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► To cite this version:

Zié Ballo, Fabrice Essé Ochou. Will Africa Be Able to Keep Its Promises to Reduce Greenhouse Gases? A Review of African Countries' Commitments at COP 21. Management and Economics Research Journal, 2018, 4 (2), pp.261. 10.18639/MERJ.2018.04.674584 . hal-02061690

HAL Id: hal-02061690

<https://hal.science/hal-02061690>

Submitted on 8 Mar 2019

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E-ISSN: 2469-4339

Management and Economics Research Journal, Vol. 4, Iss. S2, 261–267, 2018

Mini Review

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Ballo and Ochou

Special Issue S2: "Global Warming and Climate Change: Part 1"

Guest Editor: Prof. Dr. Badar Alam Iqbal

HATASO, USA

Will Africa Be Able to Keep Its Promises to Reduce Greenhouse Gases? A Review of African Countries' Commitments at COP 21

Zie Ballo^{1*}, Fabrice Essé Ochou^{2,3}

¹Department of Economics and Management, Université Felix Houphouët Boigny, Abidjan, Ivory Coast.

²Department of Economics, Université Felix Houphouët Boigny, Abidjan, Ivory Coast.

³Centre International de Recherche sur l'Environnement et le Développement (CIRED), Paris, France.

*Correspondence: zieballo@hotmail.com

Received: Jul 25, 2018; Accepted: Nov 6, 2018

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Citation: Ballo Z, Ochou FE. 2018. Will Africa be able to keep its promises to reduce greenhouse gases? A review of African countries' commitments at COP 21. Management and Economics Research Journal 4: 261-267.

Abstract

This study describes the different types of commitments made by Africans in their National Determined Contributions (NDCs) and tries to explain whether or not it will be possible for them to fulfill their commitments. For this purpose, we operate all African NDCs formally presented at COP 21 in Paris in 2015 in which the greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction commitments are presented. The analysis reveals three types of commitments—namely, conditional commitments, not conditional on international aid, and both at the same time. Countries with conditional commitments subject to external financing are likely to fulfill their commitments that are stronger. Only countries with unconditioned commitments are more realistic not relying on external assistance that is becoming more and more hypothetical. Beyond the types of commitments, other types of obstacles such as the blurred legal form of the Paris Agreement and the preference for Adaptation could make it difficult to fulfill the commitments of African countries.

Keywords: COP 21; Greenhouse gas; Commitment; Conditional; Unconditional; Africa.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the context of international negotiations about climate within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), 193 countries around the world including 53 from the African continent¹ submitted their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to the 21st Conference of Parties (COP 21) in Paris.

The overall objective of this conference was to come to an agreement about limiting global warming to 2°C. These NDCs should therefore provide an overview of countries' intents to reduce their Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions.

Being solely responsible for about 3.8% of global GHG emissions (Diop, 2015²), African countries have focused on climate change adaptation and the financial mechanisms that need to be put in place to facilitate climate change. However, they made more or less relevant commitments regarding GHG reduction.

These GHG reduction commitments also include significant investments because the world's countries, in general, and Africans, in particular, must fund the necessary ecological transition to achieve a more environmentally friendly development and, consequently, producing fewer GHGs.

¹To date, there are 54 African countries. Only Libya could not provide NDCs.

² Makhtar Diop is the World Bank's vice president for Africa.

The African continent has experienced significant economic growth for nearly a decade. In 2017, the growth rate of regional GDP (Sub-Saharan Africa) was estimated at 2.4% against 1.3% in 2016. The growth projections for the year 2018 are 3.2% (World Bank, 2017) and could even reach 4.5%³ on average by 2020.

These displayed ambitions of African economies are likely to be achieved without a real change in economic models based for the most part on the exploitation of natural resources. African countries, despite their goodwill and the apparent health of their economies, could therefore have trouble without international support (investments in renewable energies, clean technological innovations, technology transfer) to maintain or increase their growth while considering commitments made at COP 21.

In this context, can African countries with the ambition of becoming “emerging” more or less sooner truly fulfill the commitments made at COP 21? Most African NDCs at the same time set low unconditioned reduction commitments and relatively stronger commitments based on the aid of developed countries, historically responsible for GHG emissions.

The objective of this study is therefore to determine whether it is possible for African countries to respect their commitments, considering their development objectives.

After this introduction, we review and summarize the level of engagement of all African countries. Then, we analyze how, from the types of commitments made, these countries could respect or not their commitments. Finally, we determine whether there are other difficulties that could prevent Africans from fulfilling their commitments.

2. SYNTHESIS OF COMMITMENTS OF AFRICAN COUNTRIES IN GHG REDUCTION

By going through the NDCs of each country, there exist three categories in terms of commitment: countries that only have proposals not conditioned by international aid, countries that only have proposals conditioned by aid, and countries that have both. The summary is provided in Figure 1.

2.1. Only Unconditional Commitments

Among the 53 countries that have submitted their NDCs, 26 countries have made an unconditional⁴ commitment on international assistance. This indicates that these countries have included in their global development policies GHG reduction options that can be sustained by their economies. Although some countries, such as Egypt or Swaziland, have no quantified commitment, detailed sectoral measures are being considered for mitigation. An average of their proposals is estimated at about 30% GHG reduction. These countries are mainly located in West Africa and along the entire eastern coast of Africa, including South Africa.

2.2. Only Conditional Commitments

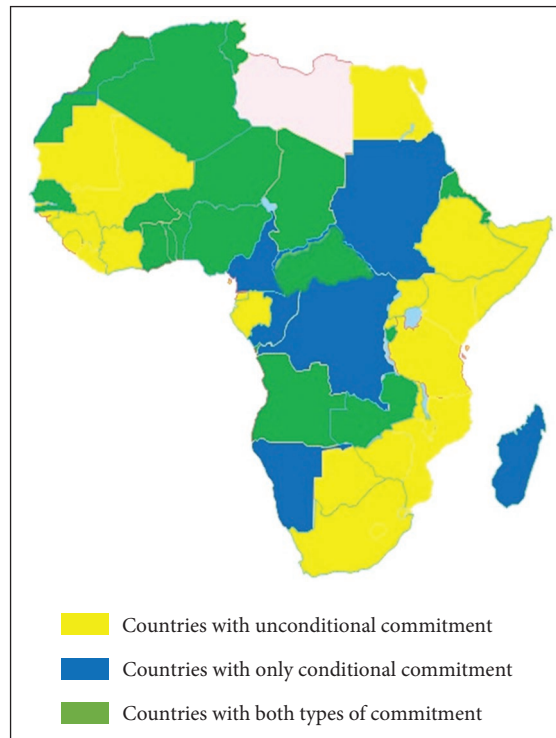
Eight African countries made commitments that are conditioned⁵ just on international aid. These commitments imply that the countries concerned will not take GHG reduction measures until they explicitly obtain government aid from developed countries. This type of commitment could mean that these states totally place the responsibility for climate change on the developed countries. Their commitments are therefore conditioned by help from those who are supposed to have significantly participated in global warming for several decades. An average of their proposals is about 45% GHG reduction. It is essentially the countries of Central Africa except Namibia.

³This is calculated based on the average of the projections provided by each African country.

Source: International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook Database, April 2017.

⁴The countries concerned are South Africa (No quantified commitment), Botswana (15%), Cape Verde (No precise percentage), Ivory Coast (28%), Egypt (No quantified commitment) Ethiopia (64%), Gabon (50%), Gambia (45.4%), Guinea (Sectoral commitments), Guinea Bissau (No quantified commitments), Equatorial Guinea (20%), Kenya (30%), Lesotho (No quantified commitment), Liberia (No quantified commitment), Malawi (Sectoral measures), Mali (Sectoral defined percentages), Mauritania (22.3%), Mozambique (Sectoral measures, no firm commitment), Rwanda (Sectoral measures), Sao Tome (24%), Sierra Leone (Sectoral measures), Somalia (No quantified commitment), Swaziland (No quantified commitment), Uganda (22%), Tanzania (10–20%), Zimbabwe (33%).

⁵ Cameroon (32%), Comoros (84%), Congo (48%), Madagascar (14%), Mauritius (30%), Namibia (89%), Democratic Republic of Congo (17%), Sudan (Not quantified), South Sudan (No specific number).

Figure 1. Map of African Countries by Type of Commitments at COP 21.

Source: Author, built based CDNs.

2.3. Conditional and Unconditional Commitments

For this category, 18 African countries⁶ made two GHG reduction proposals. This type of proposal implies that these countries can make personal efforts but feel that they can do better with international aid.

The average of the proposals without international aid is about 15% against about 35% with international aid. It can therefore be seen that in this category, countries are ready to double their reduction efforts if they receive support.

2.4. Current Situation: Signature versus Ratification

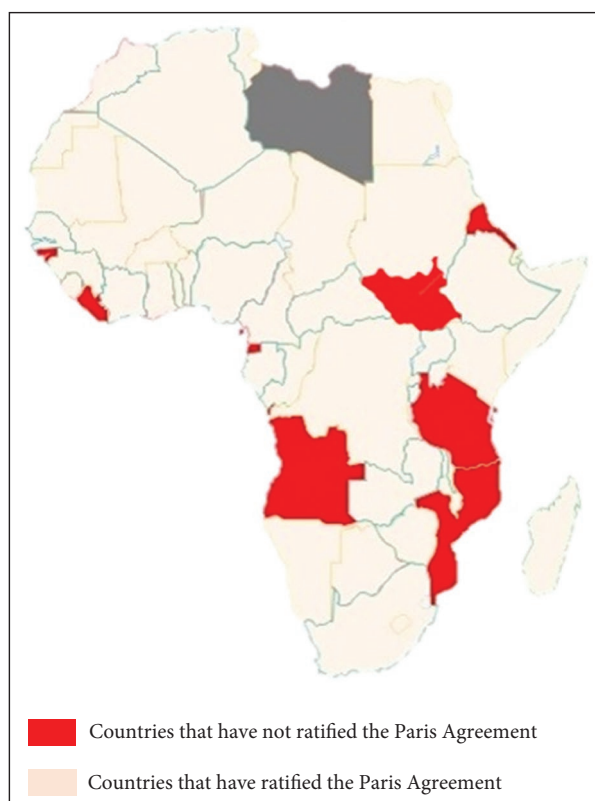
The situation just described on the commitments has changed considerably. In fact, after COP 21, the countries present should first sign the agreement, which means that they *act* on the agreement and are *aware* of what has been performed. This signature does not include a commitment to respect what each country writes in its NDC. As all the countries committed to COP 21 have signed it, this means that they have adopted it.

However, the agreement, which entered into force on November 21, 2016, the day before COP 22 in Marrakech, has been ratified by only 45 African countries. Ratification is the final commitment of the parties to respect the agreement. For the commitment made in the ratification to be implemented, there are country-specific legal procedures. There are nine countries that have not yet ratified⁷ the agreement as shown in Figure 2.

Countries that have not ratified the agreement belong to the three different types of commitments. We cannot say anything about the profound reason for their nonratification.

⁶The percentages of this list are, respectively, unconditional commitment for the first, and conditional for the second. Algeria (7%, 22%), Angola (35%, 50%) Benin (3.5%, 17.9%), Burkina Faso (6.6%, 11.6%), Burundi (3%, 20%), Djibouti (40%, 60%), Eritrea (23%, 39.2%), Ghana (15%, 45%), Morocco (13%, 32%), and Niger (3.5%, 6%), Nigeria (20%, 45%), Central African Republic (5%, 25%), Senegal (5%, 21%), Seychelles (21.4%, 29%), Chad (18.2%, 71%), Togo (11%, 31%), Tunisia (13%, 28%), and Zambia (25%, 47%).

⁷These countries are as follows: Angola, Eritrea, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Libya, Liberia, Mozambique, Tanzania, and South Sudan.

Figure 2. Map of Countries that Have Not Ratified the Paris Agreement.

Source⁸: Author.

3. ANALYSIS OF TYPES AND COMPLIANCE WITH COMMITMENTS

The commitments presented above have shown us that the three categories do not have the same objectives in terms of GHG reduction. Countries with only unconditional commitment offer about 30% GHG reduction, compared to 45% for those with just conditional commitment. We realize that countries with only conditional commitments offer a better reduction of GHGs. However, the first type of commitment, even if it is weaker, is more realistic as these countries will not officially wait for aid before implementing their GHG reduction plans. The rates of the countries with the two proposals vary between the first (unconditional commitment) and the second (conditional commitment), respectively, between 15% and 35% (Table 1). The unconditional proposal of these countries is far lower to those which make an unpacked proposition. Their conditional proposal is close to that of only unconditional commitment countries. This could mean that by making these weak proposals, these countries want to “force” the richest countries to fund them to achieve at least 30% GHG reduction.

Table 1 also shows that each time unconditional commitments are lower. This indicates that funding really plays an important role in implementing GHG reductions, not necessarily in the same way as adaptation, but to allow African countries to continue low-carbon development.

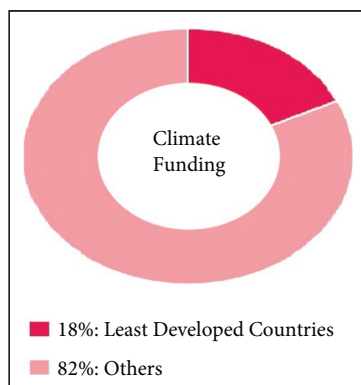
4. POTENTIAL OBSTACLES TO MEETING AFRICAN COMMITMENTS

The obstacles that may hinder the fulfillment of the commitments made by African countries are political, economic, and legal.

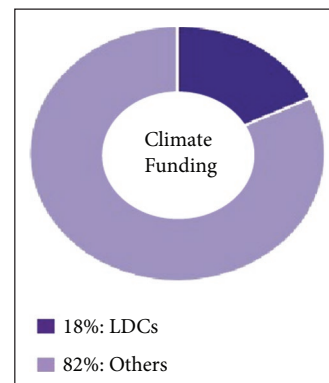
⁸This map is built based the UN FCCC, Paris Agreement, Signature Ceremony. Friday, April 22, 2016.

Table 1. Summary of GHG Reduction by Type of Commitment.

Countries with only unconditional commitment		30%
Countries with only conditional commitment		45%
Countries with both types of commitments	Unconditional	15%
	Conditional	35%

Figure 3. Estimated Share of Climate Fund Allocated to LDCs in 2013–2014 (before COP21).

Source: OECD, 2016.⁹

Figure 4. Estimated Share of Climate Fund Allocated to LDCs in 2015–2016 (before COP21).

Source: Shadow, F. Climate Finance Shadow Report, 2018.

4.1. Political and Economic Obstacles

As we have just examined it, international aid is an important condition for many African countries to reduce their GHGs. Countries with unconditional commitments could respect them without outside help. However, the process of withdrawing from the agreement initiated by the USA¹⁰ is blurring the promise of \$100 billion a year for adaptation and mitigation for developing countries. Countries that have related their commitments to international donations may therefore lack the resources to begin low-carbon development.

This situation is confirmed by the low allocation to the least developed countries (LDCs). The majority of them are in Africa. Figures 3 and 4 from the following reports¹¹ of OXFAM International (2016 and 2018) show that the shares of climate fund allocated to LDCs have not evolved since COP 21.

In addition, some recipient countries have simply not ratified the Paris Agreement (Figure 2). This decision simply indicates that they may not fulfill their commitments.

Some of these countries such as Angola, having been through two decades of civil war, are gradually getting a stable economy.

Angola became a member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in 2007 and is the fifth largest economic power in Africa. Therefore, there is a need for this country to continue to exploit its oil resources that are still important. Its unwillingness is not a surprise.

4.2. Legal Obstacles

There is a profound ambiguity about the legal value of COP 21. In fact, before and during the negotiations, COP 21's president and minister of foreign affairs at the time, Laurent Fabius, insisted that it is a *legally*

⁹ From Shadow, F. Climate Finance Shadow Report 2016.

¹⁰ Announced by US President Donald Trump on June 1, 2017.

¹¹ Shadow, F. Climate Finance Shadow Report 2016 and 2018.

binding—that is, a *mandatory*—agreement to be respected. Looking through the Paris Agreement, it turns out that there is no sanction mechanism or jurisdiction in charge of implementing the Agreement, as was the case with Kyoto Protocol adopted in 1997 and implemented in 2005.

In reality, countries that have ratified the agreement are “obliged” to respect it, but this obligation is moral, and it is based on the goodwill of countries. Therefore, this goodwill is subject to the internal policies of the countries—that is to say, the visions and priorities of the governments in place. For example some countries will have to pass their GHG reduction measures as a bill in their national assemblies. These constraints may, even after ratification, limit a country in the effective fulfillment of its commitment. The political instability of African countries that engender repetitive constitutional changes can therefore be detrimental to the implementation of commitments and consequently play against the implementation of the commitments.

4.3. The Preference for Adaptation

During COP 21, African countries claimed greater consideration of adaptation in the negotiations. Schuller and Stokkink (2016) reports that the distribution of the \$100 billion commitment places developed countries in opposition to developing countries. In fact, donor countries would like only 20% of this amount to go to adaptation. As African countries were responsible for only very low emissions, they were more vulnerable and struggled to make adaptation the focus of the debate. Diop (2015) explained that the *slogan* for Africa must be adaptation, and that if Africa is to succeed in fighting poverty, adaptation to climate change needs to be set as its priority.

COP 22 that followed did not define strategies to mobilize this amount of 100 billion. These uncertainties in terms of funding coupled with the concern for an increasingly urgent adaptation may therefore favor for several African countries the failure to fulfill their commitments.

5. CONCLUSION

This study analyzed the possibility of fulfillment or not of African countries’ GHG reduction commitments at COP 21.

The summary of commitments revealed that African countries have suggested three types of commitments—namely, only unconditional commitments, only conditional commitments, and both types of commitments at the same time.

Analysis of the percentages of reductions displayed in the various NDCs and according to these different types of commitments has shown that the levels of reductions in conditional commitments are higher than the unconditional ones, which shows that international aid is important for greater GHG reduction on the continent. However, unconditional commitments are proposals that can be achieved without international assistance and on the basis of resources owned by these countries.

This study also allowed us to see that several African countries have not ratified the Paris Agreement. Therefore, we can assume that these countries will not respect their commitments. These countries having made the three types of commitments, it is difficult to deeply know the reasons for their nonratification.

Other obstacles may also prevent African countries from fulfilling their commitments, despite the goodwill of some of them. First, the low allocation to LDCs for both mitigation and adaptation is a serious constraint especially for countries with only conditional commitments. Second, the fact that the Paris Agreement does not have legal tools for sanctions in case of noncompliance with these commitments can lead several African governments to simply exit the Agreement or not pursue GHG reduction policies. Finally, adaptation was the focus of the negotiations for African countries at COP 21. It is clear that the latter is more important than mitigation because, globally, Africa emits only about 3.8% of global emissions. Commitments can therefore be “neglected,” as there is no urgent need for reduction for Africans.

In order for African countries to meet their commitments, developed countries should respect their funding promises because Africa has the “chance” to initiate a different development to the one already adopted by today’s developed countries. Without real funding, sustainable development would be almost impossible given the amount of nonrenewable natural resources still available on the continent.

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