

# **THE COMMON AFRICAN POSITION ON CLIMATE CHANGE: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS**

by

UNARINE MBAVHALELO MUDIMELI

Student number:13036948

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Supervisor:

Professor Siphamandla Zondi

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## ABSTRACT

Climate change is a global phenomenon that sees the rise in total global temperatures creating long-term change in average weather patterns affecting populations across the globe. Studies have shown that human activity is one of the main causes of the exacerbation of the release of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere that cause the earth to warm up faster than usual. Debates have emerged between developed and developing countries on who should take responsibility for dealing with the climate problem as both groups have a different stake in the climate change debate. Developed or industrialised countries are known to be the largest emitters of greenhouse gases and developing countries have lower levels of emissions. Regardless, on-going climate negotiations reveal that it is a global problem that needs participation from all countries to solve. Africa has taken to negotiating as a collective through the promotion of *common African positions* and the main question this paper aims to explore is if these common positions truly represent the interests of all 54 African states. This study is literature-based and uses a qualitative research approach supported by documentary evidence. The research uses a theoretical framework with the use of realism and social constructivism.

**Keywords:** climate change, climate change negotiations, African common position, African agency, UNFCCC, AGN, conference of the parties

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AGN	Africa Group of Negotiators
AMCEN	African Ministerial Conference on Environment and Natural Resources
AOSIS	Alliance of Small Island States
AU	African Union
BASIC	Brazil, South Africa, India, China
CAHOSCC	Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change
CAP	Common African Position
CBDR-RC	Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities
CDM	Clean Development Mechanism
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
COP	Conference of the Parties
EAC	East African Community
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EIT	Economies in Transition
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
G77 + China	Group of 77 plus China
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GHG	Greenhouse gas
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IPCC	The International Panel on Climate Change
IR	International Relations
LDC	Least Developed Countries
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MOP	Meeting of the Parties
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	Non-governmental organisations

OAU	Organisation for African Unity
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPEC	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
REC	Regional Economic Communities
REDD-plus	Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SBI	Subsidiary Body for Implementation
SBSTA	Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
UN	United Nations
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention of Climate Change
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
WHO	World Health Organization
WMO	World Meteorological Organisation



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# CHAPTER 1

## RESEARCH THEME AND APPROACH

### 1. Introduction

Even though Africa is a developing region of the world with limited industrial production and one of the lowest carbon emissions record, it has to contend with many ramifications of the climate change challenge, from harm to food security to recurrence of natural disasters to growing desertification and deforestation. Africa suffers the dire environmental impacts and with these come major social and economic costs. The global efforts to mitigate climate change impacts and promote effective adaptation required a multilateral approach through United Nations (UN) led negotiations. Africa saw it wise to approach these negotiations on the basis of a common negotiating position whose value and management is at the heart of this study. This chapter aims to provide a brief understanding of the theme of climate change as a global problem that requires the participation of all states and how it relates to Africa's need for a common African negotiating position. In doing so, the chapter highlights the objectives of the research as well as the methodology of how the research was conducted and provides an overview of the remaining chapters of analysis.

### 2. Common Negotiating as a Strategy

Environmental issues have always been at the forefront of the international political agenda, but it was not until the late 20th century and early 21st century that climate change was recognized as a global issue that needs immediate solutions (Tsega 2016: 5). Climate change affects every nation regardless of its geographical location and reducing its detrimental environmental effects requires active participation from all countries. As the world became more aware of the gradual increase in global temperatures, issues surrounding the topic of climate change became important points of discussions on the international agenda. Scientific research has found that though there are many factors contributing to rising global temperatures, human activity exacerbates the collective amount of greenhouse gases (GHG's) released into the atmosphere. Although all states share responsibility for the release of GHG's, developed countries that have highly industrialised societies are the largest emitters

of GHG's as opposed to underdeveloped countries that have lower levels of emissions. Even though Africa is the continent with the most developing countries, the continent faces the biggest climate change challenge as it is one of the lowest emitters of GHG's (3.8% of total emissions) yet it suffers the greatest environmental consequences and is not able to properly mitigate and adapt to the environmental changes (Dahir 2017; Brown et al. 2007: 1143). The underpinning theme of this research is that the response to climate issues is one that requires full international participation and cooperation, the paper explores how Africa positions itself in global climate change negotiations given that it has a long history of marginalisation in international negotiations.

Africa's shared history of dependency on the Western world and its relative political weakness led to a "reaction" in which African states have created collective stances to address multiple international issues (Arkhurst 2010: 157). As a way to project its "voice" and for the African continent to have an advantageous and meaningful impact in multilateral negotiations, Zondi (2013: 19) affirms that the continent commits itself to negotiating common positions which are termed the common African position (CAP) understood as a strategic tool of diplomacy used to pool the meagre political capital of African countries together for purposes of increasing the continent's gains from complex multilateral negotiations. Many issues that CAPs address directly impact all the countries on the continent. According to Brown and Harman (2013: 16), it is through this unified stance through a CAP that African states are able to exert their agency in international relations. This agency, which is unpacked in the second chapter of this research, enables African states that do not have the capacity to influence the international agenda in various multilateral conferences as individual states to consolidate ideas and issue areas with other African states so that they may have more power of persuasion.

### **3. Research Problem**

The purpose of a research problem statement in methodology is to provide a rationale or to identify the need to study a particular issue or problem in society (Creswell 2014: 102). It is about providing a description of the issue that needs to be researched further, in the hope to clarify it or contribute to finding solutions to the problem. It is

often also described as either a gap or contradiction in the literature. The challenge of climate change is a global problem with many ramifications on the economy and quality of lives. But this problem is felt disproportionately in peripheral areas of the world including Africa. This is because while the continent contributes very little to carbon emissions, it pays a heavy price in the form of deforestation, desertification, the frequency of natural disasters like the floods and droughts, food insecurity and water scarcity. Climate negotiations are a complex multilateral process of finding ways to reduce carbon emissions that cause global warming and to develop strategies for coping and mitigating climate change impacts as well as building resilience and climate change adaptation. This is a subject in need of various kinds of research in order to understand if responses to climate change are adequate. Africa uses the CAP in climate change negotiations as a diplomatic tool during international conferences of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which hosts Conference of Parties (COP) every year, to enable African countries to negotiate the global climate actions in a way that benefits Africa. This derives from the imperative to build cohesion through the inter-African dialogue through such platforms as the Africa Group of Negotiators (AGN), the African Ministerial Conference on Environment and Natural Resources (ACMEN) and the Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSCC) who harness the convergence of African countries' views on climate change in order to develop a framework for a CAP (Zondi 2013: 28). This means that despite the cultural, language and other social and political barriers, all African states are able to agree on a working framework for the CAP (CDKN 2014). While there is work done on common positions and how they assist Africa to keep a united posture in negotiations or demonstrated cohesive agency, very little has been done to delve into any CAP in order to dissect how it is developed and managed. The existing research on CAP on climate change does not fully provide a break-down of all CAPs as they evolve each year before every conference of the Parties. That is to say that the literature speaks of “*the* CAP on climate change” as if it were a set, solidified document that African states constantly refer to. In actuality, there are multiple common *positions* that are essentially a series of negotiated positions among African countries and representatives of climate organisations detailed in meeting reports, observed by the media and taken from interviews with diplomats or negotiators. The research does not focus on a specific CAP on climate change but rather in the fourth chapter, it attempts to make a point of

unpacking the multiple CAPs that have emerged throughout the years that policymakers and scholars have identified as being presented as a CAP. Furthermore, the research attempts to highlight that Africa's stance on climate issues has evolved throughout the years as the continent becomes more aware of new scientific findings and the politics taking place throughout global negotiations that influence the different CAPs that emerge before each conference of the parties.

#### 4. Research Questions

The posing of a research question is critical in research methodology because it gives a clear indication of what exactly is being studied and how. According to O'Leary (2004: 28), research questions help give the focus of a study, set its boundaries, and thus provides direction to the investigation. This is important for this study. Given the research problem above, the main question is:

- Does the CAP on climate change represent the shared interests of all African states?

The sub-questions are:

- What is the context of climate change and how does it affect Africa?
- How is the CAP on climate change developed and managed?
- What are the key elements of CAP that unify African states around common positions?
- What lessons can be learned from the CAP on climate change?

These questions help the study analyse how African states in different geographical contexts are affected by climate change in different ways, and how they develop and employ the CAP in international negotiations. Furthermore, the research questions direct this study to understand where African states derive their collective identity and whether individual African states have chosen to deviate from a CAP. Simply put, questions about examining the grounds of *commonality* in a common position on climate change and whether the positions truly reflect the interests of *all* 54 African states, their position inherent in the formulation of common positions is the assumption

that there are shared values and a sense of common identity underpinned by a sense of African unity.

## **5. Research Aim and Objectives**

The main aim of this study is to analyse whether the CAP on climate change represents the shared interests of all African states. Since African states have historically been unable to exert much influence in leading the climate change agenda in the international arena, the common positions that they agree to negotiate should represent a convergence and compromise of the interests of all 54 African states.

The research aims are divided into three main objectives:

1. To discuss the context of climate change in Africa including specific actors involved in global climate negotiations and how Africa fits into their narrative
2. To examine the development of the CAPs on climate change
3. To critically analyse the elements that unify African states in common positions and whether they have been able to uphold the positions
4. To reflect on the implications of the answers to these objectives

## **6. Research Methodology**

Research methodology is the technique or process used to identify and analyse information about a topic or issue. Research methodology can also be referred to as the practical "how" of research. It indicates how the research is going to systematically design the study to ensure feasible and accurate results that address the research aims and objectives. This study is a qualitative research that focuses on collecting and analysing textual data with the aim of relaying real-world knowledge and beliefs on climate change negotiations (Brown 2006: 12; Jansen & Warren 2020). Research design is the overall strategy that is chosen to logically integrate various types of data and sources into the research to ensure that the research problem is addressed effectively.

## 6.1 Research Approach

Research approaches are the detailed plans taken in research that takes the study from broad assumptions to detailed procedures of collecting, analysing and interpreting data. This involves the process of decision-making in order to make sense of the steps taken in completing the research. The overall decision involves which approach should be chosen for a study. The approach to a study consists of both philosophical assumptions and distinct procedures and methods (Creswell & Creswell 2017: 3).

This is a literature-based study that lends itself to a qualitative approach, which aims to interpret, describe and evaluate a particular social phenomenon (Williams 2007: 67). As Jane Agee (2009: 432) states, qualitative research allows the researcher to explore the intention and perspectives of subjects involved in social relations. In this research, emphasis is placed on the exploration of the social process of climate change negotiations to understand why African countries use CAPs (intention) and how they understand its value and effect (perspectives). Leedy and Ormand (2015: 271) claim that the advantages of a qualitative approach allow researchers to gain insight into a phenomenon that is not widely studied, reveals the complexities of settings, relationships and processes and allows us to judge the effectiveness of certain policies and practices.

Given this, the research is also founded on an interpretivist paradigm which aims to create meaning out of specific phenomenon by reflecting on the values, perceptions, attitudes and experiences of subjects, in this stance, of African states and their perception of the CAP (Nieuwenhuis 2007: 99). Nguyen and Tran (2015: 24, 25), find a balance between the use of a qualitative research approach and an interpretivist paradigm in the idea that qualitative research allows the researcher to interpret data by understanding the experiences of their subjects and the interpretivist paradigm appreciates the reality of a complex world that is socially constructed by its subjects.

## 6.2 Data Collection Methods

Key to study design is the collection and analysis of data (William and Donnelly 2006). This study used primary and secondary sources of data that are available in the public

domain. Primary sources are reflections of events in original documents created during the time period being studied (Given 2008: 396). Primary sources for this study include official documents on conference and summit outcomes from the African Union (AU), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) and the African Ministerial Conference on Environment and Natural Resources (AMCEN). These primary documents are useful for this study because they are the main organisations that host meetings and conferences on climate change where original sources of speeches by high-level officials, decisions made by negotiators and event reports are found. These documents are fortunately in the public domain easily accessible without the need for permissions and ethical clearance.

Secondary sources contain information documented after an event has taken place usually written by someone who was not directly involved in the event (Given 2008: 397). Secondary sources for this research are retrieved from academic journals, websites, books and media releases. These documents hold works of study related to climate change from scholars and researchers well versed on the topic, these sources include africaportal, the Journal of International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics, the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA), the Journal of African Affairs as well as news articles that contain reflections from state officials about the CAP with specific reference to climate change. Books and chapters on international relations theory will be used to understand concepts derived from IR theory. While there is rich secondary data on climate change and its impact on Africa, the literature on CAP is still in its infancy, forcing the researcher to rely on a few accurate sources. The hope is that this study and publications to follow from it will contribute to expanding the body of sources on CAPs.

### **6.3 Ethical Considerations**

According to Bryman and Bell (2007) a dissertation should take ten important ethical considerations, first, any participant of the research should not be subject to harm in any way. This study does not use human participants, but relies on primary and secondary documents, both in the public domain. The second consideration is that the dignity of every participant must be prioritized. This study does not have such



participants, but it is careful not to harm the dignity of authors of primary documents used. Third, is that consent must be obtained from all participants, fourth, protection of privacy must be ensured. This is not relevant for this study. Fifth, confidentiality must be ensured. This too does not apply in this literature-based study. Sixth, the anonymity of organizations and individuals must be ensured. This consideration is born in mind in this study. Seventh, the exaggeration of aims and objectives must be avoided. This is honoured. Eighth, funding and affiliations must be declared. Ninth, all communication regarding the research should be transparent and honest. These two considerations are at the heart of a careful use of sources used as well as the write-up of this report. Tenth, any biased or misleading information should be avoided. In relation to this research, the first six points do not relate to this study as it does not make use of any human or animal participants.

## **6.4 Data Analysis**

The type of data analysis used in this research is a critical thematic analysis. A critical analysis aims to “expose hidden power and taken-for-granted assumptions” and to “offer alternative perspectives to knowledge, theory building and social reality” (Holland & Novak 2017: 6). Furthermore, this type of analysis also aims to engage social criticism and acknowledges that social change and the distribution of power are essential to its understanding (Holland & Novak 2017: 2). This research study critically analyses the development of climate change CAPs, its relevance and its alignment with the interest and realities of African states.

## **7. Study Delimitation and Study Limitations**

Study delimitations are boundaries that have been set by the researcher that should be acknowledged. Study limitations are the shortcomings, influences, and conditions that a researcher cannot control and has a direct or indirect impact on the end result of the research. These limitations help identify the potential weaknesses of the study.

In terms of the boundaries, the research finds itself in the 2009 to 2015 time period of climate negotiations due to the development in scientific and political developments that lead to the increase in African states involvement in global climate discussion,

hence the development of multiple CAPs. As such, this research analyses the common African positions that existed between 2009 and 2015.

This leads into the study limitation in not thoroughly engaging in climate developments after 2015 which are many, however, does not take away from the main objectives. Furthermore, the paper does not place a heavy emphasis on the consequences of the contradictions between the CAP and the realities of changing weather conditions.

## **8. Study Significance**

This study has the potential to contribute to the existing literature on climate negotiations from an African perspective as it aims to understand African unity and African diplomacy in climate negotiations, the complexities of politics in multilateral settings. It may contribute to better understanding how individual countries embrace collective interests on the basis of convergence of individual interests.

## **9. Structure of Research**

Chapter 1 comprises of the introduction, the research problem, research objectives, literature overview, research methodology and research limitations.

Chapter 2 is the theoretical framework. It conceptualizes the concepts central to understanding the CAPs such as the concepts of African agency, shared values and ideas, and national interests borrowed from IR theories.

Chapter 3 places the CAPs in context. It discusses the context of climate change in Africa, the nature of global negotiations and specific actors involved in international climate change negotiations.

Chapter 4 provides the analysis which ties in all the chapters by identifying how the CAP is used as a tool of diplomacy by certain states and whether the CAP is effective in its representation.

Chapter 5 provides concluding remarks and final observations of the study.

## 10. Conclusion

To conclude, the theme of this research is to about how the African continent position itself in international climate negotiations and how it uses its collective voice through the advancement of common positions to leverage its interests on the international agenda. By discussing the context of climate change in Africa, the development of CAPs and the analysing whether African states have been able to uphold its positions, the mini-dissertation contributes to the literature on African diplomacy and climate negotiations. This chapter introduced the theme, purpose and methodology of the research.

## **CHAPTER 2**

# **AFRICA'S COMMON POSITIONS: CONTEXT, CONTOURS AND CONCEPTS**

### **1. Introduction**

The premise of this research is to investigate the development by African states of their common positions on climate change in response to the demands of the complex multilateral negotiations through the UNFCCC and whether they are a representation of the convergence of interests of all African states. The purpose of this chapter is to put into context Africa's place in international relations as well as to expand on the concepts identified throughout the literature that seek to make sense of the emergence of CAPs. These themes are shared values, pan-African solidarity, and African agency. Western theories such as realism and constructivism provide theoretical tools that help us explain and understand how some of these concepts exist in this climate change phenomenon and the research also borrows concepts and ideas such as national interests and agency.

### **2. Background: Africa's Place in International Relations**

African states have not had the ability to fully exercise structural and relational power as actors in international relations. This has been a major ongoing topic of discussion among contemporary scholars. Yet, Africa has played a fundamental role in international relations (Blaauw 2016: 85). In the *longue durée* of history, Africa has been involved in a continuous exchange of ideas, knowledge and commodities with Europe, Asia and later with the Americas (Bayart & Ellis 2000: 218). Bayart and Ellis (2000: 218) trace this surviving exchange back to ancient civilizations in the cradle of Christianity in Ethiopia, the rise of Islam on the African coast and the constant patterns of trade with China, India, Persia and the Mediterranean, and uses this as evidence of the degree to which Africa was for many centuries integrated into the pre-modern economic systems of the East. The founder of Afrocentricity, Molefi Asante (2007) argues that African phenomena cannot be authentically understood when studied from outside the appreciation of the long duration of African history. Even when an African researcher borrows elements of thinking from outside Africa, an appreciation of African

history requires the researcher to be positioned in African experiences in order to attain valid knowledge about an African phenomenon.

Despite its rich history and exposure to the “outside world” – relative to the theoretical lens in which one views international relations, Africa has for a long time been shunned as a fundamental unit of analysis or at the least a centrepiece in international relations (Blaauw 2016: 85). This falsely assumes that international relations both as discipline and practice – especially where Africa is concerned – becomes relevant and present only when the continent is consumed by monumental events involving or caused by the Western world. To add context to this, one should be mindful of the distinguishing events that have fundamentally changed the course of Africa’s history from the onset of the (1) initial exploration which included the settlement of missionaries and colonial outposts; (2) this swiftly spiralled into the slave trade; (3) the subsequent scramble for Africa, which gave colonial masters an official imprint and claim on the African territory and; (4) finally various years after the quest for decolonisation and fight for independence, the Cold War equally played a hand in disrupting the internal affairs of African states. Examining history from this point of view places large emphasis and focus on the great powers (Blaauw 2016: 85).

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015: 28) puts the implications of the historical moments mentioned above as follows:

“Africa was incorporated into a Euro-North American-centric world culture and European languages. [...] Africa was incorporated into a heavily Euro-North American-centric world of international law. [...] Africa was incorporated into the modern technological age, including being “swallowed by the global system of dissemination of information”. [...] Africa was dragged into a Euro-North American-centric moral order dominated by Christian thought. Mazrui’s (1986) conclusion was, therefore, that: “what Africa knows about itself, what different parts of Africa know about each other, have been profoundly influenced by the West”

He goes further to say that the world that Africa was brought into and which it continues to contend with is “a racially hierarchised, patriarchal, sexist, Christian-centric, hetero-

normative, capitalist, military, colonial, imperial and modern form of civilisation” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015: 29). Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015: 29) continues, “the fragmented and weak African ‘postcolonial’ states were admitted into the lowest echelons of the Euro-North American-dominated state system of the world”. On this basis, Africa has inherited unequal relations that places it at the periphery with the West remaining at the centre of economic, political, social, and cultural power.

The mainstream International Relations taught even here in Africa has placed Europe and North America (or the West) at the centre of the world where the rest of the world supposedly acts in relation to the centre thereby inevitably placing itself at the margin. As the literature written by numerous IR scholars suggests, this proves to be a false narrative in understanding Africa’s history and how it has progressed in its international relations. Africa’s international relations existed before Western and Eastern contact. What we now consider failing or underdeveloped African states were once known as rich, prosperous kingdoms and empires in pre-colonial Africa that extended their hands into maintaining continental relations.

Expounding on the reality of continental African international relations, Seid Mohammed and Yolanda Spies respectively wrote articles detailing the continent’s pre-colonial explorations and African diplomacy. The concept of African diplomacy is a loaded concept that continues to be unpacked by IR scholars, but for the purpose of this report, African diplomacy will simply refer to the intracontinental relations between the different African powerhouses encompassing their rules and methods of engagement. A key mention in Spies’ (2018: 1) paper is that Africa has a distinguishable and different type of diplomacy which is not only born of the negative experiences of marginality but diplomacy which infuses traditional African values of solidarity, integration and unity (further discussed later in the chapter). Spies (2018: 1) goes on to mention that in order to understand contemporary African diplomacy, we have to understand these values and the themes that helped evolve diplomacy into the pursuit of equality and justice in international relations and development and peace for the continent.

Mohammed's narration of African diplomacy as widely practised in pre-colonial Africa in a manner detached from the need for validation from the "outside world". Pre-colonial African diplomacy saw African empires (such as the Ashanti Empire, the Aksumite Empire, the Southern African Kingdoms of Mapungubwe) conducting peaceful negotiations, deploying their representatives to other territories, executing regular trade exchanges and creating alliances with each other (Mohammed 2015: 95; Spies 2018: 2). The idea of embassies or any formal foreign government structure existed in African empires and African diplomats –as diplomats still do today– actively participated in diplomatic relations and activity as a way of bringing and maintaining peace, order and prosperity on the continent (Mohammed 2015: 95). African diplomacy was conducted in obedience to the customary laws and institutions of African societies in place with a high regard for morality and ethical values (Otoide 2001: 47; Smith 1973: 601). In that time period, Africa was far from being considered "weak" or "backwards" but actually hosted a number of "sophisticated political organizations" (Spies 2018: 2).

The aforementioned distinguishing events led by the West made Africa fall victim to interstate relations being incredibly linked to Western powers and to a lesser extent focused on intracontinental affairs (Otoide 2001: 48; Spies 2018: 3). In the era of decolonisation and the Cold War, Africa had to decide which role it was going to play in the international arena and it was torn between submission to colonial powers or creating a new path for itself (Otoide 2001: 50). Though many of its sovereign states are still tied to their colonial masters, Africa had to become (and is) conscious in recognizing a perception of its own future (Otoide 2001: 51). In contemporary fashion, the guiding themes for African diplomacy are rooted in an inclination towards African solidarity where strength is found in unity (Spies 2018: 1).

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

The use of a theoretical framework in research helps the researcher draw concepts and tools of analysis from existing theories to guide the research (Kivunja 2018: 46). Adom *et al.* (2018: 438) refer to theoretical frameworks as the blueprint borrowed by the researcher from scholars and giants who have theorised phenomena to help build

and define their research inquiry. In this research, the theory of social constructivism and realism are used to form a better understanding of the research problem.

### 3.1 Social Constructivism

The value of IR theory is that it tries to provide us with a multitude of approaches with the aim of simplifying the realities of an overly complex world. A commonality of IR theories is the attempt they make to observe, interpret and form an understanding of social phenomena. Of all the dominant and emerging IR theories, constructivism or social constructivism as it is formally known, offers a branched approach –from positivist approaches to post-positivistic approaches– in understanding social phenomena because it acknowledges that as we try to study the world and all its social processes, we are unconsciously and consciously taking part in its creation (Viotti & Kauppi 2010: 276). Humans are the inherent subjects of the international system and are therefore subjected to take part in human interactions and relationships. What social constructivism offers the discipline and thus this paper is an appreciation of the intersubjective nature of human interaction that further questions the link between knowledge and reality to which we are intrinsic (Viotti & Kauppi 2010: 276).

Social constructivism is primarily based on the idea that reality is what one makes of it, therefore, it is socially constructed by each individual. However, since individuals, or in the broader scheme of this context one refers to states, do not exist in isolation but in an environment comprising of a plethora of states and non-state actors, there has to be some sort of interaction. This is fitting to its core claims that (1) one of the main units of analysis in the international system and in the field of IR remains the state; (2) the intersubjectivity of the actors and structures in the state system are vital; and (3) the identities and interests of states are an essential part of the creation of social structures (Behravesch 2011).

These claims can be further explained and broken down which will help explain the theory's relevance to the paper. According to Viotti and Kauppi (2010: 280), *intersubjectivity* refers to the constant exchanges made by people of various beliefs, interests and values. This means that there is space for collective ideas to be formed which leads to the establishment of *social structures*, practices and identities (Viotti &



Kauppi 2010: 280). So, in this sense, structure according to constructivists relates to shared understandings of social interactions. This then means that structures have an effect on actors or agents which, Viotti and Kauppi (2010: 285) observe, influences actors to define and redefine their interests and identities during the process of socialization. This also occurs vice-versa where actors influence structures. In other words, this is the agent-structure relationship as understood to constructivists.

### **3.1.1 Agency**

Taking from social constructivism, the theory has a lot to say about the concept of agency, which is critical for understanding the agency of African countries exercised through CAPs. Agency refers to a state's ability to act autonomously and independently within a specific structure (Theys 2018). This agency is heavily informed by its identity and interests shaped by interaction (Theys 2018). It is worth mentioning that within this theory, there is a specific link between agency and structure (one does not exist without the other) where structure refers to the international system and its material and ideational elements (Theys 2018). According to Lee (2004: 11), structure, as per constructivist interpretation, also includes all social practices that allow states to create material to advance their own interests and these practices have the potential to shape their behaviour. In this manner, structure has the ability to both constrain and enable the agency of states (Lee 2004: 11, 12).

## **3.2 Realism**

As one of the dominant IR theories, realism is useful for understanding inter-state relations in world affairs including the role of interests, whose convergence this study seeks to analyse. Realism's foundational concern is the survival of the state. The world according to realists is violent, chaotic and unstable and in order for people and states to feel safe and secure, they need to be self-sufficient (Daddow 2013: 111, 112). The anarchical structure of the international system characterised by a system of "self-help", maintains a state's natural prerogative to make rational choices in pursuit of their national interests.

### 3.2.1 National Interests

National interest is at the heart of a state's foreign policy, when interacting with the "outside world", states are better off acting on their own national goals in order to act as a force in the international system (Jaafar 2017: 10). Realist have differing definitions of national interest, however, for the purpose of this report, a specific definition has been identified. Nuechterlein (1976: 247) suggests that national interests can be understood as the "perceived needs and desires of one sovereign state in relation to other sovereign states comprising the external environment". This definition is significant because it considers that states are sovereign entities with the authority to make and pursue their own national desires and that they are cognizant that they do not exist in isolation. After all, they act *in relation* to other states. This means that the national interests that they pursue will have an effect on other states and the structure that they find themselves in.

This ties into the research because it enables us to question whether African states fully abide by the CAP that they prescribe to or are there instances in which the CAP is ignored so that they act fully within their own interests, contradicting the CAP. It also questions the extent to which a state has to abide by the CAP and if "acting out of line" (or outside the realm of solidarity), changes the relationships with other African states (or other non-African states) that continue to promote the CAP.

Therefore, the theoretical framework is derived from a constructivist understanding of the idea and concept of agency as well as a realist idea of national interests. This helps us guide the analysis on how they help us understand the convergence of interests in order to enhance the agency of African states through CAPs.

## 4. Key Concepts

Having identified the theoretical framework, we introduce in this section key concepts that frame the discussions on the development of CAPs to complement the theoretical constructs already discussed. Below are such concepts.

### 4.1 Shared Values

One of the main concerns of this mini-dissertation is in the area where constructivism problematises the idea that state identities and values are created through the way states relate to one another and therefore, influences the way in which they behave in relation to one another within the international arena. Agwu (2011: 4) suggests that values are held at an individual level and when they reach the level of collectivity or shared values, they integrate many parts of a social system which form the basis for solidarity and unity, emphasising the need for cooperation and developing common goals and values.

Despite the view that Africa's experience in the international system is from a place of marginalisation and victimhood, African diplomacy is not necessarily informed by only negative experiences (Spies 2018: 1). Spies (2018: 1) mentions that Africans, even those in the diaspora share certain traditional values such as the respect for cultural traditions and authority, an affinity for collectiveness and a preference for community and togetherness rather than the individual. Considering this from a local level, there are many African expressions that bring life to concepts relating to a sense of "togetherness" and community that are translated to the state-level. One such concept is *ubuntu* from the Nguni people of South Africa. It finds its roots in a Nguni proverb "umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu" or as understood in Sotho as "motho ke motho ka batho" translated to mean that "a person is a person through other persons" (Louw 2006: 161). The basic underpinning of *ubuntu* is the respect for "humanity" and the idea of "humanness" which has significant meaning in the South African context as it has formed the basis of the preamble of the state's constitution and is a major guiding ideology for South Africa's foreign policy (the White Paper) (Louw 2006: 161). Although the word *ubuntu* is initially South African, there exist many other African equivalences such as *mtu* or *Harambee* in Swahili that speak to the same idea of "humanness", "we", "pulling together", community, consensus and dialogue (Ovens & Prinsloo 2010: 24). As a worldview, *ubuntu* has formed the basis of former South African president Thabo Mbeki's idea of an African Renaissance stemming from the Pan-Africanist world view. The underlying meaning of *ubuntu* suggests that African peoples are united and that political leaders also think with this attitude in mind and it tries to put into reality the ways in which African states should treat each other that reflect how African societies work on the ground (Bamikole 2012: 71). How this

explains the pursuit of common positions is a subject to be considered in framing the analysis chapter later.

## 4.2 Pan-African Solidarity

In that line of thought, Africa's political significance is based on an evolving process of continental integration. This process was expressed through Pan-Africanism which has become a prominent worldview that signifies and embodies the spirit of solidarity and cooperation among African countries (Murithi 2014: 1). This research's underlying approach relies heavily on the pan-African worldview as it posits that Africa's marginalisation in the global order presents an opportunity for the countries of the continent to draw on their common history and experiences to increase the continent's influence in the world. The pan-African movement has its roots in the Caribbean and began as an attempt to reconnect all Africans on the continent and in the diaspora that were displaced through the colonial slave trade (Ratcliff 2009: 1). Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2014: 21, 22) contends that pan-African consciousness unfolded as a response to the Eurocentric capitalist world system in an effort to ameliorate the "darker aspects of modernity". Ratcliff (2009: 1) also makes the link between the pan-African movement and the need to respond to the vagaries of the world system. Its conception is rooted in the black struggle against the racial hierarchy of the international system (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2014: 22). The founding principles of pan-Africanism were propagated by its founders W.E.B du Bois, Joseph Casely-Hayford and George Padmore. These include the belief that Africa is the motherland of all Africans and other people of colour around the world; solidarity between all men and women of African descent is necessary; the promotion of an African personality upheld by future generations; the need for Africans to manage African politics and economy and; the promotion of a united Africa for Africans and her descendants (Ani & Ojatorotu 2017: 9). Oloruntoba (2015: 10, 11) structures the movement unfolding in three distinct phases starting with the realization of an African identity opposed to Western identity; secondly, the spread of the pan-African consciousness to Africans and the diaspora and finally, the post-colonial struggle to unite the continent.

Through the creation of a pan-African congress led by du Bois, the principles of pan-Africanism were propelled. Marcus Garvey included the creation of "a strong and

powerful Negro nation in Africa” i.e. the idea of a United States of Africa (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2014: 24). Garvey’s thoughts heavily influenced Africans in the diaspora and Africans on the continent and ultimately helped push the idea of black consciousness in many liberation movements in Africa (Ani & Ojatorotu 2017: 11). Along with prominent African thinkers such as Kwame Nkrumah, Jomo Kenyatta and Steve Biko from across the African continent, the principles of pan-Africanism became an “ideology for liberation” in pursuit of many liberties especially self-government for the black peoples of Africa (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2014: 24). What was propagated by Africans, African scholars, politicians and intellectuals was that pan-Africanism was a necessary and inevitable prerequisite for Africans to exercise their right to control their social, economic and political affairs (Murithi 2014: 1). We now experience the evolution of this worldview which has taken its form through the constitution and establishment of the AU (Murithi 2014: 1). In this context, the idea of collective knowledge that is constructed through social action which produces an outcome (the CAP) based on shared beliefs and values is important (Adler 1997: 325). This relates directly to the existence of the values and ideas of African unity shared among African countries that afforded them the opportunity to collaboratively create CAPs. African Agency

Growing literature seeks to discern Africa’s actual and potential agency in international relations. History affirms that the African continent has been politically, economically and socially dominated and marginalised by Western states. A pivotal moment in the continent’s international relations was during the scramble for Africa as it was there that European politics disintegrated traditional African diplomacy and officially integrated Africa into the international society (Mohammed 2015: 96; Spies 2016: 43). Africa’s narrative and position in international relations was at the mercy of Western powers while it was entangled in the surge of global events (Chipaike & Knowledge 2018: 4).

An unravelling of pan-African consciousness unfolded, rooted in the black struggle against the racial discrimination, marginalisation and isolation of Africa and Africans in the international system (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2014: 22). Its primary aim was to create the necessary conditions for Africans to take back control of their lives and countries and to take part in the socio-economic and political affairs of their continent (Murithi 2016).

This was a significant progression of African agency, which translated into the pan-African principles of unity, cooperation, peace and economic growth as an expression of a spirit of *solidarity* among African leaders (Murithi 2016; Murithi 2014: 1). These principles were later institutionalised into the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and later the African Union (AU), which became the vehicle for African agency and driver of African interests.

In the same token, the backbone of African agency and the pan-African movement is the idea of solidarity. According to Tiekou (2014: 15), Africa's international relations cannot be fully understood without taking into account the "pan-African solidarity norm". Conceived in 1963 at a meeting of the OAU Council of Ministers, it is "the widespread belief among African ruling elites that the proper and ethically acceptable behaviour of Africa's political elites is to demonstrate a feeling of oneness and support towards other Africans" (Tiekou 2014: 15, 16). In theory, the norm provides the basis of appropriate behaviour and dissuades leaders of individual African states from publicly disagreeing with each other especially when dealing with issues and matters where a broad continental consensus has been established (Tiekou 2014: 16). African political elites are expected to work collaboratively and cooperatively at the continental level and this often puts African governments in positions where they have to constantly place conformity and compromise over national interests and preferences of their states (Tiekou 2014: 16).

The link between these ideas is that when referring to African agency, one has to take into account that it was a process in which Africa and Africans had to have a conscious realization of their African identity; there was a spread of pan-African consciousness to Africans and those in the diaspora; and there was a post-colonial struggle to unite the continent (Oloruntoba 2015: 10, 11). These were collective efforts under the guise of solidarity – which continues to be a prevalent concept today – to institutionalise and provide a wider platform for African agency.

Relatedly, agency is associated with an African state's ability to, within the structure of the international system, make its own decisions on matters of climate change regardless of the existence of the CAP. However, the assumption is that, although all states acquire a certain degree of agency in the international arena, the fact that the

CAP exists means that there was and is still a challenge for African states to act on their agency on their own. The major constraint is that the international system has historically undermined African agency and silenced the African voice; however, the enabling factor is that African agency was used to create the African Union (AU) within the confines of the “hostile” international system. The AU becomes an important aspect to the broader image because (1) its creation is as a result of African states exercising their agency; (2) it has become the overarching structure that grounds African agency; (3) all common African positions are founded within the AU; and (4) it paradoxically can become both a constraint and enabler of African agency.

## **5. Conclusion**

This chapter attempted to provide an explanation of concepts that will frame the paper and discussed the theories in which the concepts are situated. From social constructivism, the idea of shared values is vital in understanding the inception of the CAP. Relatedly, the concept of agency, pan-African solidarity provides grounds to conceptualise African agency as well as the link between agency and structure and constraint and enabler which relate to the agency of African states and the structure of the AU. Finally, the idea of national interests, borrowed from realism, speaks to the inherent self-interested nature of states to move from a condition of collective interest to one that serves their own state desires.

## **CHAPTER 3**

# **CLIMATE CHANGE NEGOTIATIONS: Context and Contours**

### **1. Introduction**

The CAPs on climate change that this study analyses is an attempt to respond to the ravages that climate change is causing the world and Africa, in particular. Therefore, we must understand these ravages by climate change on the African continent. This chapter gives the reader the context on the African continent's vulnerability to the increasing effects of climate change. These vulnerabilities include areas in food security, water availability and health. Further, the chapter discusses the idea of global negotiations, coalitions and conference or multilateral diplomacy as key responses to climate change. These are also ways to understand the setting of global climate change negotiations. The last section that highlights important climate change actors relevant to African countries in international negotiations.

### **2. Areas of Africa's Vulnerability to Climate Change**

As we become more cognizant of the prolonged effects of climate change and as it aggravates the environmental degradation and makes human life more vulnerable, the greater the need to become proactive in dealing with its risks and effects especially on the African continent. Africa is one of the smallest contributors to the increase of greenhouse gases (3.8% of total emissions) as compared to other continents in the world, yet it is one of the biggest victims of the effects of climate change (Dahir 2017; Brown et al. 2007: 1143). The challenge that the continent has is the fact that the majority of Africa's economy is highly dependent on its natural resources and its key development sectors, namely, food and agriculture, water and energy, health and forestry will be stunted as the continent continues to experience climate change (Lisk 2009: 8, 9). The impact of this environmental change exacerbates previously existing issues in African societies especially those that are already a challenge for the continent such as economic development, poverty, the standards of living and health (Lioubimtseva 2014: 222). Certainly, the magnitude and extent of these issues are dependent on the different regions and individual countries but given that Africa hosts



the greatest number of developing countries with relatively small economies and low-income households, climate change adaptation and mitigation becomes paramount (Bogott & van Wyk 2015: 49).

There is a great need for Africa to focus its resources on combatting the effects of climate change, however, the continent is not as highly prepared and structured to mitigate and adapt to these effects (Deressa 2014: 29). This is why climate scholars emphasise the importance for Africa to actively participate in global climate change governance and cooperate in creating common positions. Below we discuss these areas of vulnerability caused by climate change that directly affect African societies. These include food security, water availability, and health.

## 2.1 Food Security

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) projects that undernourishment and food insecurity are on the rise in Africa (Kabasa and Sage 2009: 21). Agriculture is also experiencing adverse effects. Agriculture constitutes approximately 30% of Africa's gross domestic product (GDP) with 60% of rural communities directly and indirectly dependent on the agricultural sector for their livelihood (FAO 2008). Without the added stress of the climate changes, the agricultural sector in many rural communities remains largely affected by the increasing population and socio-economic instabilities, which further puts a strain on the prospect for food security. The gross output of crop yield in large parts of the continent has declined due to the change in temperatures, which has led to an increase in agricultural pests, decrease in soil fertility and increase in droughts and floods. A decrease in crop yield has serious economic implications where small-scale farmers are unlikely to meet the demand as well as make enough money to sustain their businesses. Fischer *et al.* (2005: 2075) assesses that food-insecure countries, specifically those in Africa have the potential to lose 10% to 20% of their food production potential by 2080. In a report published by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) (UNECA 2020b: 4), Africa's worst-case scenario in light of climate change sees a reduction in crop yield of 13% in the central and western parts of the continent, 11% in the northern region and 8% in the southern and eastern regions. On a positive note, the length of seasonal changes may offer an advantage to certain areas where agricultural growth is

dependent on rainfall and increased temperatures and in areas where certain crops are not affected by high temperatures (Fischer et al. 2005: 2074).

Climate change will inevitably modify agricultural activities, which will likely increase the gaps between developing and developed countries. Africa's primary concern should be on better understanding and implementing adaptation strategies, both on-farm and in-market mechanisms which will be important contributors to limiting the severity of agricultural impacts (Fischer et al. 2005: 2081).

## **2.2 Water Availability**

Water covers a large percentage of the world and freshwater supply is necessary for sustaining and protecting human livelihood and development. There has been recent awareness that the earth's freshwater supply has become very scarce and is tremendously vulnerable to human activities (Ashton 2007: 1). In Africa, more than 50% of the population lack access to safe water and proper sanitation especially those concentrated in rural areas (AMCEN 2011: 25). Although every country is responsible for providing a sufficient supply of good quality water to meet the needs of its growing populations, the added changes in temperature add to the increase in water stress. Taylor (2011) estimated that the number of people exposed to increased water stress is projected to be 250 million Africans by 2020. Changing weather patterns have already caused chaos on the continent in the last decade as heavy rains have eradicated many crops and left many cities and towns flooded (ACMEN 2011: 8). Water stress will see African countries that are accustomed to regular rainfall experience long periods of droughts and many regions becoming drier than usual (Taylor 2011). Africa has approximately 80 rivers and lake basins, many of which are shared by multiple states, covering 60% of the continent's land area (Lioubimtseva 2014: 223). Many of these rivers especially the Nile, Niger and Zambezi have great importance to the economic growth and population sustainability for their bordering states (Lioubimtseva 2014: 223). As with any valuable resource, conflict has arisen as competition for dwindling water resources increased and there have been many water-related conflicts between states in pursuit of their national interest, for example, to control of water flow and supply of the Nile River between Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia

(Walsh and Sengupta 2020). These basins are also a great source of economic stability for many communities who make a living from fisheries and water farming (Taylor 2011). In addition, economic development in the form of the development of hydropower for electricity use will be negatively affected by the prevalence of droughts and floods (Isingoma 2009: 36).

## 2.3 Health

According to the World Bank (2019), the change in weather patterns has an influence on the change in distribution and occurrence of vector-borne diseases. Vector-borne diseases are organisms that transmit pathogens and parasites from an infected person to another (WHO 2014). They are found usually in tropical and sub-tropical regions and in areas where safe drinking water and sanitation systems are underdeveloped (WHO 2014). This means that the number of people at risk of malaria, cholera, dengue and diarrhoea will significantly increase (World Bank 2019). Much of the health problems the world faces are not caused by climate change, however, the reality is that the effects of climate change exacerbate and intensify health issues and many populations are unfit and ill-prepared to handle new health scares (UNECA 2011: 2). Climate change changes the frequency and intensity of weather events causing health issues such as malnutrition and changes the distribution of diseases (UNECA 2011: 2). This can also mean that the life cycle of vector-borne diseases changes. (UNECA 2011: 3). 90% of all malaria cases in the world occur in Africa and there is an apparent expansion of malaria suitable areas (Lioubimtseva 2014: 223). When considering the health impacts of climate change, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (2011: 4) suggests that climate change has a direct and indirect impact. In terms of the direct health impact, this refers to the effects on the human body such as injury, morbidity and mortality caused by extreme weather events (cyclones and floods), thermal stress (heatwaves and prolonged cold periods), skin and eye damage (through UV radiation), and cardio-respiratory diseases related to changes in temperature and air quality. They further mention that the majority of climate change health impacts are actually indirect. This means that they do not affect the human body directly, however, they primarily affect “biogeochemical systems” and include water insecurity, lifecycles of pathogens, resource conflicts, famine, population displacement and malnutrition (UNECA 2011: 5).

### 3. Global Negotiations

Global negotiations are fundamentally important in addressing pertinent issues that transcend national and international borders. They are one of the foundations of diplomacy that specifically deal with the engagement between states. According to Fred Iklé (1967: 3, 4), a negotiation is understood as a process of mutual persuasion and adjustment between multiple actors with different preferences and interests with the aim of accommodating those interests to form a single joint decision. Negotiations can then be viewed as a universal mechanism for decision-making at all levels of social interaction and among a variety of actors (Depledge 2005: 5). In order for any negotiation to take place, there must exist three conditions that have to be met. Firstly, two or more independent actors must exist in a situation that requires them to become interdependent based on an area of shared interest which sees the action of one actor directly affecting the other (Srivastava 2008: 26). Secondly, there must be a clash in the preferred course of action, and thirdly, the actors involved must refrain from using other means of action to resolve their case or conflict (Depledge 2005: 5). Kaufmann (1996: 9) also offers that in the case of conference diplomacy negotiations are to be viewed as the “sum total of all talks and contacts intended” to (1) work cohesively towards the objectives of the conference and (2) to solve any problem areas of disputes that exist prior to the conference and those that arise during the conference.

#### 3.1 Global Intergovernmental Negotiations

The fundamental principles of all negotiations are extremely similar, however, when referring to global intergovernmental negotiations there are particular differences. These differences include the *type* of negotiator: sovereign states and government representatives which are held accountable to their domestic legislature. The relationship between the individual negotiator and their domestic legislature is complex (Depledge 2005: 6). This is primarily because states are not monolithic - they essentially have to represent the multitude of government departments, representatives and NGO's who have their own opinions of the national positions and priorities that the nation should consider and to what extent they should adjust those positions. Positions that specific states uphold are directly linked to the domestic

political climate which greatly influences its position on specific issues (Depledge 2005: 6).

The second difference is the number of parties involved. We know of the traditional bilateral or two-party negotiations, but the distinction comes with multilateral negotiations that involve more than two parties. Midgaard and Underdal (1977) wrote about multiparty conferences and identified three types of multilateral negotiations: 7 parties (small), between 7 to 20 parties (intermediate) and more than 20 parties (large). A fourth distinction is intergovernmental negotiations which include all or the majority of existing states which we refer to conference diplomacy or global negotiations (Depledge 2005: 7). This type of negotiation is open to all heterogeneous nation-states and must forge a mutually acceptable outcome of all parties involved. A difficult task of negotiations of this magnitude is the complexity of organising and following the negotiation process to produce a positive and effective agreement (Auer and Racine 2001). A defining feature of global negotiations is that the large number of participants have differing economic, cultural, social, political and linguistic realities, which come with historical baggage in international relations placing them at different capacity levels (Depledge 2005: 2). That inevitably suggests that there is always going to be contradictions and the reality of extreme inequality of participants in terms of wealth and power and the protection of sovereignty.

### **3.1.1 Conference Diplomacy and Multilateral Diplomacy**

For years conference diplomacy has been an essential element of international relations. Conferences have served as an important outlet for diplomatic skills and the attainment of foreign policy goals on a large-scale setting (Kaufmann 1996: 7). Kaufmann (1996: 7) offers a wholesome definition that is conference diplomacy is the management of relationships between governments as well as between governments and intergovernmental organizations that occur in international conferences. Although commonly associated with the UN, conference diplomacy can manifest itself in many settings outside an organisation and includes states and non-state actors that have various stakes within an issue (Rittberger 1983: 170). This implies that there is an aspect of multilateralisation and diplomatic relations that occur in these settings involving several negotiations by formal and informal participants (Rittberger 1983:

170). Influence from government representatives, field experts, non-governmental organisations and committees exercise their negotiating skills during the states of conferences (Rittberger 1983: 171).

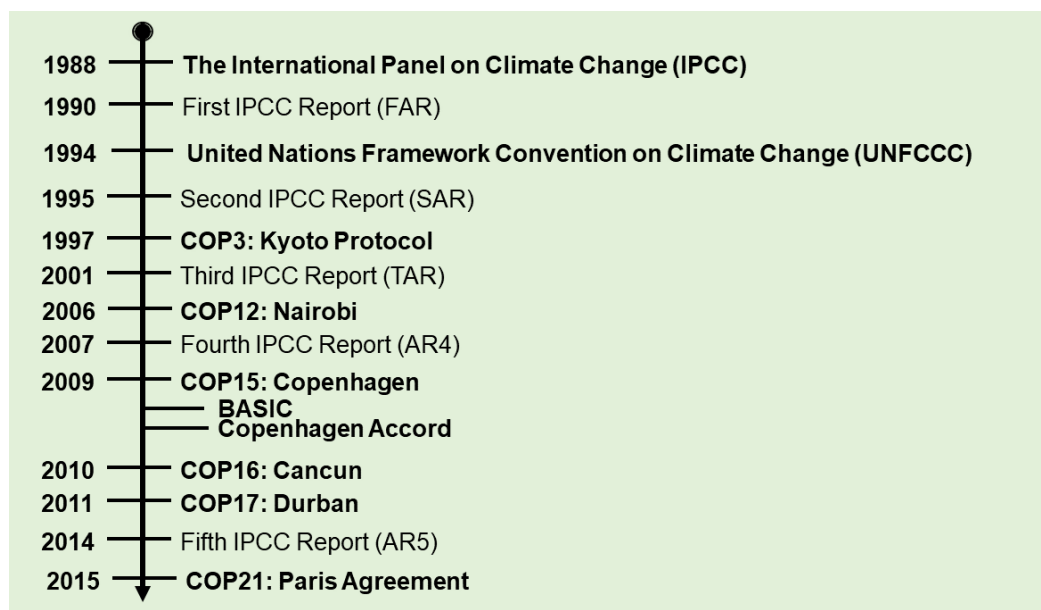
### **3.1.2 Coalitions**

In multilateral settings, it is not uncommon for states to form coalitions, in fact, it has become a common feature as they are the preferred negotiating strategy for developing states. Kelly (1968: 62) defines coalitions as groups of individuals who (1) agree to pursue a common goal, (2) combine their resources in pursuit of this goal, (3) continuously communicate their plans to achieve their goals, and (4) agree on the distribution of the payoff received when obtaining their goal. Kelly further provides a few reasons for the need for coalitions in political settings: (1) intense communication between members, (2) similarities of backgrounds, (3) ideological similarities and differences of members ability to maximize the participation of members, and (4) the size of the coalition affords members a bigger probability to win a debate. The UN boasts a number of coalitions within its organisation as member states have formed subgroupings to tackle issues such as trade and climate change. In the context of the climate negotiations, Audet (2013: 373) describes two types of coalition groups: bloc and alliance coalitions. Bloc coalitions are typically grounded in common identities and ideologies and deal with a multitude of overlapping issues (Audet 2013: 373). On the other hand, alliance coalitions are created based on specific issue-based matters and are strategically rather than ideologically aligned (Audet 2013: 373). A few coalitions have formed throughout the years in climate negotiations to give member states negotiating leverage as they negotiate common interests and positions (Auer and Racine 2001). Coalitions such as the G77 + China, the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), the African Group of Negotiators and the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) – which are bloc coalitions – and BASIC which is an alliance coalition are integral in this discussion of international climate negotiations. These groupings consist mostly of developing countries who have to deal with the reality of political and economic inequality between states where they are primarily at a disadvantage. For these negotiating groups, there is power in their collective voice because it makes exerting influence more effective.

## 4. Climate Change Actors

This section aims to provide an overview of specific actors involved in climate change negotiations and is divided into five main sections namely: the global platforms and milestones that African states have engaged in to advance their collective interests, the multilateral negotiating groups that African states participate in, the main African actors specifically tasked with negotiating climate issues, ad-hoc actors involved in advocating African climate positions. The International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) are organisations focused on providing information and a platform for climate negotiations. The Kyoto Protocol, the Copenhagen Accord and the Paris Agreement are important documents that changed certain aspects in negotiations especially with regards to establishing legally binding agreements. The chosen international climate conferences for this research are: COP12 in Kenya, COP15 in Copenhagen and COP17 in Durban because of the active participation of African states in negotiating their positions and the emphasis placed on these conferences in the literature by climate scholars. This research focuses on the 2009 – 2015 time frame and for each actor, the objective of the section is to explain *who* the actor is, their *role* in climate negotiations, *how* they are structured and their overall *position* on climate change.

**Diagram 1: Diagram shows a timeline of conferences most relevant to this paper**



**Diagram 1: Timeline of climate conferences**

*Source created by researcher*

## **4.1 Global Negotiations Platforms and Milestones**

Climate change negotiations occur in special platforms different from negotiations that would take place at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). These climate negotiations occur every year through conferences hosted by different UN member countries party to the UNFCCC and guided by the framework of the UNFCCC, with reference to research done by the IPCC and each conference has certain milestones that they aim to achieve.

### **4.1.1 International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)**

One of the most important scientific research organisation that provides regular assessments of climate change impacts and future risks is the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The institution emerged onto the international stage when it was created by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) in 1988 (IPCC 2013). It was created with the aim of providing all governments with relevant and recent scientific information that will help them develop and adopt necessary climate policies in their countries (IPCC 2019a). To curb the uncertainties and scepticism related to global warming and climate change, the IPCC releases timely reports on the progression and current reality of the change in global temperatures and has thus far provided six reports since 1990. Climate change has become a major concern for humankind and within its reports, it tries to distinguish the natural causes of rising global temperature and where human activity plays a factor. The reports map out the risks that many regions will face in the trajectory of current rising temperatures, the impacts, adaptation and mitigation measures that are necessary to deal with the problems (IPCC 2019a). The First Assessment Report, produced in 1990, set the precedence for climate matters to be taken seriously by the international community which led to the UNGA acting on a recommendation by the Second World Climate Conference to formally start negotiating a workable climate convention on climate change (Yamin & Depledge 2004: 23).

The IPCC currently has 195 country members and employs scientists, researchers, field experts, academics and knowledgeable individuals to contribute scientific papers



on the drivers, risks, impacts, known facts on climate change and areas that need continuous and further research (IPCC 2013). The organisation has three leading bodies. Firstly, government representatives of the IPCC, called the Panel, meet at least once a year at a Plenary Session along with other relevant non-state agents to make decisions on institutional matters (IPCC 2019b). Secondly, the IPCC Bureau provides guidance to the Panel on all the organisations scientific and technical aspects and also gives advice on strategic and management related issues (IPCC 2019b). The third leading body is the Executive Committee that hosts the Chair, Vice-Chair and Co-Chairs of the organisation's three Working Groups and Task Force (IPCC 2019b). The Committee aims to facilitate the implementation of the IPCC's work programme and decisions that the Panel has taken (IPCC 2019b). The three Working Groups and Task Force in the IPCC serve different functions. The first Working Group deals with "The Physical Science Basis of Climate Change", the second Working Group deals with "Climate Change Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability" and the third Working Group deals with the "Mitigation of Climate Change" (IPCC 2019a). The Task Force on National Greenhouse Gas Inventories aims "to develop and refine a methodology for the calculation and reporting of national greenhouse gas emissions and removals" (IPCC 2019a).

Many organisations base their climate research and recommendations on the reports and findings of the IPCC, which has since become an authoritative voice. Okereke and Charlesworth (2014: 42), submit that there is much scholarly debate surrounding the credibility and accuracy of scientific research on climate change – including information from the IPCC. Forsyth (2014: 225) links this to the idea that some scientific fields – especially in the area of environmental science – are politically influenced thereby questioning the ability of science to be an authoritative knowledge source, the role of scientific expertise and how that affects the social order. This is prolific for the IPCC which some academics claim functions as a political body as much as a scientific body (Okereke and Charlesworth 2014: 42). This can be seen specifically in the language and wording that the IPCC uses wherein 2009 the organisation's leaked emails revealed that some of its members intentionally used political objectives to shape their scientific research, which has a direct impact on its findings and recommendations (Forsyth 2014: 225).

### **4.1.2 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)**

Before the inception of the UNFCCC, global climate negotiations were not as structured and frequent as they are today. The climate discussions were left to big UN summits appropriate for building broad consensus than producing a binding negotiated text. The First World Climate Conference organised by the WMO was held in Geneva in 1979 as an attempt to assess whether GHG's had the potential to disrupt future temperatures (Alessi and van der Gaast 2015). As public awareness on climate change improved, politicians and policymakers started becoming vocal about climate matters and hosting smaller-scale conferences such as the World Conference on the Changing Atmosphere held in Toronto, which called for increased resources into scientific research on the global climate and established an international framework (Nulman 2015: 9). In December 1990, the UNGA started the process for negotiations on a framework convention on climate change that would later provide the foundation for a global climate change regime (Lisinge-Fotabong et al. 2016: 1). The inception for the Convention was only established at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit (UNFCCC 2019a). Despite the number of negotiations had, the Convention did not specify the limitations on global GHG emissions as countries who are the biggest emitters of CO<sub>2</sub> (especially those dependent on large coal reserves and oil) could not come to an agreement (Mumma 2000:183). After 18 months of negotiations and close to 50 ratifications, the process resulted in the adoption of the UNFCCC on 21 March 1994 (Mumma 2000: 183). The ultimate goal of the treaty was to “stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic (human-induced) interference with the climate system” (UNFCCC 2019a). Though the level of GHG emission was left undefined, the treaty was monumental in its pursuit because it was adopted during a time where scientific knowledge on the effects of climate change was limited and it was able to bound states to act in the interest of human security (UNFCCC 2019a).

As previously mentioned, the greatest historical and contemporary emissions of greenhouse gases originate in industrialised or developed countries and comparatively, the emissions per capita in developing countries are still low (Dahir 2017). For that reason, the principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities” (CBDR-RC) became an important basis for the positions of

developing countries, critical civil society formations and social movements. They argued that this principle must underpin the Convention where developed countries are required to be in the forefront of fighting climate change by providing resources and undertaking mitigation efforts more than others (Romm 2018: 154). This meant that the impetus to reduce global GHG emissions was placed on industrialised countries who were largely responsible for the increased amount in the atmosphere. In that light, the Convention categorised countries into three annexes. Annex I: 41 countries that belong to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (an organisation for high-income countries committed to enabling economic growth and providing a place to discuss, collaborate on policies and international issues) and 14 countries with economies in transition (EITs); Annex II: 24 OECD countries and; non-Annex I: low income and developing countries (Hernandez 2014: 130). Each Annex grouping has different responsibilities in dealing with climate issues. Annex I parties have the responsibility to return emissions to 1990 levels by 2000 and Annex II parties have the responsibility to provide financial support to developing and EIT countries specifically for aid in adaptation and mitigation as well as promote technology transfer (Hernandez 2014: 130). Non-Annex I parties are countries that are most vulnerable to the impact of climate change and require support from Annex I and II countries to help mitigate and adapt to climate issues (UNFCCC 2020a). In addition, the Convention also recognises 49 least developed countries (LDCs) that also have a limited capability to respond to climate impact (UNFCCC 2020a). As of 2017, there are 197 parties or member states to the convention.

The main decision-making body of the UNFCCC is the Conference of the Parties (COP), which takes place every year to assess the effectiveness of the UNFCCC, allow members to negotiate new treaties or protocols and review the progress of party commitments (Romm 2018: 154). Each COP is attended by members party to the UNFCCC and is hosted in a different country each year shifting between global regions and is expected to achieve particular milestones in negotiations towards a long-term goal of reaching a binding agreement on a climate change treaty. The first meeting was held in Berlin, Germany in 1995 and most recently COP26 is to be held in Glasgow, United Kingdom (EESI 2020; UNFCCC 2020b). Since its inception, Africa has hosted two conferences in Nairobi and Durban and has increased in its submissions and agenda items for the UNFCCC. In terms of the rest of the structure

of the UNFCCC, the Convention established several bodies to support its operations namely, the Secretariat (Article 8) tasked with arranging the yearly conferences, compiling reports and distributing information relevant to the Parties; the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) (Article 9) tasked with providing scientific and technological advice on matters related to the Convention; Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) (Article 10) tasked with assisting the COP in assessing reviewing the effective implementation of the Convention; and the Financial Mechanism (Article 11) tasked with providing countries with financial resources on a concessional basis including for the transfer of technology (UNFCCC 1992: 12, 13, 14).

Although the Convention hosts a great number of parties and is successful in conducting negotiations each year, debates of its effectiveness and fairness have been raised. Its effectiveness has been assessed under the light of the fact that GHG's continue to rise despite the protocol (Kyoto Protocol) and agreements (Cancun and Paris) that were meant to encourage states to decrease their emissions and will continue to increase over the next decade (Bhushan 2019). Divisions exist between those who see the Convention as effective and necessary, and those who see many holes in the system. The Convention is judged on the *outputs* or *decisions* it makes during conferences and on the *outcomes* it produces that result in *policies* implementing the decisions taken which can be seen differently in each COP.

### 4.1.3 Kyoto Protocol COP3

1997 saw the inception of the Kyoto Protocol to the UNFCCC adopted in the city of Kyoto in Japan during COP3 which set legally binding targets and timelines for emission reduction only for industrialized countries (or Annex II countries) (Romm 2018: 154). The targets were made specifically for individual industrialized states and would see an overall 5% decrease in emission reduction compared to 1990 levels which was expected to occur between 2008 – 2012 (also referred to the 5-year commitment period) (UNFCCC 2019b). This came from a decision that took place during the first COP that called for a review of the implementation of climate commitments of Annex I countries to the UNFCCC and to find ways to strengthen these commitments (Mumma 2000: 184). An ad-hoc group was created to draft the

protocol, which eventually came into fruition after eight sessions of intense negotiations (Mumma 2000: 184). The protocol would go into effect as soon as 55 parties to the convention – which account for at least 55% of total global emissions – became party to the Kyoto Protocol (Mumma 2000: 184). As of 2020, there are 192 parties to the Kyoto Protocol.

Important provisions included in the Kyoto Protocol are as follows:

- The gases that were meant to be controlled and reduced were identified as carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons and sulphur hexafluoride (The Guardian 2005);
- Industrialised countries were required to cut emissions of major GHG's to 5% compared with 1990 levels by the 2008 – 2012 timeframe (UNFCCC 2019b). The second commitment period started from 2013 – 2020 and Parties were committed to reducing GHG emissions by at least 18% below 1990 levels (UNFCCC 2019b);
- It assigned each individual industrialised country an allowable amount of GHG emissions during the first commitment period (Mumma 2000: 184);
- It established emissions trading systems that allowed countries to earn credits to their emissions target by carrying out emission reduction projects in other countries (CNN 2020); and
- It introduced the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), which allows emission reduction projects in developing countries to earn emission reduction credits (The Guardian 2005).

Initially celebrated for its progressiveness in addressing global climate action, scholars have argued that the Kyoto Protocol failed to achieve any meaningful progress. Rosen (2015: 32) argues that the problem was in the institutional design of the Protocol which adopted an “ineffective path-dependent model for solving climate change” that carried high costs for member states and derailed any effective GHG reduction. This may be attributed to the contestation of the principle of “common but differentiated responsibility and respective capabilities” that placed a major burden on developed countries to respond to climate change which saw countries such as the United States fail to ratify the Protocol, prolonged negotiations where states such as Australia

temporarily withdrew from the treaty and countries such as China and India were not required to cut emissions despite their large contributions (Rosen 2015: 31).

#### **4.1.4 Nairobi COP12**

The first Conference of the Parties (COP12) in Africa was held in Nairobi, Kenya in 2006. It was in conjunction with the second session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (MOP). The conference offered Africa the opportunity to put the continent's concerns at the forefront of the agenda and to devote more of the continent's resources to the conference. This was important as in previous years the African negotiators were struggling to influence the climate agenda, fortunately, during COP12 acting as a collective actor, Africa was able to focus the discussions on its main areas of concern such as adaptation strategies, capacity building of the CDM, extending the mandate of the Expert Group on Technology Transfer (EGTT) and the maintenance of momentum in discussions on the post-2012 climate regime (UNFCCC 2007). The African Group of Negotiators (AGN) was able to reach a majority of negotiating groups since the conference outcomes were aligned with the positions of Africa, the least developed countries (LDC), small states and island states (SIDS) (Zondi 2013: 29). In addition to those successes, the AGN also helped achieve a few important initiatives for developing countries: firstly, the Nairobi Work Programme on Impacts, Vulnerability and Adaptation to Climate Change that would "improve capacity building related to adaptation decision-making in LDCs" and secondly, the Nairobi Framework which "aimed to facilitate participation by underrepresented countries in the CDM" (Roger and Belliethathan 2016: 92, 99). Other successes include the initiation of reviews of treaty commitments and the first amendment to the Kyoto Protocol through the inclusion of Belarus as an Annex B country (Ancha et al. 2006).

Despite Africa achieving success for its agenda-setting aspirations, international hopes for COP12 was that it would increase the urgency of climate responses. But Sterk *et al.* (2007: 139) argue that the summit failed to achieve that. What it did achieve was a continuation of Kyoto Protocol discussions (Sterk et al. 2007: 147). Ancha *et al.* (2006) suggest that although the conference was important for Africa's voice, it did not result in any significant outcomes as discussions among COP parties were slow,

lengthy and based on issues of relatively minor concern to developed nations. Roger and Belliethathan (2016: 100) recognise that the increase in Africa's efforts to influence future negotiations and the increase in individual and AGN submissions to the UNFCCC are long-term positive effects resulting from Africa hosting COP12.

#### **4.1.5 Copenhagen Accord COP15**

Denmark hosted COP15 in 2009, which was at the time the largest political gathering outside of the UN headquarters attended by state officials and various non-state actors (UNFCCC 2019c). The conference was considered a dramatic turn in the negotiation process as negotiators and heads of states struggled and failed to agree to a legally binding agreement on climate change mitigation and adaptation. The conference was primarily seen as the developed world and emerging economies vs the developing world (Kuylenstierna 2016). The expectation was to produce a fair and equitable agreement but after hours of intense formal and informal meetings, the talks resulted in a political agreement (Miller 2010: 2). Negotiators were having problems concerning transparency (between China and the United States and the G77 and developed countries), and the overall process of the conference (IISD 2009b). At the conclusion of the conference, debates surrounding whether the Accord should be adopted or not resulted in many negotiating groups supporting it by seeing it as a step towards “a better future” agreement (IISD 2009b). However, some developing countries opposed the adoption of the Accord because they considered the negotiating process “untransparent” and “undemocratic” (IISD 2009b). The Accord was initially drafted by the Group of 20 (G20) – a group of emerging economies – but was redrafted through the initiative of BASIC – a negotiating group formed at the conference (Reitig 2012; Zondi 2013: 30).

Despite this, the conference was successful in producing two significant outcomes. The first is that parties to the UNFCCC expressed their intent to limit the long-term global temperature threshold to 2°C subject to review by 2015 (UNFCCC 2010b: 5). This was primarily influenced by the IPCC's Fourth Assessment Report, which stated that significant cuts in global emissions needed to be made to a level that was less than 2 degrees Celsius for the world to continue further sustaining itself (Romm 2018: 156). The second outcome was that developed countries were required to provide

funding to climate actions in developing countries while also adapting to the effects that rising temperatures have in the developing world (UNFCCC 2019c). An estimated 30 billion US dollars from developed states was pledged for the 2010 – 2012 period with 100 billion US dollars provided every year after that period until 2020 (UN 2010a: 7). These international funding efforts are subject to verification, monitoring, and reporting. To further support this initiative, new bodies and mechanisms were created such as REDD-plus (Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation), the Copenhagen Green Climate Fund, a Technology Mechanism as well as a High-Level Panel to study the implementation of the revenue provided (UN 2010a: 7).

Some scholars were disappointed in the outcomes and the process of the conference, arguing that the Accord was weak in its nature and that it demeans the progress of global climate negotiations. Its weakness and subsequent failure can be attributed (1) to the fact that it comes across as a non-binding political declaration; (2) to the unspecified list of countries that contributed to its text; (3) to its unreliability in actually setting targets for aggregate emission reductions and (4) to its lack of formal adoption and without an institutional home and legality in international law (Dimitrov 2009: 21). Miller (2010: 2) puts the blame of the Accord's failure on the lack of political will and leadership of some states in the months leading up the negotiations.

#### **4.1.6 Durban COP17**

The second COP held in Africa took place in Durban, South Africa in 2011 and it followed the Cancun COP, which largely firmed up agreements already made in Copenhagen around mitigation pledges, a new Green Climate Fund for developing countries, and a system to help verify countries' actions (Kuyper et al: 2018: 357; IISD 2010: 17, 18). The Durban COP was another opportunity for African negotiators to exert their influence. There were essentially three big questions at the Durban summit: (1) concern about the future of the Kyoto Protocol and a way forward after the Kyoto Protocol's commitment period expired at the end of 2012; (2) how to create a new international treaty, would require a more robust approach to “legally binding” commitments from all countries beyond 2020; and (3) how states were going to implement decisions made at Cancun (Hultman 2011; Gersmann & Vidal 2011). Previous COP's had attempted to find ways to replace the Kyoto Protocol, but a



breakthrough was achieved through the establishment of the Ad-Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action, which launched a new round of negotiations aimed at reaching an agreement by 2015 placing all countries under the same legal regime for the post-2020 period (Tuffa et. al 2012: 29).

The main outcomes from the Durban COP are as follows:

- Commitment from all countries to increase their efforts in reducing their GHG emission to well below 2°C or 1.5° below pre-industrial levels under a 2<sup>nd</sup> commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol;
- The Green Climate Fund was established to build on the commitment of providing 100 billion a year to developing countries to help manage the impacts of climate change; and
- A political agreement was established to work towards a legally binding treaty that will include all major GHG emitters (The Climate Institute 2011: 4).

Although the Durban Platform addressed previous negotiating process issues such as timing, Bodansky (2012) maintains that it did not substantively outline the content of what is to be negotiated. Although, it did address issue areas such as mitigation, adaptation, finance, technology development and transfer, transparency of action, and support and capacity-building, for some scholars it was an empty agreement that allowed parties to fill it with whatever content they wanted (Bodansky 2012). Despite this view, the Durban Platform is hailed for setting the foundation of content that would lead to the adoption of the Paris Agreement.

#### **4.1.7 Paris Agreement COP21**

COP21 was hosted in Paris, France in 2015 and brought about the Paris Agreement, which was a breakthrough agreement that exceeded expectations because for the first time since the inception of climate change negotiations and discussions, all developing and developed states in the world unanimously agreed to reduce and limit the amount of greenhouse gas emissions to well below 2°C with efforts to decrease it to 1.5 °C (UN 2015b: 3). This agreement came on the back of two decades worth of conferences and agreements dating as far back as the Earth Summit held in 1992 where the UNFCCC was begun (Romm 2018: 153). It pursues the decisions made by the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action previously established at COP17 to establish a legally

binding agreement (UN 2015b: 1). To increase transparency, the agreement reinforced the need for each state to adhere to their nationally determined contributions (NDCs) to avoid emissions rising higher which would render the agreement futile (Streck et al. 2016: 4, 5). If the agreement is adhered to, this would mean that the world could potentially avoid any more dangerous climactic changes. The pledges taken are meant to be reviewed every 5 years until the ultimate goal is reached. The Agreement came into effect in November 2016 when all 195 countries signed after reaching the requirement that more than 55 nations, responsible for at least 55% of total global GHG's, had ratified the agreement or formally agreed to join (UNFCCC 2019d). Even though 195 states have signed the agreement (meaning that once delegations from different nations agree on the terms of a treaty that will bind the signatory states, the relevant ministers sign the treaty signifying that the state expresses an intention to comply with the terms though it does not bind them to do so), only 170 have ratified it (once the treaty has been signed, each state will deal with it according to its own national procedures, after approval has been granted under a state's internal procedures, it will notify the other parties that they consent to be bound by the treaty) (Government of the Netherlands 2019; Romm 2018: 155).

The Paris agreement is applauded for successfully applying to all parties with no differentiation between developed and developing countries which means all countries are responsible to do their parts in reducing emissions (Skah 2020: 9). However, it is built on voluntary pledges and despite legally binding obligations such as the NDC's, there are issues that the parties are not compelled to implement (Skah 2020: 9). Which leads to further issues of measurement, monitoring and reporting verification remaining at top of agenda causing divisions between countries (Skah 2020: 9). Mitchell *et al.* (2018: 4), posit that even though reductions in GHG emission play a large part in stabilizing the climate at 1.5°C, there needs to be more effort put in large-scale removal of carbon dioxide and finding alternative renewable energy for sustainable development as emission reduction is not sufficient. However, there is still a need for strong policy measures for countries to share the burden of inequality (Mitchell et al. 2018: 4).

## 4.2 Multilateral Negotiating Groups

As previously mentioned, multilateral negotiations are rarely ever done purely by individual states, coalition groups and organisations form part of the process. Although climate negotiations occur under the umbrella of the UN and most negotiating groups are well established, new negotiating groups were created to manage the negotiation process and raise specific issue areas. This section looks at a select few coalition groups that African states form a part of (such as the G77 + China, Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)) and the African organisations that negotiate common positions (such as the African Group of Negotiators, AMCEN and the Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSCC)).

#### **4.2.1 G77 + China**

The G77 + China is the main coalition of developing countries in the UN and is the most important institutional expression of the position of the Global South. It was created in 1964 during the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) for the purpose of advocating the position and furthering the economic interest of developing countries within the new world order (Kasa et al. 2007: 115). As the largest coalition within the UN Framework, the G77 + China's focus is to influence the international agenda and to actively involve itself in norm-setting (Hernandez 2014: 129). The diversity in economies, cultures and political interests make its pursuit to overcome injustices and disadvantages in the international system priority so that the group continuously identifying gaps and areas that are common interest to member states (Hernandez 2014: 129). Currently, the group has 135 member states including the original 77 countries (G77 2019). The structure of the G77 includes a chairmanship, its highest political body and spokesperson for the group, rotating every year between three geographical locations: Africa, Asia- Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean (Kasa et al. 2007: 115). An ally or associate member of the group, China is the most militarily and economically advanced country within the coalition and exerts great influence. China itself, relative to the rest of the group and all nations in the world, emits a considerable amount of GHG.

With regards to issues of climate change, and as it pertains to being a development issue, the G77 + China maintains that the global North must lead the way in finding

solutions to the rising GHG emissions without inhibiting developing nations their ability to develop (Mumma 2000: 188). It also maintains that developed countries should not expect developing countries to cut their emissions, thereby opposing any pressure to make voluntary commitments to decreasing GHG emissions (Richards 2001: 16). In that light, the group also argues for penalties on non-compliance and that financial assistance and technology transfer is important for developing countries to partake in adaptation and mitigation practices (Depledge 2005: 29).

As developing countries interests diverge and converge, unity in difference of positions has led to the development of coalition subgroups within the G77 umbrella: BASIC, the LDC, the Africa Group, AOSIS and members of the OPEC. Makina (2013: 40) maintains that it is important for individual states to campaign their own national interests because in large groupings like the G77 there tends to be a group of winners and losers especially since the overall position of the G77 reflects a flexible compromised view. The “losers” who are the least developed countries within the coalition itself do not have a strong influence outside the group unless they are “big players” or “friends of the Chair”, therefore, even though they are still at a disadvantage, the G77 offers “protection in numbers” important for the voice of the south against the north (Makina 2013: 41). This echoes Kasa et al’s (2007: 125) view that the role of the G77 might in the future decrease in importance as major developing countries with growing economies might see no need to leverage the group in negotiations as opportunities for bilateral engagements increase. However, Vihma et al. (2011: 333) argue that the G77 actually presents itself as a covering for these emerging countries who can be easily called out for their large contributions to GHG emission as is the case with BASIC countries.

#### **4.2.2 Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS)**

Formed in 1990 to lobby island-specific issues on climate change, the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) is a coalition of 44 small islands and low-lying coastal countries (AOSIS 2019). These countries are most vulnerable to climate change and their vulnerability means they are extremely subject to the rise in sea levels, the increase in the frequency of extreme weather patterns, most are dependent on their agricultural sector, increase in poverty and the lack of resilient infrastructure (Kasa et al. 2007:

124). The island states recognized this commonality early and the need for inter-regional cooperation since they had limited individual economic and political influence (Betzold et al. 2012: 539). The group operates under the G77 + China coalition and functions as an ad hoc negotiating voice for small island developing states (SIDS) in global climate negotiations (Hernandez 2014: 130). AOSIS is known for forcefully arguing for strong commitments such as their proposal put forward in 1994 for developed countries to cut emissions by 20% over 1990 levels by 2005 (Richards 2001: 12). Their position over the years has been for the recognition of their vulnerability, the commitment to mitigation and financial support for adaptation (Bolon 2018). The organisation's strong lobbying of limiting emission levels by 1.5% by the end of the century has seen its success as it helped establish the Green Climate Fund during COP16 in Cancun and was included in the Paris Agreement (Bolon 2018). Richards (2001: 15) maintains that AOSIS' strength in advocating their views comes from the organisation's dedication in pulling support from NGO's, and scientific and research communities such as the United Kingdom Foundation for International Environmental Law and Development that prepares policy briefs and helps enhance member states understanding of complex legal issues.

In terms of the organisation's structure, they do not have a working charter, secretariat or budget and acts as an independent actor during negotiations, however, they do have a Chair and Vice-Chairperson (Kasa et al 2007: 124). This offers the alliance flexibility, informality and elasticity, while lack of an established secretariat may lead to weak institutional memory.

#### **4.2.3 Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)**

The Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) was formed when its member countries wanted to take control of their domestic petroleum industries to acquire a say in the pricing of crude oil on world markets (OPEC 2020). The organisation has a total of 13 including seven African countries namely: Libya, Algeria, Nigeria, Angola, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and the Democratic Republic of Congo (OPEC 2020). Richards (2001: 15) states that OPEC's main position is highlighted through its aggressive pursuit of compensation for damage to economies that comes with the decrease in GHG emissions. This means the organisation is less concerned

about the global decrease in emissions, but the impact that climate policies will have on oil exports and revenue (Dessai 2004: 1). Their primary position during climate negotiations is the question of response measures to the effect that it got included into the UNFCCC Article 4.8 and the Kyoto Protocol Article 3.14 (Dessai 2004: 19, 21). The organisation's main objectives include coordinating and unifying petrol prices among member states, securing fair and stable prices for petrol producer, efficient and regular supply of oil to consumers and a fair return on capital for those investing in the petroleum industry (OPEC 2020). Its Secretariat is responsible for the implementation of all resolutions passed by the Conference and conducting research that would help the group justify and solidify their position. The Secretariat consists of the Secretary-General, who serves as the organisation's Chief Executive Officer, the office of the Secretary-General, the Legal Office, the Research Division and the Support Services Division (OPEC 2020).

### **4.3 African Actors**

This section introduces the African actors primarily responsible for negotiating Africa's common positions. These include the African Group of Negotiators (AGN), African Ministerial Conference on Environment and Natural Resources (AMCEN) and the Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSCC). These organisations work in tandem and are bound by the goal of providing the continent with meaningful representation and a voice in climate negotiations.

#### **4.3.1 African Group of Negotiators (AGN)**

Working within the G77 coalition, the African Group of Negotiators was established during COP1 in Berlin 1995, as the African Union's diplomatic body to negotiate outcomes that would reflect the interest of all African states on matters of climate change. It is tasked with preparing and drafting common positions and consolidating decisions made by the Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSCC) and the African Ministerial Conference on Environment and Natural Resources (AMCEN), which are the main high-level bodies responsible for making decisions on the continent's positions (AGN 2018). In agreement with the position of the G77, the group strongly advocates the right for developing countries to

develop at their own pace, equal treatment between adaptation and mitigation efforts, financial assistance to developing countries for capacity building and technology transfer as well as the importance of NDC's (Skah 2020: 16). Tondel *et al.* (2015) argue that the group's success as a voice for Africa only became a prominent force when the Kyoto Protocol came into existence. However, their success in negotiating Africa's position can be seen at the conclusion of COP17 in Durban that launched the Ad hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action which formed the basis of the Paris Agreement (AGN 2018).

According to their website, the AGN serves as a technical component of the "three-tier African negotiating structure that engages in the technical negotiations during the CoP and intersessional negotiations" (AGN 2018). The AGN comprises of representatives (government officials, researchers, scientists etc) from all 54 African countries and is chaired by different African states on a two-year term (ClimDev-Africa 2017). The AGN is organized into five sub-groups representing each African region. The members in each sub-group select the AGN's chair from among their peers on a rotational basis to ensure equitable representation and the chair leads meetings, maintains discipline and acts as the leading African negotiator (Roger and Belliethathan 2016: 95). The Secretariat is based in New York and consults with other coalition groups before the UNFCCC to discuss divergence of positions. The group receives support from the African Development Bank, the African Climate Policy Centre, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the UNEP (AGN 2018).

#### **4.3.2 African Ministerial Conference on Environment and Natural Resources (AMCEN)**

After the establishment of the UNEP and its relocation to Nairobi, Kenya, African Ministers who used to meet every two years to discuss environmental matters related to Africa decided to establish their own conference focused on African matters (AMCEN 2006: 4). Through the efforts of the UNECA and the African Union (the Organisation of African Unity at the time), the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) was formed in 1985 and is a key platform involved in the process of creating, maintaining and presenting the African common position to the UNFCCC (Tsega 2016: 8). As the AGN provides the technical support of the

implementation of the common position, the AMCEN plays a more political role. All positions and decisions promoted and emphasised by the AGN at the UNFCCC are predetermined by AMCEN. The group is comprised of African ministers of environment or similar departments who convene biannually to engage in the discussion of issues of common concern and to formulate best strategies to deal with these environmental challenges for the continent (Tondel et al 2015). In terms of the structure, the conference is the highest body, it has a Bureau consisting of a president and four vice-presidents who rotate per region to ensure equal representation and is tasked with implementing decisions made between conference sessions and taking decisions on recommendations and proposals (UNEP 2020). Further, it has a Secretariat through the UNEP's Africa Office that conducts the affairs of the conference and a Trust Fund which offers financial support to manage the organs of the AMCEN and its activities (UNEP 2020).

#### **4.3.3 Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSCC)**

The Conference of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSCC) serves as the highest continental body for approving and endorsing the common position (Tsega 2016: 7). The Committee was established in 2009 at the AU Assembly and was tasked with putting forward a common African position on climate change during climate negotiations while representing the interests of the AU in high-level international disputes on climate change, at meetings in the UNFCCC and has the ability to adopt decisions made at the COP (Tondel et al 2015). In December 2009, the Fifteenth Conference of Parties (COP 15) on the UNFCCC was held in Copenhagen and saw the CAHOSCC converge their views on climate change in order to develop a framework for the CAP (Zondi 2013: 28). The committee was intentionally created to act as a middleman between policymakers and UNFCCC negotiators to encourage a more effective, unified and coordinated mandate (Tondel et al 2015). This also allowed the CAHOSCC to become a communicator between multiple African institutions dealing with relevant environmental issues and the negotiators to pass along relevant issue areas for discussion (Tondel et al 2015). The committee meets once a year on the side of the AU Summit and is led by countries represented by the five regions and leaders from countries chairing the AU, AMCEN and AGN Chair and



Chairperson of the AU. The same country chairing AMCEN also Chairs CAHOSCC. This body also makes it possible for quick political decisions to be made on behalf of Africa without having to wait for the AU Assembly Summit.

## **4.4 Ad hoc actors**

Where coalitions are aligned by specific interest areas and are able to coordinate their views and activities on multiple issue areas, ad hoc coalitions are less coordinated and focused on issue matters (Downie 2018: 647). BASIC is one such ad hoc group formed between four countries grouped because of their economic potential.

### **4.4.1 BASIC**

As a result of rapid economic growth and their active response to world affairs, the four BASIC individual countries – Brazil, South Africa, China and India – were labelled as “advanced developing countries” and “major emitters” which created a distinction between them and other developing countries (Qi 2011: 299). Developed countries saw an opportunity to engage BASIC outside the UNFCCC and in 2005 they were invited to the G8 plus 5 (and Mexico) Dialogue on Climate and Energy that brought together the 13 largest GHG emitters. There they did not represent the interests of developing countries, but they were seen as an interest group to find common ground on the climate problem with the West (Hallding et al. 2013: 617). Since then, efforts by industrialised countries have been made to impose obligations on the BASIC countries, especially China and India, to decrease their increase in greenhouse gas emissions and provide transparency of their climate policies within the framework of a global climate agreement (Hallding et al. 2013: 617). Their position on climate change is found on the common grounds of the CBRD principle in line with the G77, they agree to a certain extent on matters of equity or how future emissions should be divided among all countries and they were committed to a second Kyoto Protocol commitment period (Olsson et al. 2010: 3). BASIC entered the spotlight during COP15 in Copenhagen after there were major disagreements between states on the way forward on climate actions (Hallding et al. 2013: 608). Along with the United States, BASIC helped draft the Copenhagen Accord, which was not considered a legally binding

agreement but rather a political agreement which prioritised voluntary reductions in GHG emissions (Qi 2011: 307).

BASIC countries still keep their allegiance with the G77 and use it as important leverage with industrialised countries because their position as emerging countries allow them to be fluid in their positions between the developing and developed world as was shown in the output of the Copenhagen Accord (Vihma et al. 2011: 333). According to Vihma *et al.* (2011: 333), almost all the BASIC countries had initially downplayed the importance and role of the Accord which showed their true reluctance to compromise their individual interests.

## 5. Conclusion

The chapter aimed to provide an overview of climate change in Africa and the importance of participating in global climate negotiations. It showed that although Africa contributes very little to greenhouse gas emissions blamed for the climate change, it carries a huge burden in climate change impact, manifesting in the devastation of food security, water security, and so forth. The chapter also described the various COPs relevant to the continent that have taken place, highlighting an accumulation of related agreements and decisions that have been made. It also described in detail the actors and groups, multilateral negotiating groups and African actors, that are critically involved in multilateral climate change negotiations that are relevant to Africa. The chapter has shown just how complex and systematic the platforms for negotiations are and how Africa has organised itself for maximum impact on negotiations. It has shown also general weaknesses that have been observed as well as what has worked. It highlighted the fact that there has been a number of key milestones marking advances towards a climate change agreement that is inclusive and legally binding.

# CHAPTER 4

## AN ANALYSIS OF THE AFRICAN COMMON POSITION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

### 1. Introduction

As stated in the first chapter of this research, the aim is to analyse where African states derive their collective identity and whether individual African states have chosen to deviate from a CAP. To answer the research questions and address this aim, this section traces the development of CAPs as it maintains that there exist many CAPs. The study uses the existing literature to try to analyse the grounds of *commonality* in a common position on climate change while taking note of the concepts of shared values and African unity that were mentioned in the second chapter. Furthermore, attempting to investigate whether the common positions truly reflect the interests of all 54 African states, an analysis of three African regional leaders – Ethiopia, Kenya and South Africa - are presented as well as the positions of regional economic communities (RECs) that exists within the continent and coalition groups who have gone against the African group for the interest of their subgrouping.

### 2. The Question of Commonality

The word “common” in CAP suggests that commonality is an important basis of Africa’s position on climate change negotiations. From a critical perspective, a fundamental question arises and part of the underlying intention this research paper seeks to answer is what forms the basis of commonality in the “common African position” that encourages states to uphold the position? That is, what is meant by the word “common”? From the AU’s perspective, the argument presented is that Africa speaks with one voice, which, as seen in chapter two the idea of a common identity formed the foundation of the AU which acts as the champion of African interests (AU 2018). In this chapter, the researcher identified five key elements from the literature on climate CAPs, conference report documents and articles that speak on common positions that may help us to understand the factors linking these African states to collectively advance a CAP. These elements are that (1) African states share a

common historical disadvantage that has led to the unfortunate and overall (2) socio-economic development retardation of African nations; (3) Africa, although the lowest ranking continent in terms of total GHG emissions, is at the forefront of most climate change effects; (4) industrialized states need to uphold the responsibility of reducing global GHG emissions as well as provide mechanisms and resources to support the developing world in implementing adaptation and mitigation initiatives; and that (5) all states are bound by the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

The first element of a common historical disadvantage is the one reigning factor that aligns African countries in a number of collaborative efforts as it primarily finds its realisation in the establishment of the AU. Africa has always found itself trapped a particular international order from the colonial period, the bipolarity of the cold war to the multipolar international order that it currently finds itself. All this meant that Africa had always been on the margins of influence, but it had to exert its agency somehow. This historical disadvantage gives prominence to an African agency that sees the continent involved in many multilateral intergovernmental organizations such as the UN, establishing bilateral relations with superpowers and emerging power and most importantly recognizing the importance of intra-regional cooperation (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013: 349).

An interesting take that van Wyk (2015: 111) proposes is that this unity over a shared historical disadvantage bestows Africa an identity of victimhood and vulnerability. Victimhood assumes there is an actor that is dominant – Western states – and one that is dominated – in this case, Africa – and assumes that Africa struggles to extend itself politically in the international arena (van Wyk 2015: 111; Lisk, 2009: 12). In its favour, this victimhood creates a sense of solidarity among African countries and others who have suffered inequalities and injustices typically from the Global South which can reflect itself in a positive light through the idea of collective action (van Wyk 2015: 111). But this view oversimplifies because it suggests that Africa finds commonality in demanding others to repair it, but it also finds commonality in suggesting universally relevant principles like climate justice and inclusive solutions. It takes one factor of demanding that Africa's history needs to be atoned for and makes it an overriding factor out of many factors.

Closely linked to the element of historical disadvantage is the reality of socio-economic retardation that African states experience. This pushed Africa to the fringes of the global political economy. It is integrated into the global economic system to its disadvantage in that it is integrated to supply raw material and cheap labour. The reality that through the period of colonisation, Africa has had its resources stripped and as periods of decolonisation unfolded the continent has struggled to recover (Amin 2002: 48, 49) This area of commonality creates the need for concerted political action as a form of African agency in finding ways of overcoming the institutional and structural limitations that exist in the international arena that keep the continent from progressing. It also underlines the importance of African-led initiatives that not only improve the continent's conditions but that enable African countries to demonstrate their agency. This is why, the slogan "African solutions for African problems" becomes significant and the AU, as well as REC's efforts in developing, implementing and monitoring African led initiatives, is paramount. Multiple continental organisations such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), CAHOSCC, AMCEN, and the African Development Bank all contribute to addressing climate challenges through participating in negotiations, contributing to common positions and leading climate programs (Lisinge-Fotabong et al. 2016: 3).

The third element of commonality is Africa being the lowest GHG emitters in comparison to individual country emitters in the world. The continent as a whole is the most vulnerable to climate change effects, but it contributes the least to GHG emissions. This leads to the continent arguing that it should be the least responsible in dealing with the problem (Chin-Yee 2016: 360). Chin-Yee (2016: 360) writes that this fact gives the AGN a symbolic status and moral legitimacy, however, even that does not give them the power to support their countries and deal with the climate consequences head-on. As much as the continent can stand in the reality that their total global GHG emissions are relatively low, this does not necessarily apply to a country such as South Africa that is the continent's biggest emitter and is ranked 14<sup>th</sup> in the world (Frohlich and Blossom 2019).

The fourth element of commonality is closely linked to the third as it is the idea that in as much as the developing world has the responsibility to create its own initiatives and mechanisms to address climate change impacts and challenges, the responsibility should primarily be upheld by the developed states that continue to grossly contribute

to the climate problem. This is then summed up and tied to the fifth element centred around the principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities” (CBDR) in the UNFCCC. Most, if not all documents and reports on climate change aim to uphold this principle, which also guides Africa’s common position. It is an understanding that there is an overwhelming difference in the economic, social and political structures of countries in the global North and global South which impacts the capacity of each country in addressing climate impacts (Lisinge-Fotabong et al 2016: 2). This then puts the focus on developed countries to take the lead in reducing the amount of emissions and to assist developing countries through technology, finance and capacity building. However, Nhamo (2011: 8) makes a case for this as a pursuit of a fair process in the distribution of environmental goods, benefits and costs. In accordance with the principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities”, the assumption that developed countries should contribute the most in addressing climate action is applied differently in developing countries where a country such as South Africa who contributes most to the emissions in Africa and has the second-largest economy in the continent and is not expected to take responsibility to the same extent and developed countries.

### **3. Africa’s Common Positions on Climate Change**

Scholars writing on climate change negotiations as it pertains to Africa acknowledge that the continent has gone through a few phases to develop a common position (Tsega 2016). Although there are varying views on when exactly Africa came up with a CAP, the approach that this study takes is that a set defined common position on climate change does not actually exist. The research suggests that as Africa became aware of its need to participate in climate negotiations and throughout its attempts at organising itself as a unified collective, many CAPs on climate change developed from a process and series of negotiated statements. Through the participation in high-level AU, AMCEN, CAHOSCC and UNEP meetings, preparations for the annual COP negotiations and other initiatives undertaken by climate actors, African states have gradually detailed key areas of interest that form the basis of their common position.

Roger and Belliethathan (2016: 94) and Nelson (2016: 6) agree that the first time African states tried to develop a common position was in 1991 at the Second Regional

African Ministerial Conference for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) where the African common position on African Environment and Development was announced. This initiative came about through workshops and meetings supported by the UNEP and the UNECA. The document highlighted a few principles for reaching sustainable development such as the alleviation of poverty, economic development, food and energy security, financial stability and security, and the lack of adequate environmental management (UNECA 1992: 5). The position focused primarily on (1) establishing capacity building programs for developing countries, (2) technology and information transfer, (3) financial support for programs and management of natural resources (UNECA 1992: 5; Tsega 2016: 8).

Masters (2010: 2) and Roger and Belliethathan (2016: 96) note that in 1998, a year after the Kyoto Protocol, African states created a common position specifically focused on its objectives for the CDM which would allow more climate-related projects and programmes to be established on the continent. The objectives of this particular common position included (1) that the CDM should operate through market-based mechanisms with projects allocated to regional and subregional levels, (2) equal geographical representation in capacity-building programs and on the CDM's Executive Board and (3) environmental and developmental benefits of all projects. Mumma (2000: 199) links Africa's failure to project a common position to the framework of the CDM and how it does not benefit individual countries and lacks consideration of Africa's unique vulnerabilities.

On the other hand, Ramsamy et al. (2014: 5) and Masters (2011: 528) consider the outcome of the 2007 Eighth African Union Summit as the first step in negotiating a common position as the AU adopted the Declaration on Climate Change and Development in Africa that committed African states to (1) urge countries to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, (2) strengthen and build capacity for African states to effectively participate in future UNFCCC and Kyoto Protocol (3) integrate adaptation strategies into individual country development policies, (4) streamline funding mechanisms, (5) increase awareness and strengthen research and development in climate change on the continent, (6) encourage technology transfer between developing countries and (7) demand that developed countries deliver on mitigation commitments (AU 2007). The Summit rode on the back of the 2006 COP12 held in Nairobi where the African Group of Negotiators maintained consensus on (1) recognising the UNFCCC as the

legitimate platform and the Kyoto Protocol the preferred legal framework, (2) commitment to substantial reduction in GHG emissions by developed countries, (3) building human, technological and systematic capacity of African countries to adapt and mitigate climate change, (4) establishing an Adaptation Fund based on the principle of “one country one vote,” (5) operationalization of the Special Climate Change Fund and the Least Developed Countries Fund, (6) an increase in Africa’s access to the CDM projects by ensuring an enabling CDM investments and access to commercial credit and a flexible window of opportunity to claim credits under CDM, (7) an agreement on the establishment of technological transfer funding mechanisms as critical for the achievement of MDGs and (8) a strong focus on education, training and awareness creation programmes targeting citizens in vulnerable countries on the basis of the New Delhi work programme on the Convention (Zondi 2013: 7).

In preparation for COP15 in Copenhagen in 2009, African Ministers attended the Third Special Session of the AMCEN on Climate Change which adopted the Nairobi Declaration which was a consolidation of previous common positions championed by the AGN (IISD 2009a). The Declaration was based on Africa’s shared historical disadvantages and the principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities” (Hoste and Anderson 2011:1). The CAP echoed previous African positions considering the need for adaptation and mitigation strategies, capacity building, global stabilisation of GHG emissions and financing technology development (Masters 2010: 2; IISD 2009a). African states also emphasised the need to implement climate change programmes to attain the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and implement stable financial architecture for climate change (IISD 2009a). Even though the Copenhagen conference was highly contentious and African states did not have a favourable experience, the CAP gave strength to African states as remarked by Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi said that “for the first time in its history, Africa will field a single negotiating team empowered to negotiate on behalf of all member states of the African Union... Africa’s interest and position will not be muffled” (Harsch 2009).

Efforts to further establish a common stance were reiterated in 2011 well ahead of the Earth Summit or the Rio+20. Before the convention of the Summit, which was focused on sustainable development, African states (through their environmental ministers) convened in Ethiopia to prepare a 14-page document detailing Africa’s key environmental focus areas which formed the foundation of their consensus statements



at the Summit (Ighorbor 2012). Obtaining a clear and detailed CAP affords the AGN political weight and a platform to negotiate. Its ability to sustain the common position has been tested in every COP gathering since 2009. In the spirit of creating a strategy of addressing climate change, in 2014, the AU put together a lengthy document entitled the “African Strategy on Climate Change” that aims to “provide the AU as a whole, the REC’s, member states and other stakeholders with a reliable source of strategic guidance to enable them to effectively address climate change challenges” (UN 2015a). The AU strategy on climate change contains its position towards climate issues and bases its findings and arguments on the initiatives of the IPCC, UNFCCC, Kyoto Protocol and many other reports and conferences that have taken place.

#### **4. Compromising the Common Position**

The previous section presented the areas of commonality that encourage states to negotiate on the grounds of the common positions, however, this does not negate the existence of national interests that sometimes take precedence over African unity. In this section, three important deviations from the common positions by Kenya, Ethiopia and South Africa are discussed to understand the role of individual national interests, the role of regional economic communities (REC’s) that exist within the African continent working in tandem with the AU and lastly the existence of organizations within the climate change regime that struggle to fully align their interests with those of the CAPs.

Kenya, Ethiopia and South Africa are considered regional powers that have the responsibility to balance their national, regional and international interests when creating policies. IR scholars have debated the definitions and characteristics of regional powers as regions have increasingly played an important role in world politics (Nolte 2010: 882). For the purpose of this paper, the debates revolving around the concept of regional power will not be discussed and will instead apply a general understanding of regional powers and middle powers. According to Nolte (2010: 882), regional powers are defined as states that have a self-conception of leading a region delimited geographically, economically and politically; has material, organisational and ideological resources; and has great influence in regional affairs. Middle powers, on the other hand, are states that do not have small or grand international power,

influence and capacity yet demonstrate the ability to promote stability and cohesion in world politics (Jordaan 2003: 165). Middle powers are usually recognised by their foreign policy behaviour that sees them contributing multilateral solutions to international problems and promoting collective problem solving beyond their national interests (Jordaan 2003: 166). South Africa blurs the line of middle and emerging power where emerging powers have the potential to be rising great powers (Schoeman 2015: 430). For Africa's regional powers there is a large inclination to serve their national interest while also improving their domestic position; there's an interest to maintain regional influence while finding ways to balance the needs of their regions; and the need to use their soft power to maintain strategic relationships in the international system (Nelson 2016: 115). When considering African regional powers South Africa and Nigeria are considered the two prominent continental powerhouses and are placed at the forefront in academic discussions. Although Nigeria is one of the largest oil exporters on the continent and also part of the AOSIS group, this research does not present Nigeria as a case study. The choice to include Ethiopia, Kenya and South Africa comes from the fact that Ethiopia hosts the AU and is a major power in the horn of Africa, Kenya has previously hosted COP12 and continues to lead the East African region in major platforms and South Africa is an economic and political powerhouse on the continent and the largest GHG emitter on the continent. Research on these three countries shows them compromising the CAP for their national interests on specific occasions.

#### **4.1 Ethiopia's Compromise**

As a regional power, Maru (2017: 5) affirms that Ethiopia has focused its regional foreign policy to improve relations with its neighbouring countries while enforcing its roles within the AU and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). In 2009, under the leadership of Prime Minister H.E. Meles Zenawi, Ethiopia started to become actively involved in climate diplomacy at local, regional and international levels (Endalew and Craft 2016: 1, 2). At the local level, Ethiopia hosted various climate hearings across the country where thousands of citizens offered their views on the impact climate change had on communities (Endalew 2016: 3). In addition, the country had its first national climate change conference in January 2009 attended by senior government officials, UN representatives and multilateral organisations to

coordinate efforts and strategies in addressing climate change (Endalew 2016:3). In preparation for COP15 in Copenhagen, Ethiopia contributed to the establishment of the CAHOSSC in order to coordinate the positions of African countries (Endalew 2016: 4). It was then decided that the country should lead the organisation for two terms (Endalew 2016: 4).

The Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi led the Africa Group during COP15 in Copenhagen. The primary African consensus during this negotiation was that there was to be an agreement on major emission reduction targets by the developed countries as well as on increased funding for African climate change funds. Prime Minister Zenawi is said to have departed from the position by proposing a lesser amount of funds - US\$50 billion per year by 2015 and US\$100 billion per year by 2020 –to be made available for developing countries and 50% of the funds directed to small island states and African states (Vidal 2009). His proposal was deemed a compromise to the demands of the developed states and came short of the expectations of full compensation that was the African consensus. Although his justification for leaning in that direction was that “because we stand to lose more than others, we have to be flexible.” The sentiment in the room was best encapsulated by the president of the Pan-African Parliamentarians Network on Climate Change, Awudu Mbaya’s statement “if Prime Minister Meles wants to sell out the lives and hopes of Africans for a pittance he is welcome to, but that is not Africa’s position” (Vidal 2009). In his defence, the Prime Minister expressed optimism that the US\$100 billion pledge the developed countries had made was a major step towards assisting developing countries as he saw it as a “down payment for reparations” (Ogodo and Zulu 2010). To African countries, the pledged amount was insufficient to help the adaptation of poorer countries in the long run and to meet the objective of keeping the global temperature at 2°C, which undermines the years of climate talks and puts developing countries at risk, even Ethiopia (Aklilu 2010: 17).

Despite disagreement and dissent from African countries on the outcomes of the Copenhagen Accord at COP15, Ethiopia claimed it was legitimate and encouraged African countries and the AU to adopt the Accord (Vihma et al. 2011: 326). Sudanese diplomat, Lumumba Di-Aping, who served as the Chair of the G77 + China was extremely vocal about his disapproval of a flexible agreement on the GHG emission

threshold that developed countries were arguing for. The Accord proposed that developing nations should be required to reduce their emissions at double the levels of developed nations over the next ten years (Dearing 2009). This was not good enough for developing nations, especially Africa because it still remains the lowest GHG emitter and the greatest climate effects are going to continue being most detrimental to poorer countries and the amount of funds being allocated would not be sufficient to adapt to measures (Dearing 2009). In that light, Di-Aping accused Zenawi of succumbing to the pressures of the developed states as realistically the Copenhagen Accord promised very little to the African countries. The interesting problem that the compromising nature of the document raised is that it came at the expense of poorer countries and to the benefit of developed nations which suggested that many exclusive backroom deals were happening throughout the conference. Although this is not unusual during conferences, one needs to be aware of who else benefits from the deal besides the obvious richer countries who are constantly trying to get the better end of the climate change deal. This leads to the idea that poorer nations – in this case, certain African states – were willing to compromise the African position to further their own national interests.

Hoste and Andrews (2011: 2) link Ethiopia's endorsement of the Accord to the fact that the AU did not want to undermine Zenawi's efforts during the negotiations as he led the African delegation and that there were pressures from European Commission, the Dutch government and the United States that attached association with the Accord to development aid (The Guardian 2010a; The Guardian 2010b; The Guardian 2010c). In 2010, a series of disclosed US diplomatic cables suggest that a meeting between the Ethiopian Prime Minister and the American Under-Secretary had occurred. The summary of the document contains the Ethiopian Prime Minister's concerns about the country's upcoming elections and its democratic state but towards the end of the document, it reveals that the US delegate put pressure on the prime minister to compromise on the Copenhagen Accord and to continue supporting it at the AU Summit as it supposedly moved the international community in the right direction (The Guardian 2010c). On his part, Zenawi expressed his concern about President Barack Obama's "personal assurance" to him that funding committed in Copenhagen would be made available, yet he heard from UN contacts that the US would not support Ethiopia's proposal for a panel to monitor climate change financial pledges (The

Guardian 2010c; Hoste & Andrews 2011: 2). Host and Andrews (2011: 2) suggest that the outcome of this meeting; and in the interest of keeping the two countries in partnership, could have contributed to Zenawi's nomination as the co-chair of the High-Level Advisory Group of the UN Secretary-General on Climate Change Financing. The Group was meant to study the potential sources of revenue for mitigation and adaptation activities in developing countries with \$100 billion per year (UN 2010b).

In his own defence, Zenawi agreed that his proposals would not be widely accepted as "I know my proposal will disappoint those Africans who ... have asked for full compensation ... for damage done to our development prospects. My proposal dramatically scales back our expectation of the level of funding in return for more reliable funding and a seat at the table in the management of such fund" (Vidal 2009). Zenawi's position during COP15 highlights the difficulty and complexity in not only leading in promoting Africa's interests but also balancing them with their national interests. The country's position as a regional power and as a champion of the AU and its pan-African legacy meant that any position that it would take regarding climate diplomacy would be held to an expectation to be at the interest of those it represents.

## **4.2 Kenya's Interests**

Kenya as a regional leader, McNamee (2016: 50) observes, has historically not been a political force in global affairs. However, recently it has been dubbed as the "gateway into East Africa" with its strong economic investments into the region and exercise of soft political power (OBG 2018). As previously mentioned, Kenya hosted COP12 in Nairobi in 2009. Kenya has been actively participating in climate change activities and implementing climate policies to deal with the issue, however, Kenya's sudden interest at COP16 in Cancun 2010 was considered a case of compromising the African common position (Ndungu 2017: 267). Bassey (2010) remarks that during the conference African states were scrambling to uphold their common positions and one of the most interesting incidents involved Kenyan Prime Minister, Raila Odinga, suggesting that a second commitment to the Kyoto Protocol meant to establish a legally binding agreement obliging developed countries to cut their emissions was not a high priority. In addition to that, Odinga suggested that the US\$100 billion that was eventually pledged in Copenhagen to help developing countries was sufficient, though

it was lower than figures quoted in Africa's CAP (Bassey 2010). This stance was considered unexpected, however, conference observers noted that this compromise was similar to Japan's position on the second Kyoto Protocol commitment period (Hoste & Andrews 2011: 4). This comes from the growing partnership between the two countries that transcends the climate regime.

According to Omondi (2010), Kenya's alliance with Japan came from an opportunity to attract billions of dollars in foreign direct investments from a pipeline that runs through Sudan and South Sudan. Kenya could potentially increase its economic and political influence in the region by attracting investors that would connect the pipeline in Juba (South Sudan) to Lumu Port (Kenya) in the Indian Ocean easing South Sudan's dependence on ports in the North (Omondi 2010). This meant that \$1.5 billion from Toyota Tsusho, a Japanese company would be inserted into Kenya's and South Sudan's economies (Hoste & Andrews 2011: 4). The projects related to these investments would also benefit surrounding areas in Burundi, Uganda, Rwanda and Ethiopia (Omondi 2010). Since COP15, Kenya's climate focus has been finding ways for developed countries to finance technology transfer and adaptation technologies, Mutimba *et al* (2010: 53) do not frame Kenya's interest in Japan's funding project as a betrayal to Africa. Rather, it was seen as a positive step towards implementing future climate change response activities which would include the development of geothermal energy sources to help in the clean development of the country (Mutimba *et al*. 2010: 56).

The take-away from Kenya's compromise is that Kenya's choice of partnership and direction at the climate negotiations was not random. As a regional leader, the country saw an opportunity to bring investments into the country that would ultimately add positive change into neighbouring economies. Hosting COP12, which resulted in the Nairobi Declaration was seen as a positive for future climate negotiations. Its alignment with some African states on the outcomes of COP15 showed that Kenya typically does stand with the common positions. However, in this case, it had to leverage its national interests, regional power aspirations and allegiance with the continent's position.

### 4.3 South Africa's Interests

South Africa's national interest in the climate change regime is particularly different from other African states. Due to the nature of its growing economy and more industrialised society in comparison to the rest of Africa, South Africa is better equipped and prepared to adapt to climate effects. As a regional leader and an emerging economy, the country involves itself in multiple international groupings and also bears the burden of needing to satisfy its international, regional and domestic audiences.

South Africa's economy thrives on its abundance in coal reserves and energy-intensive industries putting its per capita GHG emissions relatively high by international standards (Atteridge 2010: 3). The energy sector has always remained a high priority in the country's political priorities given that access to energy services is increasingly difficult and scarce for the majority of its poorest population (Atteridge 2010: 1). Since the energy sector contributes the biggest to GHG emissions, the inclination to prioritize both mitigation and adaptation measures (as opposed to just adaptation as the African common position emphasises) is paramount (Nhamo 2011: 11).

In climate negotiations, South Africa has not shied away from taking an active stand to foster cooperation between developing and developed nations. However, gaining the trust of other African nations is difficult as the country belongs to many negotiating groups, namely: the G77 + China, the Africa Group, G8, G13, BRICS, G20 and BASIC (Nhamo 2011: 13). In terms of its standing with the CAP, South Africa's role in COP15 (Copenhagen) was similar to that of Ethiopia and Kenya in that it accepted the compromise that fell far short of the terms of the common position and global south demands, especially concerning climate change funding. It was heavily criticized for actively promoting major climate compromises (Bond 2010). Mr Augustine Njamnshi, from the Pan-African Climate Justice Alliance at the Third Meeting of the African high-level expert panel on climate change "expressed frustration and regret that the Copenhagen Accord was being brandished as a major outcome of the Copenhagen negotiations when in fact it had been procedurally incorrect and undemocratic and posed a threat to the African science-based common position" (AMCEN 2010: 2). Part

of the BASIC group, South Africa was tasked with finalizing the Copenhagen Accord meaning that it had to balance the interests of the Africa Group and the G77 + China as well as the interests of BASIC and developed nations (Bond 2010; Nhamo 2011: 21). The country was willing to not pledge any emissions reductions that would be subject to the available funds and technologies and the emphasis on mitigation measures in deviation from the CAP (Bond 2010; Nhamo 2011: 20). In Cancun, South Africa took a less vocal point of view as it reiterated its position from Copenhagen as well as the positions outlined in the Bali Action Plan.

## **5. Regional Economic Communities (REC) and the CAP**

Africa has eight RECs located in the different regions of the continent which are considered the building blocks of the AU (UNECA 2020a). Some RECs include the East African Community (EAC), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). Lesley Masters (2011: 260), suggests that part of the challenge that the AU has in defining and sustaining the promotion of a CAP is that the policies and strategies of the RECs are not coordinated with the AU. RECs are meant to incorporate member states national positions and help implement regional integration strategies and contribute to the regions overall socio-economic development (UNECA 2020a). RECs may present an opportunity to carefully address the gap in defining a CAP as Mr Augustine Njamnshi pointed out:

“however, that the negotiations had identified some gaps in the African common position, suggesting that, in efforts to harmonize coordination between the African group, AMCEN and the Conference of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change, other stakeholders, such as civil society, the private sector and regional economic communities, could be used to harmonize coordination and complement existing human expertise and resources” (AMCEN 2010: 2).

Many RECs have member states in different regions of the African continent with different climate realities and policies or strategies in place to address the specific climate effects. The overall effects of climate change are related to food security,



health security, extreme weather events, water scarcity, sea-level rise and biodiversity concerns. In East Africa and the Sahel, the observed climate changes will see fluctuating rainfall and droughts leading to increased levels and longer periods of flooding, rainstorms, drier seasons, a decrease crop yields and reduced water supply (WWF 2006: 2; Penney 2019). Southern Africa is extremely susceptible to warm and dry temperatures leading to less precipitation, dry days, limited rainfall on river basins and frequent bouts of drought (Shepard 2019; UNECA 2012: 1). Since a large portion of the region's economies are dependent on agriculture, the climate impacts are likely to affect the livelihoods of millions (UNECA 2012: 2). In a similar fashion, the Horn of Africa is also experiencing drier seasons exacerbating the already food shortage challenges in the region (Rowling 2015).

As regions and countries become more aware of the climate challenges, they may face, climate and development agendas have become a priority for most RECs. According to Denton *et al* (2016: 1), the problem keeping regional institutions from being effective is the lack of structural reforms necessary to operationalize climate change programs of the kind requested by the AMCEN. Institutional secretariats face financial constraints, lack of sufficient skilled human resources with technical capabilities and the challenge of linking national and regional strategies (Denton et al. 2016: 1). One of the biggest issues regarding climate change is that its effects are transboundary, going beyond the sovereignty of individual countries which sees a lot of climate issues spilling into different regions. RECs have limited regional policies and regulatory frameworks that govern climate-sensitive transboundary resources. This issue is coupled with the projection of narrow national interests that can weaken RECs on issues like the need for cohesive adaptation strategies (Denton et al. 2016: 3). Climate change can act as a risk multiplier that exacerbates already existing socio-economic and political problems, including violence, forced displacement and poverty (Scheffran et al. 2019: 2). Masters (2011: 62) mentions that tensions have long existed between countries that feed on the Nile river and continue to upset the cohesion in the IGAD and EAC RECs. In the past, competition over water resources has caused many conflicts such as the Senegal–Mauritania conflict over the Senegal River which called for efficient regional resource management. Opportunities for cooperation on shared water resources have been taken, such as the protocol signed in 2000 by 14 member states of SADC that ensure coordination and enable joint development and

management of water resources infrastructure between two or more countries. Another example is the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) created by nine countries sharing the Nile River, and the Organization of the Development of the Senegal River (OMVS) in West Africa (although Guinea presented a challenge) (Newton 2007: 3; Denton et al. 2016: 6). These cooperation commitments set a precedent for risk-sharing between countries belonging to regional integration entities in the implementation of adaptation measures (i.e., the sharing of the burden of the development and implementation of response measures that help avoid or attenuate the impacts of climate change).

In terms of integrating and aiding the broader African position, there is strong awareness between RECs that they should collaborate with African negotiators and equip them with strong arguments to achieve consolidated positions and improved outcomes at climate negotiations. It has been a challenge for RECs to take a lead role in climate negotiations, however, an instance where a REC projected their voice in the climate discussion is during COP17 in Durban when COMESA strategically lobbied for the inclusion of major agricultural challenges and the link to mitigation strategies in the negotiations (Kinyangi & Radeny 2012).

A major step forward in collaborative work between the AGN and RECs has been developing since 2009, with the alliance between the EAC and COMESA in facilitating National Climate Change Roundtables with the aim of identifying climate change priorities at a national level (in member states) to establish national climate change positions that would easily feed into building up the CAP on climate change (EAC 2020a). With the awareness of the nature of transboundary issues that climate change can exacerbate and the need for strategic solutions from multiple blocs, they have since also developed a five-year programme on climate change adaptation and mitigation in eastern and southern Africa. The program is an alliance between COMESA, the EAC, and SADC member states to attract and increase investments in climate-resilient and carbon-efficient agriculture and to integrate successful adaptation and mitigation actions (EAC 2020a). Recent efforts have been realized by the EAC and COMESA who have jointly created position papers with the intention of aiding AGN negotiators during COP25 in Madrid, Spain in December 2019 (EAC 2020b). The build-up in establishing their common positions saw a number of meetings held to

identify key regional climate priorities that will help guide AGN negotiations in finding ways to reduce the climate change vulnerability of the African regions (EAC 2020b).

The point here is that regional economic communities and other sub-regional networks have a role to play in support of the terms of the CAP, from the mitigation of climate change impacts to climate change adaptation strategies, being closer to the ground. Yet, there are pre-existing conditions that weaken this potential, including levels of unequal development, sharp projection of national interests, weak secretariats and institution, weak funding and policy coordination capacity and weak REC-AU interface needed for facilitating the bottom-up process of developing common positions with roots on the African ground. RECs straddle different geographical zones in Africa, facing different climatic conditions and often different capacities, further complicating the search for concerted efforts against climate change. These issues present a challenge to the sustenance of the common position on climate change.

## **6. International Organisations and the CAP**

An added factor in the difficulty of sustaining the CAP is the presence of certain interest-based international organisations that are guided by particular issues within the climate regime that will affect the livelihoods of their member states. The organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and AOSIS are such organisations that hold particular views and promote specific positions at the climate negotiations. According to Masters (2011: 263), these organisations are much better organised and funded than RECs.

### **6.1 OPEC and AOSIS**

The OPEC group is a coalition of the world's major oil exporters from 13 countries around the world. From the start of COP conferences, OPEC has been concerned with finding ways to avoid drastic reductions in GHG emissions (Barnett 2008: 1). Half of the members of OPEC are dependent on their oil export as it provides more than 60% of government revenue (Oil Change International 2019). The revenue provides countries with the ability to provide public services, invest in infrastructure and invest in social development (Oil Change International 2019). Because of this, the group has throughout the climate conferences aggressively argued for compensation for damage

to their economies as a result of any emission reductions stemming from a UNFCCC agreement (mostly during COP1); is in favour of flexible arrangements in the reduction of GHG emissions; opposed limitations on carbon dioxide emissions; opposed the call for climate mitigation measures and calls for more emphasis on response measures (Richards 2001: 15; Barnett 2008: 2; Williams 1993: 23; Tsega 2016: 14). These positions have come as a result of the fear of a lesser demand for oil especially from developed countries which could cause a decrease in the global prices of oil (Barnett 2008: 3). Keeping the global emissions limit to below 1.5°C would expect the use and demand for oil to fall dramatically within the next 30 years (Oil Change International 2019). OPEC has in recent years lessened its aggressive tone and supported many COP outcomes, however, according to Masters (2011: 264) its statement at COP15 (Copenhagen) to have developed nations support developing nations to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and the adverse effects of response measures was not well received by the Africa Group. This is because response measures are the actions (policies and measures) that developed countries (party to the UNFCCC and Kyoto Protocol) take to reduce their emissions and creating green economies, however, it adds the risk of creating trade distortions, restricting imports from developing countries and “green protectionism” (Vickers 2012). Further, they argue that carbon emissions contribute more to emissions than petroleum, this would be a problem for coal-producing South Africa (Masters 2011: 264).

On that note, AOSIS has been known to put pressure, especially during COP15, to negotiate the 1.5°C maximum limit in rising temperatures (Nelson 2016: 125). Not only does it put pressure on industrialised countries, but the group also demands emerging economies adopt stricter measures in keeping within the 1.5°C limit (Masters 2011: 264). AOSIS’s push for the 1.5°C limit was adopted into the Paris Agreement that had all countries agree to reduce and limit the amount of greenhouse gas emissions to *well below 2°C with efforts to decrease it to 1.5 °C* (UN 2015b: 3). For South Africa and African states within the OPEC group, this would be very difficult unless both South Africa and OPEC find alternative renewable resources to fuel their energy and oil industries. Although the African position accepts the 2°C threshold, AOSIS’s emphasis on stricter mitigation measures, as opposed to adaptation, deviates from the common position. However, in the grand scheme of future temperature rises, keeping below the 1.5°C limit would be more beneficial for African states.

## 7. Conclusion

This chapter highlighted that Africa has multiple evolving positions, which are discussed and modified before each COP. It also discussed how the common positions are actually used during key COP, showing through case studies of regional powers such as Ethiopia, Kenya and South Africa, that upholding the positions can prove to be difficult. The regional powers often have to balance a number of competing demands and have to pursue the common position while mindful of common positions of other structures. Compromises emerge in the process to the disappointment of the rest of the AU membership, critical civil society and other progressive voices. These regional powers' position during COP15 in Copenhagen is a case in point. The chapter further considers the positions of REC's showing that they have the potential to help build the cohesion of the CAP in Africa but are riddled by pre-existing fissures themselves. The chapter also found that coalition groups operating within the G77 that have specific issue areas different from the common African positions also have the effect of weakening the African CAP. All this taken together means that the common position negotiated in long processes remains challenged by the very nature of multilateral negotiations, unequal power capacities even among African countries and a complex web of different interest groups.

## CHAPTER 5

# OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

### 1. Introduction

This chapter provides a concluding discussion on the main aim and objectives of this study. The study has shown that climate change negotiations are extremely complex and putting a concerted effort into solving the transboundary climate problem requires the involvement of many actors with differing interests. African states have made multiple attempts to do so through developing and sustaining common positions throughout the years as climate change has taken prominence on the international agenda. The paper was in pursuit of answering the main question of whether the CAP on climate change represents the shared interests of all African states? This was answered through a discussion of the objectives and sub-questions stated in chapter one. The objectives included: discussing the context of climate change in Africa including specific actors involved in global climate negotiations and how Africa fits into their narrative; examining the development of the CAPs on climate change; critically analysing the elements that unify African states in common positions and whether they have been able to uphold the positions and to reflecting on the implications of the answers to these objectives.

In attempting to answer the main question, the second chapter framed the context in which Africa finds itself not in climate negotiations but its historical background in international relations where it has not been able to be a major global player. The era of colonialism, Scramble for Africa, the Cold War and the subsequent decolonial period has placed an unfair disadvantage on the continent as it continues to scramble to keep up economically, politically and socially with the rest of the world. Though pre-colonial Africa saw African diplomacy and African agency practised widely on the continent and occasionally extending itself to other continents, Africa had to rediscover its agency in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century. Leaning greatly into its traditional roots, the continent built its strength from the notions of “togetherness” and collectiveness, which meant prioritizing values of solidarity and unity. Africa’s newfound agency was solidified through the pan-African solidarity movement and institutionalised into the African Union which became the champion of the continent’s voice. As African

countries started to exert their agency individually and collectively under the AU structure, this created a self-imposed burden to constantly be in alignment with Africa's positions on many matters especially on the international stage in multilateral settings. The concepts of agency and national interests adopted from social constructivism and realism theories offered a way to understand the boundaries and realities that African countries find themselves in negotiation settings, even those related to climate change.

In briefly mapping out Africa's international relations background and understanding the concepts of African agency, Africa's shared values and solidarity, chapter three presented the continent's climate reality to paint a picture of why it has become paramount that it actively participates in climate negotiations. Although the research does not fully cover all areas of vulnerability, the mention of food security, water availability and health are greatly affecting the African population and as the temperature continues to rise the effects worsen. Stated many times within the paper, Africa is the lowest contributor to total global GHG emissions, to a certain extent including South Africa, and given its lack of influence in setting the international agenda, we understand that negotiating in within coalition in multilateral settings has given the continent an advantage. This then allowed us to explore exactly what the negotiating settings were in terms of the IPCC and the UNFCCC and the specific conferences where important decisions were made that directly influenced the common positions that the continent presented. These were found in the Kyoto Protocol (COP3), the Nairobi Summit (COP12), the Copenhagen Accord (COP15), the Durban Summit (COP17) and the Paris Agreement (COP21). The outcomes of each conference provided targets or decision for future climate negotiations and actions that would help in the mitigation and adaptation of climate change mostly for the developing world. The multiple negotiating groups or coalitions that African countries form a part of have become important in setting forth points of discussion and advocating positions important to the survival and wellbeing of their member states. We saw the G77 plus China is the biggest and most important global South negotiating bloc that is primarily responsible for making sure that the positions of developing countries – also that of African countries are consolidated and leveraged during climate talks despite the different interests and diverging views. This then brings prominence to the need for AOSIS, OPEC and the AGN to be discussed as they have specific issues that do not

gain enough attention in the caucus that is the G77. AOSIS and OPEC's have African member states who are either island states vulnerable to rapidly changing weather patterns or who are vulnerable to the economic changes in their revenues and GDP as their dependence on oil affects their outlook on the decrease in carbon emissions. This poses a problem even for the Africa Group as they are also tasked with juggling the interests of the African countries within smaller coalition groups. As the diplomatic entity of the African Union and primary advocator of the African common positions, it becomes complicated and difficult to manage the mandate prepared by AMCEN and CAHOSCC and the interests of 54 countries, coalition groups, ad hoc groups while competing with individual country interests.

This brings us to the idea iterated in chapter four that beyond finding a sense of solidarity and unity within the AU structure, what are the factors that motivate or compel African countries to stick to the African common position? We know that each country has its own foreign policy that prioritises national interests maintained even as they participate in intracontinental climate meetings as they try to consolidate a unified common position. To answer the question, the researcher highlighted five repeated themes found within climate meeting reports, scholarly papers and media releases that spoke to the idea of a binding factor. These were found to be (1) a common historical disadvantage tied to the previous discussion of Africa being previously terrorized by the West thereby leaving it without a sense of agency and having to rebuild and redefine its social and political structures, (2) the subsequent socio-economic retardation that set it "backwards" in terms of economic development and dealing with the social issues such as poverty that comes as a result of that, (3) being the lowest GHG emitters which should give it more leverage in climate talks as the continent finds itself far from being the problem but having a problem in dealing with rise temperature consequences, (4) the idea that the responsibility to create initiatives and mechanisms to deal with climate change should not be placed on the continent as they all agree that (5) the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities" gives them an advantage and leverage in demanding that developed countries that the lead in implementing projects and allocating funding to their climate actions. This is all to say that indeed there are areas of commonality that motivate African countries to want to advocate for common positions but as was seen in the discussion in chapter four, these areas of commonality are not always strong



enough for countries that are regional powers or those involved in specific coalition groups to want to uphold.

## 2. Observations

**The commonality challenge in CAP:** This goes back to the idea briefly discussed in chapter two that promoting a collective stance and constantly upholding the spirit of solidarity can prove to be a burden or troublesome for African states. However, the factors that bind the African states together to promote the African common positions on climate change will always remain key for as long as Africa continues to be a low emitter and continues to need help in its socio-economic development. The effects of climate change and the reality that Africa will for a long time be at the receiving end of the most devastating climate events will further the need for a well-developed CAP. As with the origins of the AU, the binding factors will continue to favour shared values, a need for African states to be international players and exerting their African agency.

**The national interests of regional powers:** the problem is not the existence of common African positions but to what extent a country is able to prioritise their national interests in compromise of the continental position. As observed in this research is that for the most part, the African states who have pursued their national interests during climate negotiations are regional powers who have certain expectations placed upon them. Regional powers have the responsibility to not only uphold their national interests but simultaneously those of their region and champion the interests of the continent in multilateral settings. The fact that it has been regional powers that have deviated from the common position is not unfounded as they have the perceived political power, influence and ability to do so without having to suffer any consequences if at all. Ethiopia's concern about its democracy and possibly securing future funding meant that it could go against the agreed African position of expecting a certain amount of money from developed countries to be projected into the continent in favour of maintaining its relationship with the United States. Kenya could focus its attention on securing Japanese funding for pipeline projects which would be, in the long-run beneficial for the region. South Africa even as the 14th largest GHG emitter, champion and protector of African interests, member of multiple negotiating groups

has to constantly juggle many positions at a given time that it has to use coalition groupings such as BASIC to pursue and protect its national interests. Compared to other weaker African states, regional powers can afford to pursue their national interests while selectively pursuing the interest of the continent because their perceived positions as regional powers puts them in a position that attracts foreign interest into their countries and their regions. Perhaps, a distinction between developing and advanced developing states should be made in the CAP as to set different expectations for each group.

**A coalition approach for Africa:** Though the CAP has to compete with national interests and specific coalition groups, for politically weaker and vulnerable states, the existence of coalitions propels their views onto the climate change agenda more than they could have done on their own. This is why coalitions are attractive. To stand with the CAP presents a seat at the table and being grouped with major powers allows access to more resources and opportunities. The existence of the differing opinions of OPEC and AOSIS proves this point because although it is difficult for them to keep to the common position, African member states are at an advantage. In the case of OPEC, the African member states are dependent on oil revenues and as much as the use of petroleum emits a large amount of carbon emissions into the atmosphere, they cannot easily afford to find alternative renewable resources without being provided funds to do so. In the case of AOSIS, because they are the most vulnerable countries in the world to climate change, they are very stringent on the idea to limit GHG emissions to 1.5°C and lower in the future for their own survival. Groupings such as a G77 and the Africa Group are so important for those states who do not have a voice or political leverage. Coalitions also offer a way to inadvertently protect a country's national interests and African countries find benefit in being in these groupings.

**Engagement with REC's:** Different positions that exist within RECs can be a hindrance to the process of advancing the African position. Although there are a number of competing interests, engagement with RECs, NGOs and civil society about national and regional climate realities, initiatives and policies should be a priority moving forward so that these views can be translated into common positions by the AMCEN. Regional economic communities have the advantage of being able to study

the local needs and climate effects and implement the relevant policies or even suggest to the AGN the most important policies necessary for the different regions. This adds into the discussion of what the African common position actually is because it seems to evolve before every conference of the party, however, even though this paper tried to establish if there is one solidified common position there exist many. One can say that Africa always prioritises adaptation measures, mitigation measures, the need for funding and climate funding mechanisms, capacity building and technology transfer so that it can focus its attention on practically tackling climate problems. Perhaps the lack of collaboration between REC's and the AU shows the lack of member states in wanting to commit to real integration despite the strides made by many RECs in articulating their positions to the AU. This then means that the political will and capacity to implement mechanisms and programs at a regional and sub-regional level is crucial. This would mean pooling together of expertise, resources and skills, cohesion among the AMCEN, CAHOSCC and AGN in the common position decision-making process. Many authors have written about the lack of technical and structural capabilities that keep African states and negotiators from presenting a common position.

### **3. Conclusion**

To conclude, this chapter has outlined the key conclusions made by this study in answer to the research questions raised in chapter one. These include the importance of global multilateralism in response to the dire global problem of climate change; the challenge in the commonality of the CAP; the existence of the national interests of regional powers, the need for African states to continue participating in coalitions and the need for engagement with RECs. Taken together these concluding observations reveal the complexity in managing common African positions on climate change taking into account a multitude of actors and interests, the common positions reflect generalised positions of all African states. The AGN does an important job in putting the positions on the international agenda when it can, however, the future of common African positions at the core of it depends on individual country's prerogative to see the value in maintaining common African positions instead of pursuing their own national interests or the national interest of their coalition groups. Future research areas should provide a thorough analysis of the roles of regional powers in influencing

CAPs, the roles of REC's in building CAP cohesion, and the roles of non-state actors and CAPS in climate change negotiations. Since there exist many common positions on issues beyond climate change, like the common position on development effectiveness etc, this study attempted to close the gap of understanding if common African positions can be representative of the interests of all African states, in this case on the issue of climate change.

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