

JOHN PAUL BAI MEMORABILIA REPORT ON COP27

'We are on a highway to climate hell, with our foot still on the accelerator...our plant is still in the emergency room'
Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary General

The just concluded COP27 in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, in November 2022 gives me memories of the beautiful city, nice events, fun with friends and the entire conference activities, I am very grateful to all who facilitated my roundtrip which started in Dahab and Ghazala hotel to Sharm and Aida hotel and all the necessary support they gave me from Kendi, Adam and Gavin to Climate Justice personnel who were instrumental right through including Antoine and Kate from the Forest People Program. It gave me an opportunity to interact and interface with a number of colleagues, meet with new friends, see in person Presidents from around the world. These were the highlights of the events:



I still have a picture of my experience attending the Leaders Day and security checks I went through not only do I need a ticket to gain entrance for the UK private event but the restrictions that perpetuate it for which I am grateful for Antoine's support. The good thing was that I witnessed the Forest and Climate Leaders Partnership- an event that housed world leader's reflection of COP26 commitments and pledges. The event was co-chaired by United States and Ghana an amount of \$12 billion was pledged towards forest-related programs over a five-year period. The German Chancellor Scholz committed one billion euros to forest and nature.

It was really an opportunity to see and witnessed and be in the room with prominent leaders making groundbreaking speeches from around the world with the likes of Brazil's president elect, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, promising to prioritize stopping deforestation and offering to host COP30 in three years' time. Also, refreshing and memorable was the announcement by Brazil, Indonesia and the Democratic Republic of Congo signaled their intentions to work together to protect their vast swathes of tropical forests, earning the nickname the OPEC of rainforests-this was indeed an opportunity.

Notable quotes from UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak 'for too long the world's forests have been undervalued and underestimated. They are one of the great natural wonders of our world, and with



Figure 1 Colleagues from Africa at the event

the loss of our forests accounting for more than 10% of global emissions, protecting them is one of the best ways of getting us back on track to 1.5 degrees'. That's why the UK put nature at the heart of COP26, and countries home to 90% of the world's forests committed not just to halting but reversing forest loss and land degradation by 2030.

My participation at COP27 provided space for me to meet and interact with a wide range of actors and organizations including attending events from all continents of the world. I met with colleagues from Africa joining in the Climate Justice Pavilion meeting partners from Bangladesh, South Africa and Chile. In this event I realized the need for community consent as a key vehicle for climate mitigation and adaptation. In another engagement of the Climate Justice and Resilience Fund partners event and dinner I was introduced to the Director Heather Mcgray and she announced her new Board of Directors with one present in the person of Samuel Yagase from Congo at the Pasha/Sanafir Hotel in Naama Bay.



More importantly COP27 participation for me serves as an entry point for the Sierra Leone Land Alliance breaking grounds in terms of reaching out to possible donors and making connections. In this vein, I have build relationships with the following-Global Green Grants, Global Climate Change Alliance Plus(GCCA+), Climate Justice and Resilience Fund, Loss and Damage Policy Advisor of the Scottish Government, UNFCC Capacity Building Secretariat, Bonn, Indian Network on Ethics and Climate Change-INECC, UNDP Regional Africa Secretariat on NDC Kenya, Mediators Beyond Borders, OPEC FUND, STOP ECOCIDE International etc.

In the climate Justice Pavilion my memories of the Blue Zone still linger with level of discrimination and exclusion when I learnt that the majority of diplomats, policymakers, business and professional advocates convene.as a result, climate justice voices and perspectives are not heard by most of the influencers who are situated in the Bluer Zone. Grassroots groups and activists who table and provide programming, host events, and convening are usually in the Green Zone, which is geographically isolated from the blue zone. Fruitful discussions I witnessed during these events ranges from climate finance, loss and damage, energy justice to climate reparations, among the topics most important to vulnerable communities bearing the brunt of the climate crisis around the world.

In one of the side events I attended on dealing with losses and damages in pavilion 5 in area C field experiences and lessons for a global mechanism. This side event contributes to this important topic with experiences from three continents and from the perspectives of communities, governments, private philanthropy and academia. The experiences highlighted current approaches to deal with losses and damages using different instruments, including innovative finance mechanisms supported and piloted by philanthropic donors, and addresses the challenges as case studies in specific countries. The event brought together specialists who gave educative discussions and proffered solutions.

NDC PAVILION EVENT-Implementation activities in Asia and Africa: Progress and Challenges

This was a case for Mongolia, Vietnam and Bangladesh but specifically Africa the situation in



Rwanda. The event panel discussion event which I witnessed provided the basis on the role of industrial energy efficiency in the African countries' NDCs - key priorities, high-impact sectors, barriers, and gaps. The panelists elaborated on the need for more climate-resilient industries that will remain competitive, save scarce natural resources, protect the environment, and be prepared for future climate change

impacts. The panel looked into solutions for strengthening regional efforts to accelerate the actions to boost investments in industrial energy efficiency. The decarbonization of the Rwandan tea industry was presented as a successful example of dedicated actions and priorities featured in the country's NDC and the link to the COVID-19 recovery efforts. How countries' nationally determined contributions (NDCs) are implemented and improved upon over time will determine whether the long-term temperature goal of the Paris Agreement is achieved, one of the speakers highlighted.

At the **Capacity Building Hub** of the UNFCCC open Space learning day and spoke at the high table platform session, I gave a case for the inclusion and participation of civil society in Africa on the implementation and monitoring of Nationally Determined Contributions-NDCs. Civil Society Organizations are a key stakeholder in national and international climate processes. They play a crucial role in contributing to bringing ground-level vulnerabilities into decision-making processes, providing technical support and research, advocating for ambitious action, creating awareness, building capacities, and enhancing resilience of the most vulnerable populations.



Figure 2 John Paul Bai second from left to right making statement

To ensure that Civil Society Organizations engage in a consistent and regular manner and enable them to contribute constructively to NDC-related processes at country as well as international level, a number of gaps, needs, challenges, and recommendations were highlighted during my presentation. Although the NDC is a cross-cutting document with significant impacts on people's livelihoods and their country's development, CSOs are underrepresented in the NDC development process. Local knowledge, needs and aspirations that are domestically and internationally represented by NGOs and CSOs must be recognized.

Local communities are the ones who suffer from the impacts of climate change. They are key actors in the implementation of mitigation and adaptation measures and to prevent irrevocable loss and damage. Civil society engagement is, therefore, vital to elaborate international commitments that are grounded in people's realities. NGOs play a key role, as they link the local with the national level – assuming there is a participatory NDC-update process in place and CSOs are provided with the necessary resources to engage in them.

One of the groundbreaking visitations made was the **indigenous pavilion** which among other things motivated me a lot about hands on stories from activists in Africa presenting case studies

about rural communities in Africa like Ghana, Zimbabwe, Sierra Leone, Nigeria and Senegal. Given its geographical position on of the speakers said, the continent will be particularly vulnerable due to the considerable limited adaptive capacity, exacerbated by widespread poverty and the existing low levels of development.



In Africa and other developing regions of the world says Sonkita Conteh from Namati Sierra Leone, climate change is a threat to economic growth, long-term prosperity, as well as the survival of already vulnerable populations with specific references to the laws requiring community consent for investment projects. Consequences of this include persistence of economic, social and environmental vulnerabilities particularly for the economic and livelihood sectors.

LOSS AND DAMAGE

At the Scottish government event on loss and damage I attended on different days, the term is referred to the consequences of climate change that go beyond what people can adapt to, or when options exist but a community doesn't have the resources to access or utilize them. This could include the loss of coastal heritages sites due to rising sea levels, or the loss of homes and lives during extreme floods. Urgent practical action must deliver support to the most vulnerable now. While discussions at COP27 are crucial, we all have a stake in loss and damage and those who want to act can do so now.

According to the Nicola Sturgeon First Minister of Scotland, our commitment aimed to mobilize and inspire further action among those who share our moral responsibility – state and non-state. This sum, dwarfed as it is by the scale of the issue, was followed by commitments from Wallonia, Denmark, and from philanthropies, including the Children's Investment Fund Foundation.

According to Nigel Topping-UN Climate Change High Level Champion, dialogues and commitments to operationalize the Santiago Network, much remains to be achieved. Non-state actors were also called on to act, with the adoption of the Glasgow Climate Pact, countries urging “non-governmental organizations and private sources, to provide enhanced and additional support for activities addressing loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change.”

After a tense two weeks of wrangling, countries finally reached an historic breakthrough and agreed to establish funding arrangements to address loss and damage, including a loss and damage fund. Governments also established a Transitional Committee to grapple with details for how to design the fund before it can become operational at COP28.

In conclusion, I would like to express my deep appreciation to Zero Tolerance Initiative, Forest Peoples Program and the Climate Justice Resilience Fund for the leadership and tireless efforts in supporting me to COP27 in Egypt. I will want to appeal for the continuation of the program and allow more Africans to participate in subsequent climate change conferences.