

CLIMATE POLITICS: TOWARDS AUTHENTIC SOLIDARITY AND JUSTICE FOR AFRICA

Helen Titilola, Olojede

*Department of Philosophy, National Open University of Nigeria
Abuja, Nigeria*

holojede@noun.edu.ng

&

Philip A. Edema

*Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies
Augustine University Epe, Lagos State, Nigeria*

philip.edema@augustineuniversity.edu.ng

https://orcid.org/0000_0002_6096_1618

Abstract

Climate change and its attendant effects on health, economy, daily life, and every sphere of life are a global issue of urgent concern that has left no part of the world exempted. While its effect is wide-ranging, it is also rather disproportional, with the developing world being more affected than the developed world, which contributes more to the emission of fossil fuels. On the one hand, the October 2022 Report of the World Economic Forum states that “Africa faces a disproportionate level of climate risks despite emitting less than 4% of global emissions, in contrast with the average 8.2 tonnes of emissions in advanced economies. Undoubtedly, there have been concerted efforts around ethics and various climate talks. This paper, thus, argues that there is an urgent need to go beyond mere meetings at COP and to institute swift, strict, and strategic ways of reaching the Paris Agreement, especially regarding enacting plausible policies and indicators to measure how well the policies are performing. Employing in-depth critical analysis and reconstruction of ideas maintains that there is a need to transcend mainstream interpretations of ethical principles of equity, solidarity, and justice to one that truly reflects the African historical experience vis-à-vis the trajectory in climate change discourse. It, therefore, argues that the ‘climate action’ needed in Africa is one that truly walks the talk with sanctions and strong policies beyond voluntary pledges.

Keywords: Africa, Climate-Politics, Developed Nations, Justice, Solidarity.

Introduction

The human factor is the most prevalent in climate change, despite the many elements that brought about climate change. Human factor is especially seen in the increase in the population of humans on the Earth's surface. So, as the population increases, there is a change in climate conditions necessitating

action. According to the BBC, the discourse of climate change notes that at various times in history, there has been an increase in population. In 1800, the population of the world was 1 billion, in 1930, two billion, in 1960, three billion, in 1975, four billion, in 1987, five billion, in 1999, six billion, in 2011, seven billion, etc.⁹⁷ Humans are, therefore, the culprits in most of the changes in the climatic conditions over the past 50 years. This fundamentally brought about changes in the level of greenhouse gases found in the air, as well as in aerosols, in addition to land use. To illustrate, there has been a spike in the temperature of the earth's surface, and certain weather conditions, such as heavy downpours and heat waves, have been on the increase with increased intensity and frequency as reported in some parts of the world.⁹⁸

Fundamentally, this paper aims to recommend ways to achieve the Paris Agreement beyond the incessant COPs, with objectives including analyzing the ethics of climate change and appraising the Paris Agreement along with the effectiveness of various Conferences of the Parties (COPs). It further seeks to recommend viable options beyond the COPs as a more plausible approach to meeting the Agreement's goals while advocating for a limit to climate politics. The paper argues for greater proactivity in addressing the devastating impacts of climate change on human lives. This study is qualitative and library-based. It purposefully consults journals, books, and reports, particularly on climate change. It employs the analytical, critical, and reconstructive tools of philosophy. Conceptual analysis is used to clarify concepts such as climate change, climate politics, and the interplay of these concepts in the context of Africa. Critical analysis is employed to interrogate the incessant COPs, while reconstruction is used in making recommendations for a strict, swift, and plausible means of achieving the Paris Agreement. It is equally employed in presenting the idea that solidarity and justice ought to be employed, and understood bearing in mind Africa's political experience and not to be wielded to undermine sovereignty, perpetuate colonial agenda, or as a way of deflecting from reviewing current COPs that are not bringing us closer to achieving the Paris Agreement.

Effects of Climate Change

Aside from its effect on the environment and the human population therein, climate change also has huge impacts on agriculture in Africa. The May 2020

⁹⁷ British Broadcasting Corporation site. *A Brief History of Climate Change*. Retrieved from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-15874560>. 2013. Accessed on 8-6-2025.

⁹⁸ Le Treut, H., R. Somerville, U. Cubasch, Y. Ding, C. Mauritzen, A. Mokssit, T. Peterson and M. Prather. Historical Overview of Climate Change. In: *Climate Change 2007: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* [Solomon, S., D. Qin, M. Manning, Z. Chen, M. Marquis, K.B. Averyt, M. Tignor and H.L. Miller (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom and New York, NY, USA. 2007. Retrieved from: <https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/03/ar4-wg1-chapter1.pdf>. Accessed on 3-1-2023.

McKinsey Global Institute report projects that, owing to climate change, development in agriculture is anticipated to be more difficult. This is due to weather patterns being less clement, thus making crop and livestock production unpredictable. There is an increase in the intensity of extreme temperatures, which is still expected to be on the rise, in addition to a shift in rainfall patterns. All these contribute to challenging agricultural development in Africa. The continent is therefore at a high risk because of its many crops and its dependence on agriculture. Agriculture is pivotal to growth and development in Africa. Climate change, however, is disrupting local markets and preventing economic growth, and increasing the risk for investors. More concretely, a considerable part, that is, one-third of GDP for Ethiopia and one-fifth of sub-Saharan Africa, relies on agriculture. While the need to adapt is usually chanted as a way out, some areas of adaptation may be problematic to an average African farmer due to higher temperatures, irregular rainfall when compared to farmers in the developed nations who seamlessly get their crops secured through insurance, varying what is planted, irrigate farmlands, or make use of chemicals and fertilisers for crop protection.⁹⁹

Agriculture in many parts of Nigeria is still largely rainfall dependent, and climate change has a huge impact on this, likewise on other water resources. The northern part of Nigeria is experiencing a much higher level of aridity because of decreased water surfaces, flora, and fauna. Because of this, farmers are forced to cultivate abandoned lands, which leads to further sap in forest cover and a risk of desert intrusion. The South of Nigeria, ordinarily known for increased rainfall, is experiencing fluctuating rainfall and temperature, which contributes to crop and livestock volatility.¹⁰⁰

The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) reports that climate change is already affecting food security and the quality of food for the most marginalised and vulnerable groups. It recommends that swift action be taken to achieve the goal of eliminating hunger. Take livestock, for instance, climate change affects not just animal productivity but also their health. Many African countries in sub-Saharan Africa account for losses between 20 and 60 per cent in the number of animals when there were severe droughts in recent decades. Due to climate change, dairy products are expected to decrease by 10 to 25 per cent. FAO reports that high temperatures and decreased precipitation lead to reduced production in forage, similar to the

⁹⁹ Jonathan Woetzel. McKinsey Global Institute. Climate Risk and Response. Physical Hazards and Socioeconomic Impact. How Will Africa Adjust to Changing Patterns of Precipitation? May 2020 Case Study. <https://shorturl.at/Iiimp>. Accessed on 8-6-2025.

¹⁰⁰ Ayinde, O. E., Muchie, M. and Olatunji, G. B. "Effect of Climate Change on Agricultural Productivity in Nigeria: A Co-integration Model Approach." *Journal of Human Ecology*. 35(3), 2011. DOI: [10.1080/09709274.2011.11906406](https://doi.org/10.1080/09709274.2011.11906406).

60% shortage in green fodder in France in the summer of 2003.¹⁰¹

Climate change also affects health. According to the World Health Organisation's (WHO) 2021 report, health emergencies relating to climate change are increasing in Africa, accounting for about seventy-five cases of public health issues in the last twenty years. 56% of 2121 Public health issues noted between 2001 and 2021 are offshoots of climate change. This is the reason in 2021, World Health Day was celebrated under the theme "Our Planet, Our Health". WHO, therefore, enjoins governments to make human well-being in all major decisions a top priority and to put an end to the exploration of new fossil fuels and to execute its recommendations on air quality.¹⁰²

In the words of Matshidiso Moeti, WHO Regional Director for Africa, "Climate change is one of the greatest threats to humanity. The entire foundation of good health is in jeopardy with increasingly severe climatic events. In Africa, frequent floods, water- and vector-borne diseases are deepening health crises. Although the continent contributes the least to global warming, it bears the full consequences."¹⁰³

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) anticipates that in tropical regions like sub-Saharan Africa, human health conditions will worsen due to global warming. This is because the number of mosquitoes increases with the rise in temperature, which implies a higher risk of malaria, dengue fever, and similar insect-borne diseases. While temperature change and adaptability range from one region to another, wealthier nations can make use of technological advancements such as high-capacity air conditioners and architectural designs of houses to reduce heat absorption and retention. Developing nations generally do not have the technology, resources, and public health systems to prevent or manage outbreaks. Heat waves, decline or total loss of agricultural productivity, asthma, and other respiratory diseases are some of the other health consequences of the increase in temperature due to global warming.

Efforts at Addressing Climate Change

Paris Agreement

There have been several attempts, especially at the global level, to address the menace of climate change occasioned by global warming. One of the main turning points is the Paris Agreement. The agreement brings together all

¹⁰¹ Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations. Climate Change and Food Security: Risks and Responses. Retrieved from: <https://www.fao.org/3/i5188e/i5188E.pdf>. Accessed on 8-6-2025.

¹⁰² World Health Organisation. 2022. Africa Faces Rising Climate-Linked Health Emergences. Retrieved from: <https://www.afro.who.int/news/africa-faces-rising-climate-linked-health-emergencies>. Accessed on 8-6-2025.

¹⁰³ World Health Organisation. Africa Faces Rising Climate-Linked Health Emergences. 2022.

countries of the world to pull together efforts and resources to fight climate change, and with improved efforts to help developing countries to do likewise. It thus begins a new path in the global attempt to tackle climate change. The main purpose of the agreement is to improve how the world tackles the menace of climate change by ensuring the rise in temperature globally is lower than 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, in addition to making sure that temperature does not increase beyond 1.5 degrees Celsius. Another reason for the agreement is to improve the capabilities of nations to address the impacts of climate change. For this to be possible, applicable financial pathways, alongside innovative technology and an improved abilities framework, will be instituted so that efforts of developing nations and other vulnerable groups would be enhanced in accordance with their domestic national objectives. Contained in the agreement are ways to make actions taken and support transparent, drawing on more transparent frameworks.¹⁰⁴

A major requirement of all parties to the Agreement is for them to bring to the table their best through what is referred to as “nationally determined contributions” (NDCs) and to continue to improve on these as the years go by. Also, from time to time, make an update report of what their emissions are and the efforts being put in place to curb the emissions. The NDC also requires a global periodic review every five years to appraise the level of progress geared towards reaching the demands of the Agreement and to spur Parties to more action.¹⁰⁵

United Nations Conference of the Parties (COP)

The United Nations Conference of the Parties (COP) is the highest decision-making organ of the Convention on Climate Change. Every state that is a party to the convention is represented at COP, where they appraise how the Convention is to be executed and other legal tools that COP takes on and arrives at decisions that are important to advance the adequate execution of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), including institutional and administrative arrangements. A major duty the COP carries out is the assessment of the national communications and the list of emissions that parties submit. Following this, COP reviews the impact of the actions the parties have taken and the development recorded in accomplishing the main objective of the Convention. At every turn of 365 days, the COP meets, except that the parties decide not to, as seen in COP 26, which did not meet in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

¹⁰⁴ Paritosh Kasotia. The Health Effects of Global Warming: Developing Countries are the Most Vulnerable. Retrieved from: <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/health-effects-global-warming-developing-countries-are-most-vulnerable>. 2007. Accessed on 5-1-2023.

¹⁰⁵ Paris Agreement. Available at: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf. 2015. Accessed on 6-1-2023.

The first meeting of the COP was in Berlin, Germany, in 1995. Normally, it meets in Bonn, the secretariat, except that one of the parties decides to host the session. Similar to how the Presidency revolves around the five acknowledged UN regions – Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Central Europe, and Western Europe, among others, the venue of the COP also tends to rotate within these groups. Since its inception, there have been a total of about 30 COPs, with five so far, held in Africa: 2001, COP 7 in Morocco; 2006, COP 12 in Kenya; 2011, COP 17 in South Africa; 2016, COP 22 in Morocco; and 2022, COP 27 in Egypt. Other COPs are held, of course, in other parts of the world. This paper shall discuss the last three COPs, which are COP25 held in Madrid in 2019, COP 26 in Glasgow in 2021, and COP 27 in Egypt in 2022.

COP 25, initially slated to be held in Chile, was held in Madrid, Spain, because of the cancellation; Chile nonetheless presided at the conference. “...COP 25 in Madrid became the longest on record when it concluded after lunch on Sunday, following more than two weeks of fraught negotiations. It had been scheduled to wrap up on Friday” (See COP 25 on Climate Talks, 2019). It was the longest so far. A group of countries referred to as a ‘High Ambition Coalition’, comprising the European Union, the UK, and several not-too-large nations and businesses, made a case for stronger action; however, they met stiff opposition from several countries whose emission rates are high. Finally, there was a consensus among the countries to postpone new ways and plan to reduce emissions to the next COP, 26, following about 80 countries’ interest in doing so.¹⁰⁶

While COP 25 was largely a failure on major issues, particularly seen in the words of UN Secretary General António Guterres, who said he was “disappointed” with the results of COP25 and that “the international community lost an important opportunity to show increased ambition on mitigation, adaptation & finance to tackle the climate crisis.”¹⁰⁷; it nonetheless accomplished the execution of a global Gender Action Plan, which aims to spread and include gender matters into climate policies.¹⁰⁸ COP 26 was held in Glasgow, Scotland, in November 2021 after a two-year break owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. A major achievement of the conference is what is referred to as the “Glasgow Climate Pact”, which contains decisions enjoining parties to present improved NDCs, which are climate plans, by 2022, while having a target for 2030 that aligns with the Paris Agreement. The Pact equally urges governments to “accelerate the development, deployment and dissemination of technologies, and the adoption of policies, to transition towards low- emission energy systems”, including by “accelerating efforts

¹⁰⁶KPMG. COP 25. Key Outcomes of the 25th UN Climate Conference. Retrieved from: <https://assets.kpmg/content/dam/kpmg/xx/pdf/2019/12/cop25-key-outcomes-of-the-25th-un-climate-conference.pdf>. 2019. Accessed on 8-6-2025

¹⁰⁷COP 25: Key Outcomes of the 25th UN Climate Conference.

¹⁰⁸ Roman De Rafael. Summary of COP 25: What Now for the Climate. Retrieved from: <https://eco-act.com/climate-change/summary-of-cop-25/>. 2019. Accessed on 8-6-2025

towards the phasedown of unabated coal power and phase-out of inefficient fossil fuel subsidies.”¹⁰⁹ It was noted that the targets of some significant emitters, such as Australia, China, Saudi Arabia, Brazil, and Russia, for 2030 were quite weak, offering no plausible route to accomplishing their net-zero targets.

They were thus called upon to intensify their effort to reduce their 2030 emission targets to be in line with their net-zero commitments.¹¹⁰ Further, developed countries were also tasked to commence another phase of financial commitments to aid developing nations that are most vulnerable to climate change to better adapt. Other important outcomes of the conference include having a common time frame where countries agree that their NDCs should be revised in a five-year cycle, and every revised NDC should not exceed 10 years. Countries also agreed to rules that express the balances in their national emissions, thus bringing about a more transparent framework. The COP also recognised the need to increase collective financial contributions for the approaching 2030 phase since the current financial commitment has not been able to meet the 100 billion per year 2020 goal.¹¹¹

The ‘Loss and Damage’ fund, which has been referred to as a breakthrough agreement, is a major highlight of COP 27, which was held in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, in November 2022. This fund is meant to cater to the needs and cushion the effects of climate change on disadvantaged countries that are mostly hit by the effects of climate change. Parties also decided to institute a ‘transnational committee’ to recommend the way in which not just the new funding would be achieved but also the funds at the COP 28, billed to be held in 2023.

Ethical Principles

Another effort is found in the Declaration of Ethical Principles in Relation to Climate Change. It details principles such as prevention of harm, equity and justice, sustainable development, solidarity, scientific knowledge, and integrity in decision-making. Prevention of harm relies on the idea that climate change diminishes and destroys the stability of the Earth’s ecosystem and the produce they bring.

It thus has to do with the idea that countries and other relevant stakeholders should enact and execute policies to lessen and adjust to climate change, which involves encouraging climate resilience and development in the

¹⁰⁹ United Nations Climate Change. *Outcomes of the Glasgow Climate Change Conference – Advance Unedited Versions and Submissions from the Sessions in Glasgow*. Retrieved from: <https://shorturl.at/tohvH> Accessed on 8-6-2025

¹¹⁰ United Nations. COP 26 Together for Our Planet. Available at: <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/cop26> 2023. Accessed on 8-6-2025.

¹¹¹ United Nations. COP 26.

emission of low greenhouse gases, such that it does not pose any threat to the production of food. Prevention of harm also has to do with being able to anticipate, prevent, and reduce harm to the barest minimum in whatever way it could occur in climate change, in addition to abatement and adaptation policies and actions. Further, through such policies, pursue and advocate for cross-border cooperation prior to introducing novel technologies that may have a country-wide impact.¹¹²

Justice in connection with climate change boils down to treating humans fairly and their adequate inclusion in their own affairs. It requires concerned stakeholders such as national governments, organisations, both regional and international - United Nations inclusive, the private sector, civil society organisations across various strata team up in “justice, global partnership, inclusion, and in particular solidarity with the poorest and most vulnerable people”. It behooves women be involved in decision-making because they are unduly affected by climate change and yet have less access, even as they play an important part in making inclusive, sustainable development possible. Actions ought to be taken to secure the needs of those who are at greater risk, especially the poorest and most disadvantaged. When the need arises to address the unfavourable effects of climate change and its reduction and adjustment policies at all levels, judicial and administrative proceedings must be accessible as provided in the Rio Declaration and national laws of each country.

At the heart of sustainable development is the need to enforce the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDGs, particularly by embracing renewable ways through which we consume, produce, and manage waste by being frugal in resource utilisation, encouraging climate resilience, and reducing emissions of greenhouse gas. It also has to do with having disadvantaged people be recipients of development opportunities, such that poverty, extreme poverty in all its facets, is eradicated. It equally pertains to handling the negative impact of climate change in specially selected areas of concern, such as “food, energy, and water insecurity, the ocean desertification, land degradation, natural disasters, displaced populations, as well as the vulnerability of women, children, the elderly, and especially the poor”.¹¹³

What solidarity means is that humans as a whole and as individuals ought to help persons and groups most disadvantaged in terms of climate change and natural disasters. Those who could tackle climate change, such as states and other relevant stakeholders, should come together to protect and improve the

¹¹² UNESCO. Declaration of Ethical Principles in Relation to Climate Change. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000260889.page=127>. / <https://www.unesco.org/en/ethics-science-technology/climate-change>. 2018. Accessed on 8-6-2025.

¹¹³ UNESCO. Declaration of Ethical Principles in Relation to Climate Change.

world humans share to show solidarity and reliance on one another of people with divergent backgrounds and how humans relate with other organisms, ecosystems, and the environment at large. Relevant information that pertains to the factors, modes, and consequences of climate change and responses ought to be disseminated fairly and promptly to improve the adaptive power of everyone and to strengthen the stamina of both persons and the ecosystem. Advanced economies and others, alongside relevant actors, ought to voluntarily promote technological cooperation, bring together pertinent information, build capacities, and extend financial aid to developing countries, particularly the ones that are most disadvantaged in the negative impacts of climate change, especially States classified as least developed countries (LDCs) and small developing islands (SDIs).¹¹⁴

A science-based decision-making process is of utmost importance to mitigate and adapt to the difficulties of a fast-changing climate. Decisions ought to be offshoots of top-notch knowledge from natural and social sciences, as well as interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary science, while taking cognisance of the right local, traditional, and indigenous knowledge. Decision-making requires the maximum principle of research integrity that is “impartial, rigorous, honest, and transparent”¹¹⁵ (UNESCO. Declaration of Ethical Principles in Relation to Climate Change, 2017) and ought to make room for uncertainty to give decision-makers epiphanies of the embedded risks, opportunities, and direction to design enduring policy. There also ought to be a reinforcement of scientific collaboration and capacity building in developing countries to establish a detailed insight into climate change effects and probable alleviation and adaptation actions.¹¹⁶

Critical Intervention

The issue in the discourse of climate change can be divided into two: (i) the disposition of the developed nations towards the impact of climate change on vulnerable African countries, and (ii) African leaders' attitudes towards the common person whose life is affected day in and day out by the effects of climate change. We will start with the former. Solidarity, equity, and justice are three major ethical principles highlighted by UNESCO to tackle climate change. The issue, however, is that none of these principles has been implemented holistically.

The Principle of Solidarity

Solidarity, for instance, has its etymology from the Latin *solidus*, which means solid, tight, dense, whole, or united. It connotes some type of connectedness. The evolution of its French origin starts from *solidaire*, which means interdependent, complete, and entire; then to *solidarite*, which

¹¹⁴ UNESCO. Declaration of Ethical Principles in Relation to Climate Change.

¹¹⁵ UNESCO. Declaration of Ethical Principles in Relation to Climate Change.

¹¹⁶ UNESCO. Declaration of Ethical Principles in Relation to Climate Change.

refers to “communion of interests and responsibilities, mutual responsibility.”¹¹⁷

Within the African worldview, the principle of solidarity is viewed in the ethics of *ubuntu*, of Southern African origin, which emphasises care for the other and the common good of the entire society. Mogobe Ramose’s philosophy of social existence expresses this kind of solidarity as *umuntu ubuntu ngabantu*, which means, “I am who I am through the other. Richard Bolden describes it as “a social philosophy based on principles of care and community, harmony and hospitality, respect and responsiveness that expresses the fundamental interconnectedness of human existence. It has been described as a philosophy of peace.”¹¹⁸ Similarly, *Ubuntu* is described as the philosophy that highlights the belief that an individual's identity and sense of self are deeply rooted in their relationships with others and their contribution to the collective well-being of the community. Historically, Ubuntu has been integral to African societies, guiding social interactions, governance, and conflict resolution. It has served as a moral compass, promoting values such as empathy, compassion, respect, and mutual support.¹¹⁹

Stemming from the above, *Ubuntu's* moral principles align with the fact that there is an idea of being with others which aims at fostering a peaceful co-existence in the African environment. Using this framework, climate change/politics is understood by the African as having an overarching effect on the mutual co-existence of Africans. This implies that the African understanding of climate change portrays a socio-existential dimension. This is further buttressed in Senghor’s expression of the African’s perception of reality. In his words, ‘I dance, I feel the other’. The African’s approach to reality is synthetic rather than analytic, as in the West. The African sees himself as part of the environment. He sees himself as having that communal obligation towards the environment and nature. He is not detached from his climate or climate change, as the case may be. The African, through this principle, expresses the spirit of solidarity and mutual support for the environment, rather than engaging in activities that are exploitative towards the environment and the self.

Interestingly, Polat Kaya argues that the word solidarity is a fabrication and an anagram of the Turkish expression *El Tutariz*, which means, ‘we hold

¹¹⁷ Harper, D. Online etymology dictionary. *Solidarity*. Retrieved from: <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=solidarity>. Accessed on 3rd April, 2017.

Hollenbach, D. 2002. *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 182.

¹¹⁸ Richard Bolden, ‘Ubuntu’, in book: *Encyclopedia of Action Research* Chapter: Ubuntu Publisher: Sage Editors: David Coghlan, Mary Brydon-Miller. January 2014. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/25989297>.

¹¹⁹ Bukunmi Deborah Ajitoni, ‘Ubuntu and the Philosophy of Community in African Thought: An Exploration of Collective Identity and Social Harmony’, *Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development*. 7 (3), 2024: 2.

hands.’ Kaya argues that the ‘Y’ was simply added to the English solidarity “to lengthen and confuse the used source text in Turkey so that it is not recognisable. Whether the word is English or French, both have been fabricated from Turkish, and the readers have been deceptively conned by some crooked linguists.”¹²⁰ Irrespective of the origin of the word ‘solidarity’, the important point is that solidarity, from different backgrounds, connotes mutual support, relations, and agreements for collective action among individuals and groups.

Solidarity is widely employed under different nomenclatures in different circles and contexts. For instance, in the Armed Forces, solidarity is used as *esprit de corps*; in corporate organisations, it is usually couched as team spirit; among a group of persons having common interest, the word solidarity is used as camaraderie; in the society generally, it is referred to as harmony, unity, cohesion, etc. Part of the evolution of the word solidarity is from the legal idea of joint liability; this remains in its contemporary usage when it is applied to social security systems. A fundamental feature of solidarity is that of “standing in for one another,” that is, every individual must ‘watch one another’s back.’ From this perspective, solidarity is related to the issue of social integration. It refers to the ‘social bond’ that binds society together.¹²¹

According to the sociologist Emile Durkheim, in his *The Division of Labour*, states that, “solidarity is what prevents the breakdown of society.” This is the descriptive meaning of solidarity, referring to what obtains within a group or society. Beyond the descriptive meaning of solidarity, it also has a normative meaning. This means that whenever we appeal to solidarity, there is a certain kind of behaviour or attitude we expect to see or that ought to be in place. In addition, we can conceive of solidarity as what we ‘owe to one another’, what we should do and expect others to reciprocate at least within particular relations and in specific situations.¹²²

While solidarity can be based on common interest, a common fate, faith, or some interdependencies. For example, a common interest of a collective, such as the Non-academic Union of Universities (NASU), a corporation, or student unionism. It is, however, not simply a coalition. Solidarity is deeper than a coalition, expressing a deeper commitment beyond mere coalitions such as friendship, loyalty, and other forms of coalition. Readiness to help and compassion, though, might appear as characteristics of solidarity, but they are not always an expression of solidarity. One of the reasons for this is that one might be able to readily help or show compassion to somebody one

¹²⁰Kaya, P. 2013. *About the etymology of the English word SOLIDARITY*. Retrieved from: http://www.polatkaya.net/yahoo_Polat_Kaya/msg_611.htm. Accessed on 3rd April, 2017

¹²¹Jaeggi, R. ‘Solidarity and Indifference.’ In: ter Meulen, R., Arts, W., Muffels, R. (eds) *Solidarity in Health and Social Care in Europe*. Philosophy and Medicine, vol 69. Springer, Dordrecht. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-015-9743-2_12. 2001: 288.

¹²²Jaeggi, “Solidarity and indifference”, 287-292.

does not share any interests with. Therefore, solidarity, according to the *Oxford Concise Dictionary*, is a “unity or agreement of feelings and actions especially among those who have a common interest; mutual support within a group.”¹²³ This definition recognises that solidarity can exist among other groups or persons; however, sharing a common interest is a key idea that defines solidarity. This is probably the reason the Catholic Church describes solidarity thus:

Solidarity highlights in a particular way the intrinsic social nature of the human person... Solidarity must be seen above all in its value as a moral virtue that determines the order of institutions... Solidarity is also an authentic moral virtue... a firm and preserving determination to commit oneself to the common good... Solidarity rises to the rank of fundamental social virtue since it places itself in the sphere of justice. It is a virtue directed *par excellence* to the common good...¹²⁴

This excerpt captures the relationship between solidarity and human social nature. It underscores the interconnectedness of solidarity with the common good and justice. Solidarity, therefore, means one for all, all for one. The principle of solidarity avers that all are responsible for all, not just as individuals but collectively at every level. Every member of the larger society is expected to work together for and commit to the ideals that unify, uphold, and sustain the common good of that larger society.

Richard Rorty in *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* restates the traditional philosophical articulation of solidarity as ‘human solidarity.’ This implies that as humans, we possess a fundamental humanity which, by extension, is present in other humans. The implication of this is that, when we watch with arms folded when fellow humans are treated inhumanly, we are therefore lacking in certain elements that are needed to be a complete human being. Rorty further posits that, as humans, we are prone to conceive morals in the sense of ‘we’ as against ‘them’, making it easy for us to be vicious to those we conceive as not a part of us. Rorty states it in the following:

Consider, as a final example, the attitude of contemporary American liberals to the unending hopelessness and misery of the lives of young blacks in American cities. Do we say that these people must be helped because they are our fellow human beings? We may, but it is much

¹²³ Oxford Concise Dictionary. Retrieved from: <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/solidarity>. Accessed on 3rd April, 2017.

¹²⁴ Compendium, supra note Nos. 192, 193 (emphasis and internal quotations omitted). In McKinley, 2012. *Subsidiarity in the tradition of Catholic Social Doctrine* 15.

more persuasive, morally and politically, to describe them as fellow *Americans*...our sense of solidarity is strongest when those with whom solidarity is expressed are thought of as 'one of us', where 'us' means something smaller and more local than the human race. That is why 'because she is a human being' is a weak, unconvincing explanation of a generous action.¹²⁵

Rorty's point is that solidarity is more strongly felt in all its ramifications when it expresses a closer affinity, like when I say, 'Bola is my kinswoman or a Nigerian like me' unlike when it is simply that Bola is a human being. Realistic as this is, and just as Rorty further argues, solidarity ought to go beyond 'consanguinity', particularly for it to serve the common good. This is the point Immanuel Kant makes when he argues that doing good to another is not good enough or is not a moral action until one does it for the sake of duty and not simply according to duty.¹²⁶ The notion of solidarity should therefore not be limited to persons with whom we share a closer relationship, but to encompass the generality of the human race. Therefore, everyone is a fellow human being, which would guarantee human progress. Commenting on Kant's concept of Duty, Rorty argues thus:

For Kant, it is not because someone is a fellow Milanese or a fellow American that we should feel an obligation toward him or her, but because he or she is a rational being. In his most rigorous mood, Kant tells us that a good action toward another person does not count as a *moral* action, done for the sake of duty as opposed to one done merely in accordance with duty, unless the person is thought of *simply* as a rational being rather than as a relative, a neighbour, or a fellow citizen.¹²⁷

David Hollenbach, in *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, conceives the common good as both the virtue of communities and individuals. In his view, this is one of the reasons Karol Wojtyła designates the devotion to the common good as 'the virtue of solidarity.' Solidarity in this sense transcends emotional sympathy for the needs of others. It is fitting for one to have the intellectual awareness that interdependence is an essential attribute of human existence and that such interdependence is important in order to uphold the human dignity of all. Solidarity is not a virtue to be performed one after the other by individual persons. It must manifest itself in the economic, cultural, political, and religious institutions that form society. This is what Hollenbach calls 'structural solidarity'. In other words, solidarity aids human dignity as

¹²⁵ Rorty, Richard, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989: 191.

¹²⁶ James Rachels. *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1995, 127.

¹²⁷ Rorty, Richard, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. 191.

dignity cannot be achieved when people are alone.¹²⁸ Based on this, the common good can therefore be defined as the good that exists in a community in which there is solidarity among active, equal agents. Therefore, a call to solidarity is to commit ourselves to the common good – the good of all as equals.

According to Marie Bilgrien:

Still in the process of becoming and being accepted on a worldwide basis, that justice is...solidarity will have to function for some time as a virtue before it can have the influence and stability that justice has because of its longer history...During this historical process, if solidarity does grow in practice and influence, there is a greater possibility that solidarity will more clearly define justice and at the same time that justice will attest to the need for solidarity to complement and reinforce the practice of justice.¹²⁹

Bilgrien's position is that the principle of solidarity has a great future in the scheme of things in the world. One that is comparable to that of justice and even against which justice would be measured. But before solidarity evolves to such a level of recognition, it is presently a virtue. The essence of the discussion on solidarity is that solidarity has a much deeper connotation than has been expressed in the climate discourse. It goes beyond climate financing.

Conclusion

The issue of climate politics and the need for solidarity leading to justice within and for Africa from the developed world have been the concerns of this work. Efforts were made to show the challenges of climate change across the globe, with particular reference to Africa, which is real and deserves an urgent intervention from developed societies and economies that are more or less responsible for about 8.2 tonnes of emissions worldwide. The work also showed that despite the Paris Agreement and various Conferences where issues pertaining to solving the climate problems were discussed, much has not been achieved. The consequences of the lack of achievements and solutions to climate change have further subjected Africa to a continent of indignity and exploitation. This negates the principles and ethics of solidarity and justice as espoused in the ethical principle of *ubuntu* that emphasises empathy, communalism, dignity of the African person, interconnectedness, common good, obligation towards the other and environment, mutual trust and

¹²⁸ Hollenbach, D. 2002. *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, 187.

¹²⁹ Marie Bilgrien. *Solidarity: A Principle, an Attitude, a Duty? - or the Virtue for an Interdependent World?* Peter Lang Inc., International Academic Publishers. 1999: 72.

respect.

This work recommends that critical intervention is needed at this point in addressing the politics of climate change that have further aggravated the socio-economic situation in Africa. Africa is rich in natural resources, but this cannot be enjoyed and will not benefit Africans if advanced economies responsible for this problem fail to rise and make amendments towards reducing climate problems. The paper further submitted that there is a need to promote the principle of solidarity and common good, aiming to remind us all that the care for the earth is not only fitting and obligatory, but is necessary for the sustenance of the human race. The human race is not limited to the advanced economies alone, but to the weakest members of the globe. It is a call to promote the common good and a reminder that the *powers-that-be* should abstain from playing politics of alienation of some society from the rest of the world. It is a call that the destruction of the earth and refusal to share collective responsibility for its restoration is a stripping bare of humanity. Following from this, humans bear a huge burden of responsibility, powered by the overarching principles of solidarity and justice to be true to their calling and nature. To be true to one's nature within the conduct of solidarity would go a long way in promoting peaceful coexistence that values and recognises the importance of all life forms. This is what we mean when we argue that we are socially, economically, politically, and environmentally responsible to ourselves and the 'Other'. This is what we mean when we say in the spirit of *ubuntu*, "I am who I am through the Other".

Bibliography

- Ayinde, O. E., Muchie, M., and Olatunji, G. B. "Effect of Climate Change on Agricultural Productivity in Nigeria: A Co-integration Model Approach." *Journal of Human Ecology*. 35(3) 2011. DOI:10.1080/09709274.2011.11906406.
- British Broadcasting Corporation site. A Brief History of Climate Change. Retrieved from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-15874560>. 2013. Accessed on 8-6-2025.
- Bukunmi Deborah Ajitoni, 'Ubuntu and the Philosophy of Community in African Thought: An Exploration of Collective Identity and Social Harmony', *Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development*. 7 (3), 2024: 2.
- Compendium, supra note Nos. 192, 193 (emphasis and internal quotations omitted). In McKinley, 2012. Subsidiarity in the tradition of Catholic Social Doctrine.
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Climate Change and Food Security: Risks and Responses. Retrieved from: <https://www.fao.org/3/i5188e/I5188E.pdf>. 2015. Accessed on 8-6-2025.
- Harper, D. Online etymology dictionary. Solidarity. Retrieved from: <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=solidarity>. Accessed on 3rd April, 2017.

- Hollenbach, D. *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Jaeggi, R. Solidarity and Indifference. In: ter Meulen, R., Arts, W., Muffels, R. (eds) *Solidarity in Health and Social Care in Europe*. Philosophy and Medicine, vol 69. Springer, Dordrecht. 2001. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-015-9743-2_12.
- James Rachels, *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1995.
- Jonathan Woetzel McKinsey Global Institute. Climate Risk and Response. Physical Hazards and Socioeconomic Impact. How Will Africa Adjust to Changing Patterns of Precipitation? May 2020 Case Study. <https://shorturl.at/Iiimp>. 2020. Accessed on 8-6-2025.
- Kaya, P. About the Etymology of the English word SOLIDARITY. Retrieved from: http://www.polatkaya.net/yahoo_Polat_Kaya/msg_611.htm. 2013. Accessed on 3rd April, 2017
- KPMG. COP 25. Key Outcomes of the 25th UN Climate Conference. Retrieved from: <https://assets.kpmg/content/dam/kpmg/xx/pdf/2019/12/cop25-key-outcomes-of-the-25th-un-climate-conference.pdf>. 2019. Accessed on 8-6-2025
- Le Treut, H., R. Somerville, U. Cubasch, Y. Ding, C. Mauritzen, A. Mokssit, T. Peterson and M. Prather, 2007. Historical Overview of Climate Change. In: *Climate Change 2007: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* [Solomon, S., D. Qin, M. Manning, Z. Chen, M. Marquis, K.B. Averyt, M. Tignor and H.L. Miller (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom and New York, NY, USA. Retrieved from: <https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/03/ar4-wg1-chapter1.pdf>. Accessed on 3-1-2023.
- Marie Bilgrien, *Solidarity: A Principle, an Attitude, a Duty? - or the Virtue for an Interdependent World?* Peter Lang Inc., International Academic Publishers. 1999.
- Oxford Concise Dictionary. Retrieved from: <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/solidarity>. Accessed on 3rd April, 2017.
- Paris Agreement. Available at: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf. 2015. Accessed on 6-1-2023.
- Paritosh Kasotia, The Health Effects of Global Warming: Developing Countries are the Most Vulnerable. Retrieved from: <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/health-effects-global-warming-developing-countries-are-most-vulnerable>. 2007. Accessed on 5-1-2023.
- Richard Bolden, 'Ubuntu', in book: *Encyclopedia of Action Research*, Chapter: Ubuntu Publisher: Sage Editors: David Coghlan, Mary Brydon-Miller. January 2014. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/25989297>.

- Roman De Rafael, Summary of COP 25: What Now for the Climate. Retrieved from: <https://eco-act.com/climate-change/summary-of-cop-25/>. 2019. Accessed on 8-6-2025
- Rorty, Richard, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- UNESCO. Declaration of Ethical Principles in Relation to Climate Change. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000260889.page=127>. <https://www.unesco.org/en/ethics-science-technology/climate-change>. 2018. Accessed on 8-6-2025.
- United Nations Climate Change. Outcomes of the Glasgow Climate Change Conference – Advance Unedited Versions and Submissions from the Sessions in Glasgow. Retrieved from: <https://shorturl.at/tohvH> Accessed on 8-6-2025.
- United Nations. COP 26 Together for Our Planet. Available at: <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/cop26>. 2023. Accessed on 8-6-2025.
- World Health Organisation. Africa Faces Rising Climate-Linked Health Emergencies. Retrieved from: <https://www.afro.who.int/news/africa-faces-rising-climate-linked-health-emergencies>. 2022. Accessed on 8-6-2025.