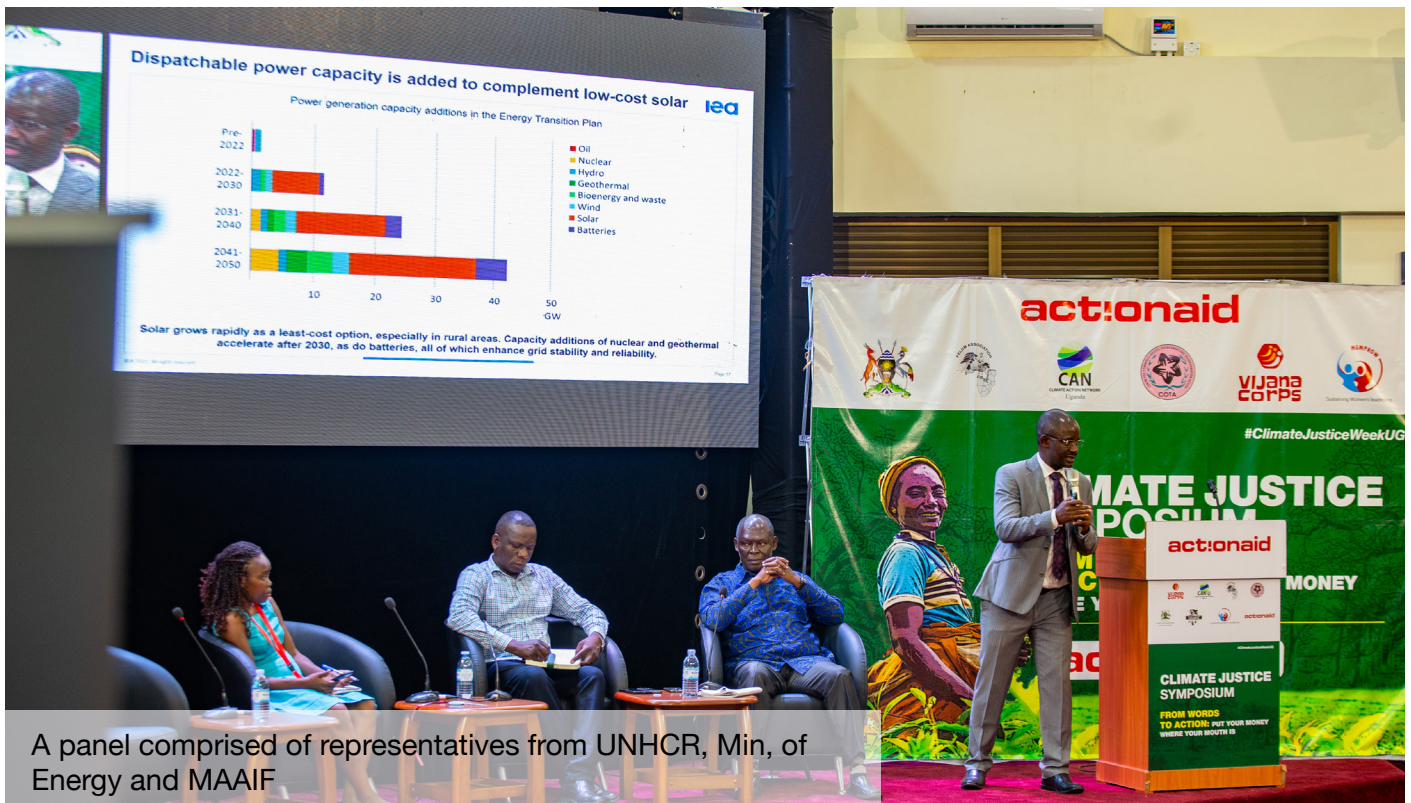
During the symposium, Betty, a Human and Environmental Rights defender, presented a compelling case highlighting the intersection of climate change and social justice in Uganda. She shed light on the specific challenges faced by vulnerable communities, such as those in Northern Uganda, where 40% of the country's economic supply of charcoal to urban areas originates.

Betty emphasized that despite the President of Uganda issuing an executive order in May 2023, based on Article 99(2) of the 1995 constitution, to ban the influx, commercial production, and trade of charcoal in Northern Uganda, the implementation of this order has encountered numerous obstacles. Corruption incidents have been prevalent, hindering effective enforcement of the ban. Additionally, there have been reports of intimidation and arrests of activists who advocate for environmental protection and the enforcement of the ban.

Moreover, Betty highlighted the stark contrast between the continuance of the charcoal business in Northern Uganda and the persistently high levels of poverty experienced by the local population in Northern Uganda. This disparity underscores the need for a comprehensive approach that addresses both the environmental and socio-economic dimensions of the issue.

Betty's presentation further reinforced the symposium's overarching message that climate change is deeply intertwined with social justice concerns. It emphasized the urgent need to address the differential impacts of climate change on marginalized communities, particularly indigenous communities, and low-income populations. The discussions stressed the importance of adopting an inclusive and intersectional approach to climate justice, considering the unique challenges faced by different groups and striving for equitable solutions.

## Just Transition and Green Jobs



A panel comprised of representatives from UNHCR, Min. of Energy and MAAIF

The concept of a just transition and the potential of green jobs were prominent topics of discussion at the National Climate Symposium held in Uganda. Participants recognized the need for Uganda to transition from fossil fuel-dependent economies to sustainable and renewable energy sources, taking into account the specific context and challenges faced by the country.

During the symposium, it was emphasized that a just transition in Uganda should prioritize fair treatment and opportunities for workers in industries affected by the transition.

This includes ensuring that workers in fossil fuel industries are not left behind and are provided with alternative employment options and support during the transition. By addressing the social and economic impacts on workers, a just

transition can minimize disruptions and facilitate a smoother shift towards sustainable energy systems.

Furthermore, the discussions highlighted the potential of green jobs to address socioeconomic disparities, particularly in marginalized communities in Uganda. Green jobs, which encompass employment opportunities in sectors such as renewable energy, energy efficiency, sustainable agriculture, and ecosystem restoration, can contribute to poverty reduction, improve livelihoods, and promote sustainable development.

Participants recognized the importance of creating an enabling environment and providing necessary training and skills development to ensure that marginalized communities can access and benefit from these green job opportunities.

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## Indigenous Knowledge and Traditional Practices

The symposium emphasized the significant role of front-line communities, including Indigenous peoples and local councils, in climate action. These communities often have a deep understanding of their local ecosystems and possess valuable knowledge about sustainable resource management, adaptation strategies, and resilience-building practices. Their experiences and perspectives are crucial for developing effective climate policies and strategies that are contextually relevant and inclusive.

The discussions at the symposium underscored the importance of respecting and incorporating indigenous knowledge and traditional practices into climate policies and decision-making processes in Uganda. Recognizing the value and validity of indigenous knowledge systems can contribute to more holistic and sustainable approaches to climate change mitigation and adaptation. This involves fostering genuine partnerships and collaboration with Indigenous communities, ensuring their meaningful participation in decision-making and policy development processes.

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Saviour Mak-kristo, Team leader, Elthre Agroecology Centre speaks about agroecology

## National Policy

### Recommendations from the Report on *“Assessing Readiness and Institutional Arrangements to Access Climate-Induced Loss and Damage Finance in Uganda”*



CSO representatives launch the Loss and Damage report

**T**he report by PELUM Uganda and ActionAid International Uganda has underscored the critical need for Uganda to develop a comprehensive national climate policy that addresses key gaps in the country’s readiness to access and manage climate-induced loss and damage finance. Specifically, the report emphasized the following policy priorities:

#### **Undertake a National-Level Vulnerability Assessment:**

The report stressed the urgent need for Uganda to conduct a thorough, nationwide climate vulnerability assessment. This evidence base is essential for identifying the country’s climate hotspots, exposed populations, and critical adaptation needs, thereby informing targeted, effective resilience interventions.

#### **Strengthen and Operationalize the Existing MRV System:**

While Uganda has made progress in establishing a Measurement, Reporting, and Verification (MRV) framework, the report highlighted the need to further strengthen data collection, monitoring, and reporting capabilities. A robust MRV system is crucial for accessing climate finance and demonstrating results to donors and stakeholders.

#### **Devise a Framework for Loss and Damage Finance:**

The report called for the development of a clear national policy framework to define and facilitate access to climate-induced loss and damage finance. This would enable Uganda to mobilize resources to address the unavoidable impacts of climate change and support affected communities.

By embedding these priorities within a comprehensive national climate policy, Uganda can empower its institutions, enhance transparency, and unlock the resources required to build climate resilience and drive sustainable, low-emission development. This policy reform is essential for Uganda to enhance its readiness to access and manage climate-induced loss and damage finance effectively.



# Report Launch Pictorial



## Regional Policy



Zacary Makes his remarks at the symposium

In his remarks at the National Climate Symposium, Mr. Zachary, the Senior Climate Officer at the East African Community (EAC) Secretariat, emphasized the urgent need to enhance the region’s capacity for developing and implementing mitigation, adaptation, and climate-integrated development projects.

Mr. Zachary highlighted that while EAC member states have demonstrated strong political commitment to climate action, they often lack the technical expertise and institutional mechanisms to translate these ambitions into tangible, impactful projects on the ground. This gap undermines the region’s ability to access and effectively utilize available climate finance.

To address this challenge, Mr. Zachary called for the EAC to spearhead policy reforms and institutional strengthening initiatives that can build robust project preparation and management capabilities within national and regional entities. This includes: Strengthening technical skills in areas such as feasibility assessments, financial modeling, procurement, and monitoring and evaluation.

Establishing streamlined, innovative project delivery mechanisms that can expedite the flow of climate finance into transformative initiatives. This could involve developing regional project

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preparation facilities, blended finance vehicles, and other innovative financing approaches. Fostering harmonized, cross-border frameworks and protocols to facilitate the collaborative design and implementation of climate projects with regional impact.

By addressing these institutional capacity gaps through policy changes and strategic investments, Mr. Zachary emphasized that the EAC can empower member states to overcome the barriers to climate finance access and deliver tangible, impactful climate solutions across the region.

## Recommendations

**B**ased on the discussions and insights shared during the National Climate Justice Symposium, the following recommendations emerged:

### **Integrate Climate Justice into Policy Frameworks**

The National Climate Justice Symposium recommends that governments and international organizations prioritize climate justice by integrating it into policy frameworks at all levels. This entails incorporating the principles of equity, justice, and inclusivity into climate adaptation and mitigation strategies.

To achieve climate justice, it is crucial to ensure that marginalized communities have a meaningful role in the development and implementation of climate policies. This means actively engaging and empowering these communities, addressing their unique needs and vulnerabilities, and providing them with the necessary resources and support to participate in decision-making processes.

By integrating climate justice into policy frameworks, governments, and international organizations can ensure that climate actions are not only effective in addressing the challenges of climate change but also fair and equitable. This approach acknowledges that the impacts of climate change are disproportionately felt by marginalized communities and that they should have access to the benefits of climate action.

### **Empower Marginalized Communities**

The National Climate Justice Symposium recommends that efforts be made to empower marginalized communities by providing them with the necessary resources, capacity-building initiatives, and access to decision-making processes.

To achieve climate justice, it is crucial to support community-led initiatives that address the unique needs and challenges faced by marginalized communities and most especially front-line communities. This can be done by providing funding and technical assistance for climate justice projects/ initiatives that are developed and implemented by these communities themselves.



Susan Otieno, ActionAid Kenya Country Director, speaks at the symposium

Empowering marginalized communities also means ensuring their meaningful participation and representation in climate-related forums. This requires creating inclusive spaces where their voices are heard and valued, and where they have a seat at the table during policy discussions and decision-making processes.

### **Strengthen Climate Education and Awareness**

The National Climate Justice Symposium recommends that efforts be made to strengthen climate education and awareness as a crucial step in fostering a greater understanding of climate justice issues.

To achieve this, collaboration among governments, educational institutions, and civil society organizations is essential as presented by Professor Julius Kiiza who argued that these different sectors should work together to develop comprehensive climate education programs that promote awareness, empathy, and action specifically focused on climate justice.

Additionally, public awareness campaigns and community engagement initiatives should be encouraged. These efforts can raise awareness about climate justice issues, promote dialogue, and encourage action at the individual, household, and community levels.

## Symposium between the Local and Central government

The National Climate Justice Symposium recommends organizing a symposium between the local government and the central government in Uganda to facilitate dialogue and harmonize their approaches toward climate justice. There is a clash in implementing climate justice measures between the two levels of government. Convening this symposium, will provide a platform for open discussions, fostering a common ground, and finding mutual solutions that prioritize the needs of marginalized communities and ensure effective climate justice implementation across the country.

### Regional recommendations:

#### Strengthen Technical Skills and Capacity for Climate Finance in the EAC

In a presentation at the National Climate Justice Symposium, the senior Climate officer at the EAC Secretariat Mr. Zachary highlighted the critical need to strengthen technical skills and institutional capacity around climate finance across EAC member states.

EAC member states lack the specialized expertise to access and leverage international climate funds effectively. This undermines their ability to secure resources for adaptation, mitigation, and a just climate transition.

As a result, the Symposium delegates recommended that the EAC invests in comprehensive capacity-building programs. This includes, training on navigating climate finance mechanisms, preparing bankable proposals, and monitoring impacts.

Establishing regional knowledge-sharing platforms and strengthening national institutions' climate finance integration will also be crucial. Closer collaboration between EAC states, climate funds, and the private sector can unlock innovative financing solutions.

By empowering EAC nations with robust climate finance skills, this recommendation aims to unlock the resources needed to address the region's dire climate challenges - a key pillar of the youth-led climate justice agenda.

#### Enhance EAC's Capacity for Climate Action Projects

In his remarks at the National Climate Symposium, Mr. Zachary, the Senior Climate Officer at the East African Community (EAC) Secretariat, emphasized the urgent need to enhance the region's capacity for developing and implementing mitigation, adaptation, and climate-integrated development projects.

Mr. Zachary highlighted that while EAC member states have demonstrated commitment to climate action, they often lack the technical expertise and institutional mechanisms to translate these ambitions into tangible, impactful projects on the ground.

To address this gap, Mr. Zachary recommended that the EAC invest in building robust project preparation and management capabilities within national and regional institutions. This includes strengthening skills in areas such as feasibility assessments, financial modeling, procurement, and monitoring and evaluation.

Most importantly, Mr. Zachary also called for the EAC to establish streamlined, innovative project delivery mechanisms that can expedite the flow of climate finance into transformative initiatives.

This could involve developing regional project preparation facilities, blended finance vehicles, and other innovative financing approaches.

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## Conclusion

The National Climate Justice Symposium, held on 16th May 2024 at Makerere University, provided a significant platform for engaging discussions on the critical intersection of climate change and social justice. Participants at the symposium highlighted the pressing need to address climate change with a strong emphasis on equity, recognizing that marginalized communities bear a disproportionate burden of its impacts.

The recommendations stemming from the symposium reflect the collective understanding that climate justice must be integrated into policy frameworks at all levels. This entails incorporating principles of equity, justice, and inclusivity into climate adaptation and mitigation strategies. By doing so, governments and international organizations can ensure that climate actions prioritize the needs and rights of marginalized communities.

The symposium also recognized the significance of strengthening climate education and awareness. Participants stressed the need for comprehensive climate education programs that promote awareness, empathy, and action on climate justice. By incorporating climate justice into school curricula and providing accessible information to all segments of society, stakeholders can foster a greater understanding of the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of climate change.

Finally, fostering collaboration and partnerships emerged as a crucial recommendation from the symposium. Participants underscored the importance of collective action among governments, civil society organizations, indigenous communities, businesses, and academia. By working together, sharing knowledge, and co-creating sustainable solutions, stakeholders can address climate justice challenges holistically and inclusively.

Overall, the National Climate Justice Symposium served as a platform for generating actionable recommendations and inspiring meaningful change. It is hoped that these recommendations will guide policymakers, practitioners, and advocates in their efforts to prioritize climate justice and work towards a sustainable and equitable future for all.





**ActionAid** is a global movement of people working together to further human rights and defeat poverty for all. We believe people in poverty have the power within them to create change for themselves, their families and communities.

**ActionAid** is a catalyst for that change

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