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EU climate adaptation diplomacy: Searching for common ground with Africa

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The EU's partnership with Africa is trying to weather multiple crises. Long-standing tensions and frustrations – from vaccine equity to colonial legacies and migration management – hinder the broader Africa-EU partnership. The Russian invasion of Ukraine further strained diplomatic relations. These tensions spill over to the Africa-EU climate partnership, which is already under pressure due to the potentially negative repercussions for Africa from Europe's Green Deal strategies, like the Farm to Fork strategy, and inadequate global climate financing.

Climate change remains the most significant existential threat to both Africa and Europe. The impacts of global warming are already leading to more food shocks. Africa needs massive international support to adapt and build more resilient food systems. At the same time, the EU seeks to strengthen ties with African countries in an increasingly unstable geopolitical environment. A strong Africa-EU partnership on adaptation can support much-needed resilience in Africa while improving the broader Africa-EU partnership.

This paper examines the state of the Africa-EU climate partnership by unpacking the EU's adaptation diplomacy towards Africa. It presents four future scenarios of EU adaptation diplomacy to illustrate the EU's dilemmas when balancing its economic and climate interests. Finally, we propose three ways to enhance EU climate adaptation diplomacy towards Africa: linking with African partners to create more robust EU policies, providing more and better adaptation support and boosting strong alliances while seeking new and credible ones at various governance levels.

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Acronyms

AEF	Africa-Europe Foundation
AfDB	African Development Bank
AU	African Union
BASIC	Brazil, South Africa, India, and China
BMZ	Bundesministerium für Wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung
CBAM	Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism
CBDR	Common But Differentiated Responsibilities
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
COP	Conference of the Parties (UNFCCC)
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
EC	European Commission
EFSD +	European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus
EIB	European Investment Bank
EU	European Union
F2F	Farm to Fork Strategy
G77	Group of 77 Underdeveloped Countries
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEF	Global Environment Facility
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
L&D	Loss & Damage
LDCs	Least Developed Countries
NAPs	National Adaptation Plans
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NDICI(-GE)	Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument(-Global Europe)
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
RECs	Regional Economic Communities
SDR	Special Drawing Rights
SIDSs	Small Island Developing States
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
TEI	Team Europe Initiative
WFP	World Food Programme
WTO	World Trade Organization

1. Introduction

Africa is particularly exposed to climate change as extreme weather is hitting the equator hard and fiscal space and capacity of African governments to adapt is generally low. Even at 1.5°C warming, Africa faces high risks of widespread losses and damage due to climate change. Fortunately, adaptation remains cost-effective even at higher warming (IPCC 2023), with African governments possibly already spending approximately 3.4 % of their gross domestic project (GDP) on adaptation (AU 2022). Yet, the continent faces a severe and urgent shortfall in funding for climate adaptation: adaptation costs could reach approximately US$ 36 billion (median) per year by 2030 for sub-Saharan Africa (UNEP 2022; Trisos et al. 2022).

While the energy sector is the main focus of current mitigation efforts, food systems are arguably the most important but challenging systems for adaptation. Climate change has already hit food production and availability, particularly for the world's poorest, exposing millions to acute food insecurity. Moreover, climate change intensifies food problems in Africa and makes shocks cut deeper. While the Russian invasion spurred the worst global food crisis since 2007-08, this crisis hit Africa particularly hard, with estimates of an additional 30 million Africans experiencing acute food insecurity (WFP 2022; Di Ciommo et al. 2022). The food crisis revealed not only the dependence of many African countries on food imports but also how international food markets are increasingly concentrated and, therefore, vulnerable to climate and political shocks (FSIN 2023; Knaepen and Dekeyser 2022). Vulnerability in Africa can impact Europe too: climate-induced threats can trigger cascading and cross-border implications, which, combined with existing socioeconomic and political stress, can spark unrest with spillover effects throughout African and European regions, for example, unsafe or illegal migration flows that, in turn, may create opportunities for organised crime, or entail risks (e.g. exploitation) for migrants (Hildén et al. 2020; Carter et al. 2021; Knaepen 2023).

A strong Africa-EU climate partnership on adaptation can support much-needed adaptation in Africa. But climate diplomacy between the two continents has a two-step-forward, one-step-backwards dynamic. Today's crisis environment is a step back: in Europe, the Russian invasion of Ukraine tests Europe's commitment to global climate action. As a result, foreign aid and climate finance budgets are under increasing pressure, with significant redirections towards Ukraine and internal spending by some European countries (OECD 2023). This comes at a time when African countries were already criticising the Global North, including the EU, for the lack of tangible progress on the adaptation agenda, characterised by a gap between commitments and disbursements, double-counting and insufficient quality of finance. The EU's greening agenda ruffles feathers as well. Several trade partners expressed grave concerns that the EU Green Deal would create extra trade barriers for them and limit their options to support their own resilience through agricultural and industrial development (Moens and Mathiesen 2023; Dekeyser and Woolfrey 2021).

Since 2009, the EU and its member states have been a pioneer in global climate finance. They provided, together with the European Investment Bank (EIB), on average €20 billion annually in public climate finance to developing countries in recent years (Haque 2023). The EU pays strong attention to adaptation support in sub-Saharan Africa, at least on paper (Knaepen 2022). The reality is that European climate finance, including from the European Investment Bank (EIB), public development banks and development finance institutes, continues to prioritise mitigation projects over adaptation. The latter is one of the reasons for the divergence between Europe and Africa.

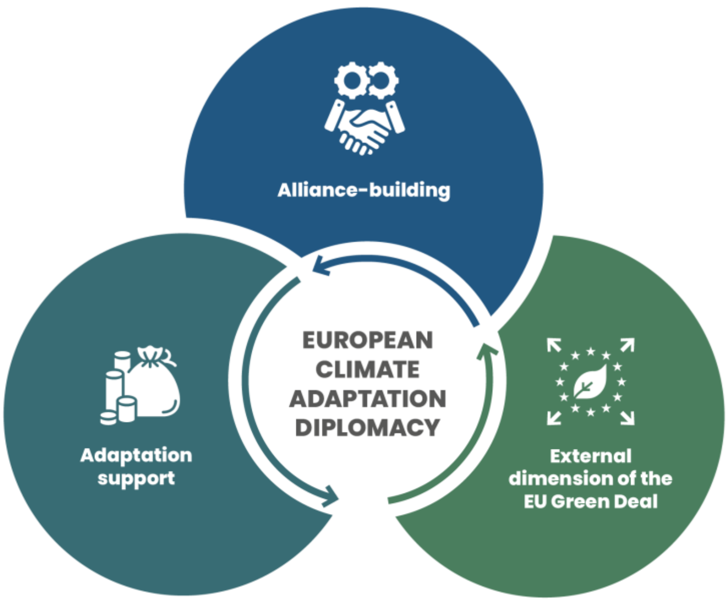
This paper explores **the EU's climate adaptation diplomacy towards Africa in a context of a geopolitical crisis**. We identify three avenues for improved climate diplomacy between Europe and Africa: a better understanding of the external implications of Europe's green transition and adaptation agenda, better incorporating African concerns and demands within reinvigorated alliances and partnerships, and increased and better-targeted adaptation support from both public and private sources. It explores four potential future scenarios of EU adaptation diplomacy, illustrating the challenges the EU might encounter as it seeks to bridge economic and environmental interests, both at home and on the global stage.

2. Unpacking EU climate adaptation diplomacy

Climate diplomacy is integral to the EU's foreign policy. The EU is formally determined to work with global partners to implement the Paris Agreement. This includes limiting the global temperature increase to 1.5°C, supporting the most vulnerable countries in adapting to climate change effects, and increasing collective climate finance (CoEU 2023a). The 2019 EU Green Deal led to a more proactive EU climate diplomacy. While the early 2000s marked the EU's climate diplomatic strategy based on leadership by example, the EU now seeks to both encourage and support others to raise ambitions and accelerate a global green transition (Herrero and Knaepen 2014). As the EU raised the bar of all of its climate policies, it also started a more explicit reflection on its external climate action. The EU's 2021 Adaptation Strategy, for the first time, included an international component with a strong focus on strengthening the resilience of African Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (EC 2021a; Oberthür and Dupont 2021). The strategy has finally raised the climate adaptation agenda as a key element of the European Green Deal (Klein 2021).

Yet, while the EU has strong policies on paper, they can be difficult to translate into practice, especially in its external partnerships. There is no universally accepted definition of 'climate diplomacy'. Therefore, we unpack it by looking at three interrelated strands of the EU climate diplomacy (see Figure 1): the external dimension of the EU Green Deal (and its related policies), (financial) adaptation support, and alliance-building at multiple governance levels.[1] These building blocks can move the EU's external climate (adaptation) agenda forward. But they are also - each in their own way - subject to tensions between Europe and Africa.

Figure 1: The three strands of European climate adaptation diplomacy



[1] Note that the EC (2018) identified a fourth strand of climate diplomacy: addressing the implications of climate change on peace and security. Due to space limitations, this is not covered in this paper. An analysis on how the EU bridges the climate and security agendas is done by Knaepen and Vajpeyi (2022).

2.1. Externalising the EU Green Deal

So far, the EU's global influence on climate change has been strongest as a global negotiator and agenda-shaper rather than convincing other countries to adopt and adapt its domestic climate policies. In the absence of such adoption, the EU turned up its regulatory machine to enact various measures to externalise its Green Deal. These measures are often seen as important non-tariff trade barriers for partner countries exporting to the European market, causing what some name "regulatory imperialism" (Moens and Mathiesen 2023), meaning the EU acts as the world's regulator, which has caused protests from the EU's trade partners including many African countries.

The best-known example is the heated debate around the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), which is the first carbon tariff on selected imported goods, such as steel and cement, to avoid carbon leakage of EU greening policies and force a global industrial 'green transition'. If not accompanied by complementary measures, CBAM could price out producers that cannot make the necessary sustainability investments (Oguntoye et al. 2023). Other measures are the regulation for deforestation-free products, which limits the import of agricultural products from recently deforested land, and the directive on due diligence, which promotes supply chain sustainability. These measures may have a significant compliance cost for developing countries, both in terms of their intended effects and the additional reporting burden that is generally passed on to producers (Byiers et al. 2023).

EU policy impacts on Africa's development, especially in agriculture, have been long-standing. Before its 2013 revision, the EU's Common Agricultural Policy was widely criticised for producing trade distortions, with a particularly strong impact on poor farmers in the Global South (Tondel et al. 2022). Consecutive reforms significantly reduced these negative impacts, yet the EU took a considerable amount of time to incorporate the concerns of these poorer farmers into EU policy. Similarly, the impact of EU policymaking on African agriculture development and the exclusion of African concerns in its green policies are currently criticised as well. As part of the Farm to Fork (F2F) Strategy, for example, a regulation has been proposed to reduce the usage and hazards of pesticides in EU food imports (EU 2021). This regulation is significant as it marks the first instance where a WTO member has proposed pesticide limits based on their environmental impact rather than just consumer health concerns. However, some have described the regulation as akin to "*Throwing a hand grenade into global agri-food trade*" (Matthews 2022), and indicates the EU's use of market power to externalise its Green Deal, with little attention to the specific needs of developing countries.

2.2. Supporting adaptation

Generally, international adaptation finance to developing countries is up to ten times below these countries' estimated needs. By 2030, those needs are estimated to range between US$ 160-340 billion annually (UNEP 2022). The outcomes of the annual global UNFCCC climate conferences show insufficient progress on the delivery of adaptation, including an agreement on the modalities of the Global Goal on Adaptation, the delivery of €100 billion per year as of 2020, the doubling of adaptation finance by 2025 promised at COP26 in Glasgow, and increasing the share of adaptation finance as part of the New Quantified Goal on Climate Finance.

EU climate finance, including for adaptation, has increased over the years, especially for African LDCs and SIDSs (EC 2021b). The EC's new financial instrument for Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation – the so-called NDICI-Global Europe (NDICI-GE) instrument - was launched in 2021 with a 30% climate spending target. Although not yet officially laid down in NDICI-GE legislation, this target has been raised to 35% (EC 2022a). In light of these climate targets, the EU, its member states and the European Investment Bank (EIB) jointly committed a sizeable amount of €23.04 billion in climate finance to developing countries in 2021 (EC 2022). However, less than 40 % of this funding was dedicated to adaptation (EC 2022).

A common criticism levelled is that EU financing commitments are a repackaging of existing allocations rather than new and additional resources. At COP27, for example, the EU also announced a Team Europe Initiative (TEI) on Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience in Africa, with an envelope of €1 billion, but this largely consists of a collection of already allocated projects (EU Capacity4dev 2022). Furthermore, just like many other international climate finance providers, the EU institutions are plagued by slow disbursements of committed finance, increasing allocations to global rather than local or country-specific projects, a higher proportion of loans with insufficient 'concessionality', affecting debt sustainability, and insufficient impact assessments (ECA 2022; Savvidou et al. 2021).

The EU's finance instruments and modalities for adaptation raise concerns about whether they can deliver for those suffering the most from climate impacts, including smallholder farmers, who constitute more than 60% of Africa's population. Under the EU's current 2021-2027 financial framework, the European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus (EFSD+) and its External Action Guarantee (EC 2022) provide the investment framework for NDICI-GE. The EFSD+ aims to mobilise at-scale private finance more effectively, including addressing climate adaptation and resilience, to help close the adaptation finance gap. Driven by the global targets of the Paris Agreement, other European financial institutions with a public mandate, such as the European Investment Bank (EIB) or national public development banks like the German Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW), are increasingly greening their portfolio (Ahairwe et al. 2022). The EIB, for instance, is positioning itself as the EU Climate Bank with a dedicated 15% of overall climate financing to adaptation (EIB 2021). While mobilising *more* adaptation finance by a larger variety of sources is laudable, adaptation finance solutions are often perceived as generating lower returns with long time horizons for impact, compared to mitigation investments (e.g. renewable energy deployment). The benefits of investments in adaptation are often indirect, making it less straightforward to mobilise development finance, especially private finance. Such perceptions are partly driven by investors' lack of proper assessment of climate change risks and an excessively short-term view (Ahairwe et al. 2022). As a result, the private sector underinvests in adaptation, including in African farming communities that operate in informal settings (Knaepen 2022). Adaptation finance can be difficult to track and may be overreported. For example, out of the total amount of €23.04 billion in climate finance to developing countries in 2021, a small proportion also went to cross-cutting action, which addressed mitigation and adaptation. However, there is no clear definition of the shares in such cross-cutting segments so adaptation may be overreported (CAN Europe 2021).

'Climate and energy' is one of the five pillars of the 2021 Global Gateway strategy, presented as the external projection of the EU Green Deal, which aims to mobilise up to €150 billion in investments in Africa by 2027, including through EFSD+ guarantees. While many initial climate-related ESFD+ proposals focus on the energy transition and climate mitigation, several investment proposals address adaptation dimensions, including sustainable cities, water & sanitation, and (climate-smart) agriculture (EC 2023). The opacity in the current allocation of guarantees and future targets makes it difficult to assess of the EFSD+ and Global Gateway contributions to EU climate adaptation ambitions.

Climate finance also suffers from a bias towards top-down global funds, which often struggle to engage with the complexity of local adaptation efforts. None of the major global climate funds like the Green Climate Fund (GCF) or the Global Environment Facility (GEF), to which the EU and EU member states contribute significantly, has an office in Africa, but instead work with "fly-in consultants" to identify projects (Interview AEF, February 2023).

Preliminary data in 2022 suggest a net drop of 7.4% (or US$34 billion) in bilateral flows of Official Development Assistance (ODA) from DAC countries to Africa compared to 2021 (OECD 2023). The overall EU institutions' aid to Ukraine shows a staggering increase. In the near future, Africa does not seem to be slated for dramatic ODA. However, significant ODA increases are unlikely in the current political climate marked by a conflict without an end in sight. The 'repurposing' of ODA (i.e. in-donor refugee costs) and the stretching of the definition continues at a pace driven by domestic factors (Harcourt and McNair 2023). Ultimately, this may have negative repercussions for climate adaptation-related ODA projects, and it would only strengthen the already existing critique by African partners on the growing adaptation finance gap.

2.3. Alliance-building at multiple governance levels

To help meet the goals of the Paris Agreement, the EU is committed to building alliances and engaging in dialogue to increase mutual trust and accountability. In the past, we have seen informal Europe-Africa coalitions in the context of UNFCCC climate negotiations, most notably the High Ambition Coalition, joined by European and 79 African, Caribbean and Pacific countries at the time of the Paris COP21 in 2015 (EC 2015). But these types of diplomatic initiatives never led to formal alliances, and they easily fade out after the negotiations. The EU seemingly struggles to build effective, long-term climate partnerships and alliances, with major emitters and countries from the Global South. The Africa-EU partnership is a case in point. It has long been plagued by an overreliance on rhetoric and an inability to follow through with implementation, as it is not anchored in institutions that can implement.

Yet, forming 'green alliances', 'partnerships', and even 'clubs' are key objectives throughout the EU's climate policies, including the F2F Strategy, which calls for 'Green Alliances' on sustainable food systems with all partners (EC 2020). Yet, in practice, limited progress has been made after three years. Rather than joining hands with the EU, said partners have directed withering critique towards the F2F. A bone of contention lies in partners feeling excluded from discussions on the EU's plans, despite being at the receiving end of these plans.

The EU's partnership agenda is also held back by an inability to engage openly on the historical climate injustice and the longstanding objective of 'common but differentiated responsibilities' (CBDR). At the Africa Adaptation Summit 2022, Vice President Timmermans mentioned, *"European citizens are not worried about the moral argument. It might seem strange, seen from an African perspective, but it's always what is closer to your own worries is always bigger on your agenda than somebody else's worries"* (EC 2022c). Such statements add insult to injury for African countries. They confirm their perception that the EU fails to acknowledge the historical imbalance, which further erodes trust and strengthens perceptions of a lack of accountability.

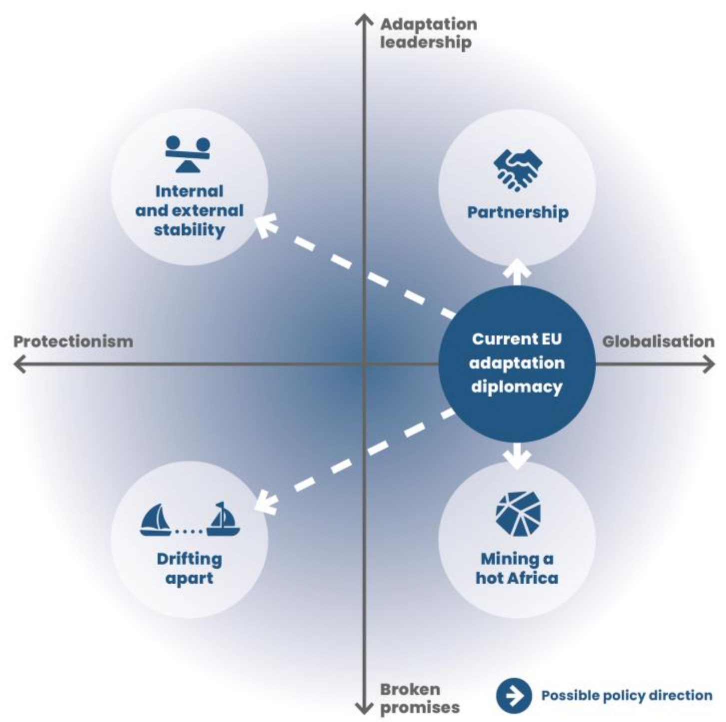
At times, internal European fragmentation hampers effective climate diplomacy and alliance-building. EU member states are often divided on the EC's climate proposals. In the run-up to COP27 in November 2022, the EU failed to submit its updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) due to disagreement around the specific final targets of the REPowerEU Plan, put forward by the EC in May 2022. This plan included a proposal to increase the EU's share of renewable energy in the final energy mix in 2030 from 40% to 45%. EU member states could not agree on this final target (Climate Action Tracker 2022). A year earlier, internal European disagreement also marked the COP26 negotiations on the potential creation of a Loss & Damage (L&D) facility. The European Commission was one of the negotiating partners blocking the inclusion of an L&D facility in the final Glasgow climate pact (Carrington 2021), while Scotland separately announced the creation of an L&D Fund to which others, including the Belgian Wallonia region, contributed (Huq 2022). These internally fragmented agendas risk undermining the EU's position as a leader in climate action, including adaptation action. Furthermore, the fragmentation of European interlocutors is an additional barrier to effective alliance-building: diplomatic relations require African policy-makers to deal with various interlocutors from the EU institutions and EU Member States, depending on whether the dialogue is economic cooperation, energy cooperation, or climate cooperation (Dennison and Engström 2023).

On the other hand, the African Group does not face internal disagreement on the adaptation or L&D agendas when formulating a common African position in the run-up to the UNFCCC COPs. At COP27, they agreed on all adaptation-related topics: scaling up climate adaptation with half of all climate funds to be dedicated to climate adaptation, operationalising an L&D facility, and agreeing on measurable means to review the progress towards the Global Goal on Adaptation (Kuwonu 2022). However, disagreements among African negotiators on mitigation, more precisely, the modalities of Africa's just energy transition, and the role of oil and gas in this transition, usually delay the formulation of the position (Farand 2022). The multiple memberships of African countries, ranging from the G77 to the BASIC Group, including Brazil, South Africa, India and China, to the SIDS and OPEC, show how diverse needs and interests are. As a result, African climate diplomacy is often hampered by slow processes of coming forward with common positions or strategies. So far, less than ten African countries have put forward their National Adaptation Plans (NAPs). As EU partners often use NAPs and NDCs as guidelines for their adaptation initiatives to understand partner countries' key priorities, this risks delaying the much-needed support.

3. What can future EU adaptation diplomacy look like?

We have developed four future scenarios and examined their implications to better understand the possible directions for EU adaptation diplomacy, (Figure 2). We span the EU's adaptation diplomacy on two dimensions: economically, meaning externalising the Green Deal, which can range from closed protectionism to open globalisation; and diplomatically, covering adaptation support and alliance-building, which can stretch from leadership to broken promises. While each scenario is theoretical and simplistic, they provide insights into potential pathways for the EU's climate adaptation diplomacy in the future. In reality, elements of all four scenarios will likely be in play. Each scenario underscores the dilemmas that the EU may face as it seeks to balance its economic and environmental interests, both domestically and globally.

Figure 2: Scenario framework for current and future EU adaptation diplomacy along axes from protectionism to globalisation and from adaptation leadership to broken promises



In the first scenario, '**Internal and external stability**', the EU seeks to quell domestic discontent caused by its transition agenda by protecting and supporting its own economies while continuing leading on global adaptation efforts, as it recognises that insufficient adaptation abroad can lead to instability that can have negative cascading and cross-border effects on Europe as well. This scenario tries to ensure a level playing field for EU industries competing with foreign producers while also supporting the Global Goal on Adaptation. However, there is tension between its protectionist stance and its desire for global leadership, with only a handful of countries joining its 'Adaptation Alliances' and others accusing the EU of hypocrisy. The outcome of this scenario could well be a more autonomous Europe, gained by a "vigorous pursuit of sovereignty through regulatory power" (Bonefeld-Dahl 2022), but also a less open Europe; and a more adapted Africa that is selling more of its goods to the easier accessible markets in Asia.

The second scenario, '**Partnerships'**, is the most challenging but potentially rewarding one for the EU. It combines strong internal and external adaptation leadership with an open green economy based on strong linkages with trade partners. The EU uses the appeal of its single market and its development cooperation to incentivise and enable adaptation and green transition in African countries. In doing so, the EU can create a model for sustainable development that could inspire other countries. The outcome of this scenario is an elevated Africa-EU partnership with African and European countries invested in each other's green transition (Karkare and Medinilla 2023). The EU overcomes the alleged conflict between trade commitments and climate action by engaging in a two-way exchange with other WTO members on the design and implementation of its transition policies (Zerka 2023). However, achieving such a partnership would require a significant commitment to cooperation and preparedness to absorb some of the short-term risks and costs of an accelerated EU transition.

Third, '**Mining a hot Africa'** is marked by broken promises in the EU's climate diplomacy, combined with a focus on exploiting African resources to fuel the EU's own green transition. Rather than a partnership, Europe pursues new extractive partnerships with Africa and views the continent as a means to reduce its dependence on China for critical raw materials, and Russia for energy. An Africa that suffers from insufficient and inadequate adaptation support could still reap benefits from the green transition-fueled mining boom but will end up feeling exploited while battling with the impacts of a climate crisis. The outcome of this scenario could be a strained relationship between the EU, African countries, and others, with increased criticism of the EU's choice to favour its own transition and economic position over others.

Lastly, '**Drifting apart'** represents the bleakest economic and climate future of all scenarios for both continents. In this scenario, the EU protects and supports its own economy while retreating its adaptation support. The outcome is a more isolated Europe needing to deal with more climate-induced instability abroad, which increasingly spills over to Europe and its borders. The flip side of being less dependent on the world is that the world becomes less dependent on you: Europe has a dwindling economic appeal, and its diplomatic power wanes. Unable to reap the opportunities from the green transition in Europe, as insufficient green investments mean less access to the higher-standards EU market, Africa looks elsewhere. The Africa-EU partnership continues to underperform, as African countries feel neglected and left behind, seeing the EU's protectionist stance as hampering its development and being frustrated towards the EU for not helping to address climate impacts. Climate cooperation and the Africa-EU partnership are damaged.

At present, the EU's economic position is mostly a global one, with adaptation diplomacy being a strong European policy orientation that, as a key policy domain, is, however, plagued by many other urgencies and interests, which creates pressure on public budgets and results in limited *quality* financial backing. The EU's adaptation diplomacy could change in any direction with the strategies and policy measures currently discussed in Brussels as the EU seeks to navigate the difficult balancing act between its quest for more strategic autonomy, its more globalist agenda, and implementing its Green Deal while leading the global climate agenda. The current trajectory of the EU may lean towards a more protectionist Europe, albeit with a growing commitment to adaptation on the global stage. Such a course aligns more closely with the first scenario, 'internal and external stability'.

4. Steps towards improving EU climate adaptation diplomacy towards Africa

Climate adaptation remains a joint priority between Africa and the EU, yet it lacks a clear shared agenda. Recent progress in the Africa-EU setting was quickly overshadowed by the Russian invasion and the economic and food crises that ensued. We identify three avenues for improved EU climate diplomacy towards Africa in the current global environment: linking better with African partners to create stronger EU policies; providing better adaptation support; and boosting alliances at multiple levels

4.1. Creating stronger EU policies by linking better with African partners

The EU Green Deal is in the first place a European transition plan geared towards domestic objectives. While there is an explicit awareness of the need for strong international engagement, the EU has struggled to prevent or mitigate unintended negative impacts of its policies outside the EU's borders and to garner support for its transition model worldwide, and in the Global South particularly. A major point of criticism is that the EU takes unilateral, often blanket measures, and expects others to get on board. The EU's adaptation diplomacy requires a more nuanced understanding of African positions and could involve African governments, businesses, civil society and the research community better and sooner in its plans as it seeks to mitigate the negative consequences of these policies (Di Ciommo 2023).

More upfront and jointly formulated accompanying measures to new EU standards and policies can also make sure that the European Green Deal is not seen as a risk to African economies but as a response to a shared challenge. Establishing partnerships between institutions in EU member states and comparable organisations in partner countries - the 'twinning' of organisations - can aid in building the necessary capacity to harness the advantages of complementarity (Dennison and Engström 2023). For this to happen, African leaders should not only find ways to benefit from the EU Green Deal, but the Green Deal could also be tweaked to align more with Africa's stated development and adaptation priorities (Usman et al. 2021). A frank and continued dialogue is crucial for this, which requires a step up from the current Africa-EU trend of losing momentum between the high-level summits, resulting in insufficient follow-up on the declarations made and a loss of credibility (Tadesse Shiferaw 2023).

4.2. Ensuring *more and better* adaptation support based on African needs

The EU's climate finance could avoid double counting of climate and development finance, close the gap between commitments and actual disbursements, and ensure faster disbursements when its financial flows are based on higher quality, transparency and effectiveness (ECA 2022; Cichocka and Mitchell 2022). For adaptation purposes specifically, the EU will need to continue providing new and additional adaptation finance to help meet the US$ 100 billion and the goal to double adaptation finance goal by 2025 while simultaneously accelerating its phasing out of fossil fuel finance. In practice, this means that the EU's climate financing should be separate from official development assistance and provided either as grants or at concessional rates to avoid saddling African countries with unsustainable debt. The financing should also be rebalanced from its current heavier focus on climate mitigation toward climate adaptation and resilience. Priorities for adaptation support in Africa include resilient transport infrastructure, forest and soil conservation, and stronger natural resource management (Usman et al. 2021; CAN Europe 2021).

Furthermore, the EU institutions and member states should continue exploring innovative adaptation finance solutions. So far, the EU has a strong track record in supporting better climate finance flows by introducing technical innovations, including the EU Taxonomy Regulation, which is a classification system for environmentally sustainable economic activities to help implement the EU Green Deal at home and abroad, the EU Green Bond standard and the Global Green Bond Initiative. More recently, 'debt-for-climate swaps' constitute a new type of innovative climate finance. With these swaps, a creditor forgives a portion of a country's sovereign debt in exchange for investment (in local currency) by the debtor nation in climate or nature protection projects. There are already some successful examples of European debt swaps to support adaptation. Going forward, under certain conditions, a joint EU and EU member states' Team Europe approach could facilitate cooperation in multi/plurilateral debt swaps while limiting transaction costs (Karaki and Bilal 2023). At COP27, the Sustainable Debt Coalition Initiative was launched, and debt swaps will be discussed at the Summit for a New Global Financial Pact in Paris on 22-23 June 2023 (Karaki and Bilal 2023; CoEU 2023a). The latter Summit is organised after multiple calls to reform the international financial system in favour of sustainable development. With its political and financial weight in international financial institutions, it will be important for the EU to establish a shared approach and create alliances with like-minded partners. Furthermore, there is more space for EU members to reallocate a portion of their special drawing rights (SDRs) to the International Monetary Fund dedicated structures to benefit vulnerable countries, including those in Africa, for adaptation. So far, some member states have pledged to re-channel a total equivalent of €28 billion through the International Monetary Fund, but additional commitments are urgently needed (Dufief et al. 2023).

At the same time, whilst the argument for adaptation and L&D financing is intrinsically a moral one, it is important to make the investment case for such finance. The exact returns on investments in adaptation are difficult to assess (attempts have been made by the Global Centre on Adaptation, Verkooijen 2019), but the recent IPCC AR6 calls adaptation investments "generally cost-effective" (IPCC 2023). With the EIB moving towards becoming a climate bank (including adaptation) bank, the EU should focus on providing more risk capital and guarantees in order to facilitate large investments while maintaining EU support for small-scale local projects, notably in adaptation (EPP Group 2022).

African governments should also create an enabling environment for adaptation investments. Concretely, this means articulating investment-ready NAPs and mainstreaming adaptation into government procurement to ensure that international infrastructure investment builds resilience. The former is critical for establishing long-term expectations, setting priority actions across sectors, and indicating areas for low-risk private sector participation. As aforementioned, fewer than 10 African countries have submitted their NAPs, and 34 others have received or applied for funding from the GCF and the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) for NAP development (GCA 2022). Furthermore, mobilising domestic African resources to help close the adaptation gap is a largely unexplored area with high potential (AfDB 2021; Somorin et al. 2021). Entry points include African institutional investors, African insurance companies or private equity and venture capital (GCA 2022).

Guaranteeing the much-required 'quality of adaptation finance' hinges on African countries and regions ensuring they can absorb these financial flows. This requires technical assistance that institutions like the EIB and implementing technical agencies from EU member states could help provide. Additionally, enhancing local, African participation in adaptation processes is crucial. For this, reliable systems and tools for monitoring and evaluation are required (Interview Africa-Europe Foundation, February 2023). Having a better understanding and overview of Africa-led adaptation solutions should be part and parcel of the discussion on how to achieve adaptation support of high quality. Furthermore, the Team Europe approach could potentially be a new type of instrument to ensure sustainable investments in African countries, thereby overcoming issues with smaller project sizes involving numerous donors adding to administrative burdens and reducing the scope for transformational impact. Another such type of joint approach for the EU and the member states to increase funding for adaptation is the Global Shield against Climate Risks of the V20/G7 (BMZ 2023).

4.3. Boosting alliances and seeking new ones

Both on the European and the African side, there is a formal recognition of the need for a strong Africa-EU climate partnership that honours interdependency based on mutual economic security and principles of climate equity. For Africa, to strengthen its own role and position in this partnership, it would need to seek a more economically nuanced approach towards adaptation while moving away from the narrow discourse of climate negotiators around climate finance and adaptation (Fakir 2021; Dennison and Engström 2023). The AU climate strategy calls for 'integrated responses' and a 'whole of economy approach' (AU 2022). In practice, this means addressing adaptation as part of a whole economic solution rather than the ghettoisation of adaptation to be solved remotely through development and climate finance. At the same time, none of the issues presented by climate change can be solved through Europe's current strategy of rather 'protective autonomy', whereby it attempts to securitise its own borders (Fakir 2021; Interview African Climate Foundation, February 2023).

The recent past showed that African countries, faced with severe security threats and other types of political and economic crises, will seek other security partnerships as well as financial and other forms of assistance to bolster their security operations from whoever is willing to provide them. This resulted in more collaborations with, for instance, China, India, and increasingly Russia. It is, however, unlikely that most of these new types of arrangements will result in long-term peacebuilding or resilience-building (Haastrup 2022). Yet, in light of this new reality, the EU has a geopolitical stake in improving relations with African countries. Stepping up cooperation in the space of adaptation and resilience can play a role in achieving this.

To build a strong Africa-EU partnership it is of utmost importance for both to seek new types of alliances or reinforce existing ones together to protect the climate agenda, as mentioned in the recent Council Conclusions on Climate and Energy Diplomacy (CoEU 2023a). This reinforcement should happen at multiple governance levels simultaneously, bilaterally and multilaterally. A few examples: the EU's ongoing work in the High-Level Expert Group on scaling up sustainable finance in low- and middle-income countries can help better define what sustainable finance should look like. It brings together twenty members including from the African private sector and civil society (EC 2022c). Furthermore, the EU and its member-states could co-establish interministerial climate working groups, including African ministries of finance and planning, that could engage directly with international partners. This is a way to strengthen cross-sectoral adaptation work and institutional capacity for effective implementation (Savvidou et al. 2021). Also, EU partners can further explore cooperation with African regional economic communities (RECs), such as the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), presented in the AU climate strategy as key players in addressing climate change in Africa (AU 2022). Many RECs have already devised climate change adaptation frameworks, but they lack the institutional and financial capacity for coordination and implementation that could trigger buy-in from their member states.

Simultaneously, for Africa to be a strategic partner, it has to take a proactive role in shaping its partnership agenda with the EU. It is yet unclear what Africa's strategic objective vis-à-vis the EU is and whether Africa can afford to engage in issue-based diplomacy and make common African positions on the go in the current geopolitical context (Tadesse 2023). Concretely, potential ways to strengthen the Africa-EU climate adaptation dialogue could include identifying successful 'Africa-owned' adaptation and greening projects, such as the Africa Adaptation Initiative (AAI), that the EU can directly support (AAI 2023). This type of joint cooperation can feed into a strengthened Africa-EU climate dialogue.

5. Looking ahead

Africa-EU climate diplomacy has become a permanent process rather than one limited to major climate summits, although the latter is where efforts often culminate. COP28 will be organised by the UAE at the end of 2023. It will constitute a political moment for the 'Global Stocktake', a mechanism for countries to periodically report progress towards the Paris Agreement's goal within the UNFCCC process. Hopefully, it will also create a new wave of NAPs planning by African countries. It is expected that the African Group of Negotiators will ask for US$4 trillion in annual renewable energy investments, a strong agreement on the Global Goal on Adaptation, formal recognition of Africa's special needs and circumstances, as well as an agreement on the set-up and operationalisation of the L&D Fund (AU 2023).

The road to COP28 is built around several milestone moments that will benefit from a strengthened Africa-EU climate diplomatic relationship. These moments include the Bonn Climate Change Conference, or so-called Intersessional Meetings (5-15 June), with a strong focus on finding agreement on the Global Goal on Adaptation that was initially launched at COP21 (2015) in Paris. In the same month (22-23 June), the aforementioned Summit for a New Global Financial Pact will take place in Paris. In September, the Africa Climate Week will be hosted by Kenya, the second SDG Summit will be convened by the UN Secretary-General, and the Finance in Common Summit will take place in Colombia. Furthermore, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund will have their annual meetings in the autumn of this year. These moments should all be seen as platforms to reinforce Africa-EU engagements. Furthermore, EU institutions and member states increasingly focus their climate (adaptation) efforts on forums such as the G7, the G20 or the World Economic Forum.

In sum, the Africa-EU partnership thus urgently needs a new, more ambitious strategy for climate adaptation. It should be based on the dramatically changed international context, an equal balance of benefits and responsibilities, and a long-term vision.

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