



DEVELOPMENT  
REIMAGINED

# REBALANCING THE SCALES:

AFRICA-UK-EU CLIMATE  
COMMITMENTS  
POST ACS2 AND COP30

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ROUNDTABLE SUMMARY REPORT

HOSTED BY:

Development Reimagined

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## Executive Summary

On 4 November 2025, Development Reimagined convened an online roundtable to examine the state of Africa-UK-EU climate commitments. This report presents a detailed account of the recent dialogue convened to reflect on Africa's climate commitments following the Africa Climate Summit (ACS) and to chart a path toward COP30 and the forthcoming AU–EU Summit. The event, held under Chatham House rules, provided a safe space for frank exchange between representatives of African governments, European partners and development experts.

The discussion explored how Africa's evolving climate narrative - from vulnerability to opportunity - can be translated into practical partnerships that deliver investment, technology, and fair finance. Participants assessed existing mechanisms such as the Global Gateway, Just Energy Transition Partnerships, and carbon markets, while also interrogating the implications of the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM).

Across the conversation, a consistent theme emerged: Africa is asserting itself as a provider of solutions, not a recipient of charity. The continent seeks equitable partnerships that respect its priorities, empower its institutions, and advance its green industrialisation ambitions. Participants highlighted the urgent need to re-orient international finance toward investment rather than aid, emphasising predictable concessional funding, local value addition, and genuine ownership.

The dialogue concluded with agreement that Africa's partnerships with the UK, EU, and wider global actors must be grounded in mutual respect, shared prosperity, and a recognition of Africa's central role in powering the world's green transition. The report closes with reflections on key priorities for COP30 and practical steps for translating ambition into action.

## Introduction

Development Reimagined, an African-owned and African-led international development consultancy, convened this dialogue as part of its ongoing efforts to amplify African perspectives in global climate and development policy. With offices in Beijing, London, and Nairobi, the organisation works across continents to support poverty reduction and sustainable development through innovative, evidence-based approaches.

The event formed part of a continuing series of strategic discussions with African and international partners. Entitled *Rebalancing the Scales: Africa–UK–EU Climate Commitments Post-ACS and Toward COP30*, the meeting brought together a wide range of stakeholders to reflect on the outcomes of the Africa Climate Summit and to examine how African, British, and European actors can work collaboratively to achieve climate goals.

Held online, the dialogue adhered strictly to Chatham House rules, allowing participants to speak openly without attribution. The outcome is a synthesis of collective insights rather than individual statements, ensuring confidentiality while distilling the ideas and arguments that defined the discussion as discussed in the themes below:

### Reframing Africa’s Climate Narrative

The meeting began with an acknowledgement that Africa has reached a pivotal moment in its climate journey. The Africa Climate Summit marked the start of a fundamental shift from a narrative of vulnerability and dependency to one of strength, innovation, and opportunity. This re-framing has transformed Africa from a passive actor to a proactive leader in the global climate arena.

Participants noted that the Nairobi Declaration, which emerged from the first Africa Climate Summit, and the subsequent Addis Ababa Declaration of the second summit together signal Africa’s resolve to speak with one voice. The declarations emphasise fairness, reform, and finance in global climate governance while highlighting Africa’s vast potential for renewable energy, green manufacturing, and sustainable industrialisation.

The discussion stressed that Africa’s narrative must continue to be built on ownership. The continent’s leaders, civil society, and private sector have clearly articulated that climate action should be framed not as aid but as investment in shared prosperity. Africa’s renewable energy potential, young workforce, and natural resource endowment were described as assets that position the continent at the heart of the world’s transition to net zero.

### From Charity and Extraction to Partnership

A key theme running through the dialogue was the rejection of paternalistic or extractive partnerships. Participants observed that too many international initiatives continue to treat Africa as a site for project implementation rather than policy innovation. The time has come, they argued, for partnerships that are empowering, equitable, and forward-looking.

Such partnerships should invest in African industries rather than merely in export terminals; channel finance through African institutions rather than external intermediaries; and create mechanisms for joint rule-making in emerging sectors such as carbon markets and green trade. This approach, it was said, constitutes an “affirmative partnership” one that enables African institutions to co-design, co-finance, and co-own the transition.

The concept of partnership was framed as a continuum moving from dependency to co-agency. Participants stressed that while Africa welcomes collaboration, it must not come at the expense of

autonomy. International partners were encouraged to adopt a listening approach, aligning their support with African-defined strategies and national development plans.

## Outcomes of the Africa Climate Summit

The conversation turned to the achievements of the most recent Africa Climate Summit held in Addis Ababa in 2025 which convened tens of thousands of participants representing governments, civil society, youth, business, and academia. The scale of participation was seen as a demonstration of continental unity and the urgency of addressing climate challenges collectively.

The Addis Ababa Declaration, the main outcome of the summit, reaffirmed that Africa does not seek charity but equitable investment and partnership. It called for predictable and concessional climate finance, underlining that existing flows are inadequate and often structured as loans that exacerbate debt burdens.

Participants noted that the declaration's call for a shift from grants to investments represents both a practical and philosophical change. Rather than viewing climate finance as assistance, the declaration frames it as a legal and moral obligation rooted in historical responsibility and the principle of equity.

Among the summit's flagship initiatives was the Africa Climate Innovation Compact, designed to mobilise **USD \$50 million** annually for renewable energy, adaptation, and resilience. Other themes included clean cooking, critical minerals, and local value chains that ensure Africa's resources are processed within the continent.

The summit also reaffirmed the importance of integrity in carbon markets. Africa's participation in these markets, participants agreed, must be based on fair pricing, transparent verification, and benefit-sharing mechanisms that place communities at the centre. The continent's carbon assets should not be undervalued or exploited but recognised as essential components of global mitigation efforts.

## Aligning African Ambitions with International Mechanisms

Building on the continent's growing consensus, the dialogue examined how existing international mechanisms - particularly those designed in the European Union and the United Kingdom - could be better aligned with Africa's ambitions for green industrialisation, renewable energy expansion, and fair global climate governance. Participants acknowledged the importance of European climate policies in driving global decarbonisation but voiced several key concerns regarding their design, inclusivity, and downstream economic impacts on developing economies. In particular, there was extensive discussion of the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), the EU Deforestation Regulation, and other sustainability-linked trade measures.

Participants observed that major trade and environmental policies affecting African exports had often been developed with minimal consultation. While the CBAM was described as an instrument to equalise carbon costs between European and foreign producers, it was emphasised that its design did not adequately consider Africa's structural realities, such as limited access to low-carbon technologies and weak measurement, reporting, and verification (MRV) systems. Several participants cautioned that this lack of consultation risks reinforcing patterns of dependency and marginalisation in international trade. They argued that, rather than promoting shared climate ambition, such unilateral mechanisms may function as disguised trade barriers, disadvantaging African industries and exporters who already face high logistical and compliance costs.

Participants highlighted the mismatch between the administrative burden imposed by new European environmental policies and the level of financial support available to help African countries comply. Evidence was cited showing that only **22%** of EU climate finance allocated for Africa between 2021 and 2023 reached African institutions directly. This imbalance illustrates that while commitments may be

substantial, implementation often bypasses the very entities best positioned to deliver locally. The discussion pointed to the need for capacity-building partnerships that would strengthen African institutions, industries, and regulators to meet environmental standards on their own terms. Participants also suggested that part of existing European and British climate finance should be ring-fenced for compliance support, technology transfer, and emissions-measurement systems to ensure African producers are not penalised unfairly.

Participants noted that Africa continues to supply much of the world's critical minerals—lithium, cobalt, and manganese—yet retains minimal benefit due to limited local processing. International climate mechanisms, they argued, should encourage investment in local value chains, ensuring that climate finance translates into job creation and technological upgrading rather than raw-material extraction. The discussion emphasised that this approach would strengthen Africa's role in global supply chains while supporting global decarbonisation. The Africa Climate Innovation Compact's target to mobilise **USD \$50 billion** annually was cited as evidence of the continent's readiness to generate and channel investment into renewable energy, adaptation, and green manufacturing when given equitable access to capital.

While participants welcomed Europe's commitment to environmental integrity, they cautioned that policies must be sequenced appropriately to avoid penalising late industrialisers. Transitional arrangements, such as technical assistance and longer adaptation periods, were proposed as practical steps to allow African producers to adjust without losing market competitiveness. There was also strong support for establishing joint technical task forces to co-develop regulatory frameworks and monitor their effects. Such collaboration could transform potential points of friction into opportunities for joint learning and innovation.

## Green Investment and Industrial Transformation

The dialogue then turned to the role of finance in transforming Africa's climate ambitions into action. Participants recognised that investment is essential to bridging the infrastructure and energy gaps that continue to constrain industrialisation.

The European Union's Global Gateway Strategy, worth **€300 billion** worldwide, of which €150 billion is earmarked for Africa, was highlighted as a potentially transformative vehicle for partnership. The strategy aims to mobilise public and private investment for sustainable infrastructure, energy connectivity, and digital transformation.

However, participants sought clarity on the composition and accessibility of these resources. They questioned how much of the **€150 billion** represents direct public financing as opposed to leveraged private capital, and how much will reach African entities directly rather than through multilateral intermediaries. Speakers emphasised that transparency and local alignment are critical. If Global Gateway investments are to succeed, they must correspond with African development strategies and provide concessional financing where market-rate lending would be prohibitive.

Examples from across the continent were cited, including geothermal energy development, solar investments, and clean-cooking programmes, showing that African governments and private actors are already pioneering scalable solutions. Participants urged that climate finance be structured to reinforce such momentum, supporting both household access and large-scale industrial power generation.

## Bridging the Debt–Climate Finance Divide

A recurring concern was that climate finance commitments, while generous on paper, often translate into additional borrowing rather than fiscal relief. Many African countries spend a large share of government revenue on debt servicing, leaving little room for adaptation and green infrastructure investment.

Participants called for debt restructuring and debt-for-climate swaps, where creditor nations or institutions would convert a portion of debt into domestic investment for renewable energy or conservation projects. Such arrangements could release immediate fiscal space while accelerating progress toward nationally determined contributions. The discussion reaffirmed that concessional finance and grants remain essential for achieving climate goals. Climate obligations, participants argued, stem from historic responsibility and must therefore avoid aggravating debt vulnerabilities.

They also noted that while African countries are reforming domestic resource mobilisation and public finance management, the international system must evolve in parallel. Reform of global financial institutions to increase African representation and ensure fairer access to affordable financing was deemed a strategic priority for upcoming summits.

## **Balancing Standards, Trade and Development**

Participants revisited the intersection of environmental regulation and trade, recognising both its necessity and its potential unintended consequences. Measures like the EU's deforestation regulation were seen as valuable in principle but challenging in practice. Compliance with such regulations often requires advanced monitoring systems and digital traceability across supply chains. Participants warned that small and medium enterprises in Africa risk exclusion from lucrative markets if compliance costs are not offset by targeted support.

They proposed that partners introduce graduated compliance mechanisms and dedicated funding to build technical capacity among producers, cooperatives, and exporters. This would uphold environmental integrity while safeguarding livelihoods. The dialogue further stressed that African producers should be viewed as partners in innovation, not passive suppliers. Co-investment in green technologies and knowledge transfer were identified as pathways to ensure Africa's integration into the global low-carbon economy.

Harmonisation of standards between African and European systems was considered vital. Participants encouraged the development of African-led certification bodies capable of interfacing with international counterparts, ensuring mutual recognition and reducing transaction costs.

## **Scaling Up Renewable Energy and Regional Integration**

Energy access emerged as a cross-cutting theme linking climate mitigation, adaptation, and economic growth. Despite progress, hundreds of millions of Africans still lack reliable electricity, and limited generation capacity constrains industrial expansion.

The dialogue emphasised that Africa's energy agenda must focus equally on households and industries. Initiatives like Mission 300, jointly promoted by African and multilateral institutions, aim to provide clean energy access to 300 million people. While widely welcomed, participants noted that such programmes focus mainly on residential access rather than powering factories, corridors, and industrial parks. Large-scale renewable investments - particularly in hydropower, geothermal, wind, and solar - were described as essential for creating a foundation for green industrialisation. Regional cooperation was identified as the key to achieving this at scale. The meeting drew attention to the Africa Single Electricity Market, an African Union-driven framework designed to connect regional power pools and facilitate cross-border trade in electricity. Supporting this initiative, participants said, would significantly lower energy costs, expand renewable deployment, and attract sustainable investment.

They called for development partners to prioritise financing for transmission infrastructure and grid modernisation. Strengthening regional power pools would allow countries with abundant resources to export surplus energy to those with deficits, ensuring equitable and efficient use of the continent's renewable potential.

## Perspectives from Vulnerable and Island States

Participants from small island and climate-vulnerable states reminded the group of their acute exposure to natural hazards and rising sea levels. These countries face catastrophic losses despite relatively higher per-capita incomes that disqualify them from most concessional finance.

Speakers shared that achieving climate neutrality in some small island nations is projected to cost €6.2 billion, yet domestic resources can cover only **35%** of that total. The remainder must come from international support, underscoring the inequities in global climate financing. The dialogue highlighted the need to operationalise the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI), which measures exposure and adaptive capacity rather than income alone. Participants agreed that incorporating the MVI into eligibility criteria for climate finance would reflect the true vulnerability of small and fragile economies and ensure equitable access to funds.

The discussion also referenced the disproportionate cost of natural disasters, which in some cases exceed 5% of national GDP per event. Participants argued that new financing instruments - such as resilience bonds and loss-and-damage facilities - should be prioritised to provide rapid and predictable support when disasters strike.

## Africa and Europe: Shared Challenges, Shared Solutions

In the concluding round of discussion, participants reflected on the interdependence of Africa and Europe in addressing the climate crisis. Together, the two continents contribute around **10%** of global greenhouse gas emissions but bear outsized impacts from global warming. Europe is the fastest-warming continent, while Africa remains the most climate-vulnerable.

Participants agreed that this shared exposure creates both moral and strategic grounds for partnership. Africa and Europe collectively hold approximately **40%** of the votes in the United Nations General Assembly, giving them potential leverage to drive a more equitable global climate agenda.

It was emphasised that cooperation should be rooted in mutual benefit, recognising Africa's capacity to supply renewable energy, critical minerals, and innovation, while Europe can contribute technology and finance. Participants also stressed the need for continuous engagement beyond summits, including regular monitoring of commitments and progress.

## Conclusion: From Promises to Projects: A Shared Path Forward

The dialogue concluded with a collective recognition that Africa's climate story has entered a new phase, one defined by delivery, accountability, and transformation. Participants agreed that the time for declarations has passed and that progress will now be measured by projects implemented, results achieved, and partnerships sustained.

The shift from promises to tangible action, they noted, requires strong institutions, transparent financing, and coordinated implementation across national, regional, and continental levels. Building the capacity of African development banks, ministries, and local authorities is vital to ensure that climate investments are effectively managed and channelled toward high-impact projects. Participants stressed that the continent's transition must be inclusive. Women and youth, who together make up the majority of Africa's population, should not merely be beneficiaries but co-drivers of climate solutions. Their participation strengthens innovation and ensures that interventions reflect real community priorities.

Energy and industrial projects were identified as the immediate test of partnership credibility. For Africa, translating policy into progress means scaling up renewable infrastructure, linking power generation to industry, and expanding regional grids. For international partners, it means aligning financial

commitments with Africa's own priorities and providing the concessional and predictable finance needed to unlock growth.

The discussion highlighted that the true measure of partnership lies not in the size of pledges but in the quality of cooperation. Participants agreed that Africa and its partners must work together to turn pledges into plants, strategies into jobs, and climate ambition into measurable outcomes. Each solar farm built, each transmission line completed, and each green enterprise financed should stand as evidence of shared progress rather than symbolic intent.

The conversation closed on a forward-looking note. Participants affirmed that Africa's role in the global climate architecture is no longer peripheral; it is pivotal. The continent holds the key to balancing planetary sustainability with inclusive, people-centred development. For international partners, this demands humility, consistency, and long-term commitment to African ownership. For African nations, it requires unity of purpose, strategic foresight, and sustained advocacy for fairer global systems.

As the world moves toward COP30, participants agreed that the strength of Africa's partnerships will be judged not by rhetoric but by results: cleaner energy delivered, industries transformed, and resilience built. The overarching message resonated clearly throughout the dialogue: Africa does not seek sympathy, but shared progress; not charity, but partnership; and not promises, but projects.



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