Outcomes of the UNFCCC COP 24 negotiations and implications for Africa

INTRODUCTION

The nearly 23,000 delegates who arrived in Katowice had a very specific agenda – to finalise the Paris Agreement "rulebook" – the detailed operating manual needed in implementing the agreement as from 2020 when the agreement becomes operational. This was mandated in 2015 to be finalised by the end of COP24. The rule book which was mostly agreed to, sets in motion a new international climate regime under which all countries will have to report progress in implementing provisions of the Paris Agreement – every two years from 2024. Essentially, Katowice marked the conclusion of one process and commencement of another – both aimed at ramping up ambition in implementing the Paris Agreement. With the rule book coming on line, another process, the *Talanoa Dialogue* was concluding. The *Talanoa Dialogue* was a year-long inclusive dialogue around enhancing implementation ambition towards achieving the 1.5° warming threshold set under Article 2 of the Paris Agreement as the best insurance against escalating climate change impacts. The urgency for ambition was validated by the Global warming of 1.5° report released by the IPCC just as countries headed for the COP24, which concluded that based on actions to date, the globe is headed for a **1.5° warming scenario** sooner than was earlier projected, by a massive 20 years.

Through the rule book, the lessons & recommendations of the *Talanoa Dialogue* to enhance climate ambition are now backed by ground rules of how countries go about implementation. The guidelines incorporate the fact that countries have different capabilities and economic and social realities at home, while providing the foundation for ever increasing ambition.

The outcome of the COP24 provided Africa, the most vulnerable region, that has contributed negligibly to global warming, with a panoramic perspective of the extent to which it needs to increase its ambitions. As the most vulnerable region, coverage of priority issues of international finance, adaptation support, loss & damage and ambition was light weight. On finance, rules governing climate finance under Article 9 were loosely worded. The language is relatively permissive, with countries allowed to report the full value of loans as climate finance, rather than the "grant-equivalent" portion of the total as developing country parties expected. While *loss and damage* was a critical issue for vulnerable countries, a majority being in Africa, the rulebook mentions it but with less weight than many hoped. On adaptation, the rule book does not mandate developed countries to inform on the finance that will come in for adaptation, which becomes a weak link considering adaptation is Africa's leading priority. On ambition, the rule book only welcomes the timely completion of the IPCC's special report on global warming of 1.5° - it does not adopt findings of this report that is the core of climate ambition as expressed in the *Talanoa dialogue*. The final text simply invited countries to consider outcomes of the *Talanoa dialogue* in preparing their NDCs and in efforts to enhance pre-2020 ambition.

IMPLICATIONS FOR AFRICA

As the most vulnerable region to escalating climate change, Africa's response must be premised as an accelerator of socioeconomic transformation. This is especially so considering that Africa's vulnerability rated the highest globally, is significantly escalated by the prevailing low socioeconomic development. Implementation of the regions, its NDCs, should therefore prioritise the following;

1. ***Prioritise climate action through catalytic sectors***: over 60% of Africa's NDCs target actions in two sectors – clean energy to enhance mitigation themes & sustainable, nature-based, Ecosystems Based Adaptation Driven- Agriculture to enhance adaptation and sequester land-based emissions. These sectors stand out as catalytic because they can create inclusive socioeconomic opportunities for the majority while simultaneously enhancing ecosystems resilience & mitigating carbon in line with aims of the Paris Agreement. As countries seek to enhance ambition pre-2020 and get to substantive operationalisation of the agreement post-2020, Africa should prioritise incentivising creation of enterprises around these sectors as the strategic thrust to meeting its climate obligations.

2. ***Foster innovative approaches to bridge gaps in driving climate actions through catalytic sectors above***: creating enterprises above call for an enabling policy environment and a conducive operational environment where key enablers like affordable finance, market incentives etc. are in place. Putting these calls for innovative approaches underscored in both AMCEN and the UNEA decisions as follows. Countries need to prioritise operationalising these innovations pre-& post 2020;

Policy innovations: to implement NDC commitments in both adaptation & mitigation, while the ministry of environment is responsible for reporting progress under the UNFCCC, the actual work is done by other line ministries – such as agriculture, energy, trade etc. The implication therefore is that NDCs implementation policies cannot be silo to the environment ministry – but need to cut across all the leading line ministries. Specifically, driving climate actions from the trajectory of maximizing catalytic sectors requires coherence in policy processes between various ministries. Where policies in each of the ministries concerned are implemented in a harmonized way that creates a government-wide enabling policy environment. For instance, clean energy & agriculture polices need to be implemented coherently to ensure focus to incentivize decentralization of clean energy to power value added agro-processes. This will drive implementation of Articles 4 (mitigation) & 7 (adaptation) while creating leading socioeconomic opportunities – food security & creation of income opportunities. Finance policy needs to be implemented coherently with cooperatives policy to ensure cooperatives are incentivized to finance enterprises that deal in agriculture & clean energy as above. This is in addition to key policies on areas of trade & industry which also need to prioritize market incentives for such enterprises. UN Environment work across Africa already supporting countries establish this coherence and will continue building on this success.

Financial innovation: The UNECA estimates that total investments required for implementation of the 44 ratified NDCs (conditional and unconditional) is in the order of $2.5 trillion. Notwithstanding these astronomical amounts, the Paris Rule book was non-committal on international public finance support in operationalizing Article 9. This is against a backdrop of declining ODA falling to a mere 1% of all capital inflows into the continent and to only 3% of continental GDP. The implication is that relying on international public finance alone is a risky strategy and Africa needs to diversify sources. The continent needs to leap-frog from traditional financing approaches and embrace innovative, market driven financing approaches. This is in line with Article 9(2). The strategy is based on going beyond **socially driven financing** of climate actions to **investment financing** and can start with building on the structure for risk sharing & diversification already existing in the continent. For instance, cooperatives should be incentivized to lend affordably to enterprises engaged in Africa's catalytic sectors. UN Environment is already working across Africa to support countries establish such risk sharing facilities and will continue building on this success.

Market incentives: enterprises engaged in Africa's catalytic sectors need to get market access for their produce to incentivise increased investment in the clean energy and sustainable agriculture approaches that drive realisation of mitigation & adaptation aims while unlocking priority socioeconomic benefits. For this, existing quality standards covering health, quality, clean energy, organic agriculture – need to be implemented coherently to certify offerings of such enterprises and create a niche among health & environment conscience consumers who are increasing globally.

Technological innovations: as countries gear up for enhancing their implementation ambitions towards the stock take in 2020, NDCs implementation investment policies need to be informed by analysis of the potential climate & socioeconomic benefits of implementing NDCs through the paradigm of catalytic sectors. By this, NDC recommitments during the stock-take will be objective and validated by data, making them admissible. UN Environment is already working across Africa to support countries establish such analytical tools and will continue building on this success.

Partnerships innovations: human capital, embodied in people, and the diversity of skills, talents, energy, enterprises they represent is the most important component of wealth globally. Driving the above innovations towards unlocking climate action from a socioeconomic opportunities' perspective in Africa – where environmental, social, economic & financial dividends are realised calls for inter-disciplinary collaboration. Where state & non-state, individual & institutional stakeholders drawn from complementary sectors convene mutually beneficial, market driven partnerships to drive the above innovations. These partnerships also need to take to account, the mainstreaming of youth who at 60% of the population – or over 700million, represent the most significant non-sate actor constituency. Partnerships, driven by people are implied in section 5 of the Paris Agreement as well as goal 17 of the SDGs as critical to unlocking practical means of implementation and Africa should prioritise them in the pre-2020 & post-2020 dispensation. UN Environment is already providing a common convening framework to drive these innovations building on an AMCEN decision and will continue building on this success.

Conclusion: structure for ambitious action is what the outcome of the COP24 negotiations, the "Paris Agreement Rule book", has provided for the globe. In considering the need for differentiation in the context of prevailing socioeconomic realities of countries in the continent, Africa's paradigm is that of increasing ambition in such a manner that we put more food on more the table, we create jobs & incomes for all, engage youth substantively and accelerate economic growth.

Richard Munang, PhD
Regional Climate Change Coordinator,
UN Envronment, Africa Office