POSITION STATEMENT | SEPTEMBER 2025

Universal Recognition of Energy Access as a Climate Goal

Prepared by the African Coalition for Sustainable Energy and Access, the Pan-African Climate Justice Alliance and partners of the 630 Campaign ahead of the Africa Climate Summit II (ACS-II) and COP30

THE PROBLEM

Global climate frameworks focus heavily on emission reduction, adaptation, and finance targets. Yet one of the most urgent issues for Africa, energy access, remains absent as an explicit global climate goal.

- *Scale of the crisis:* More than 630 million people in sub-Saharan Africa lack access to electricity, while nearly one billion rely on polluting cooking fuels.
- *Development trap:* Energy poverty stifles industrialization, weakens healthcare and education, promotes deforestation, deepens gender inequality and drives vulnerabilities.
- *Moral contradiction*: The world demands that Africa decarbonize rapidly but denies recognition of Africa's right to build energy systems that lift people from poverty and enable climate resilience.

If global climate goals continue to exclude energy access, climate action risks becoming unjust, unbalanced, unattainable, and disconnected from the realities of the world's poorest people.

THE RATIONALE

There can be no just transition if millions remain in darkness

The African Coalition for Sustainable Energy and Access (ACSEA)[i], a network of more than 25 civil society organizations across the continent and partners of the Six30 Campaign[ii] believe that climate justice and energy justice are inseparable.

As the world confronts the escalating climate emergency, it must also confront the reality that millions of Africans live without the most basic access to modern energy. There is a compelling case for an energy access goal in the UNFCCC framework.

- *Energy poverty is a climate crisis:* Over 630 million Africans without electricity rely on firewood, charcoal, and kerosene – fuels that drive deforestation, indoor air pollution, and emissions. Ending energy poverty is therefore a direct climate action.

- *Justice requires inclusion:* It is unjust to demand that Africa decarbonize at the same pace as wealthy nations while leaving its people in darkness. Recognizing energy access as a climate goal ensures that universal obligations reflect Africa's right to development.

- *Resilience depends on power:* Without electricity, hospitals cannot run, schools cannot prepare children, and communities cannot adapt to climate shocks. Energy access is fundamental to adaptation and resilience, not just to development.

- *Finance must follow goals:* What is not named is not funded. Unless energy access is recognized as a formal climate goal, Africa risks being sidelined in global climate finance. Recognition guarantees that investments target both emissions reduction and energy justice.

OUR POSITION[iii]

Without universal recognition of energy access as a legitimate climate goal, Africa risks being forced into a climate framework that saves the planet but sacrifices its people.

We therefore call for:

1. *Energy Access as a Climate Imperative:* The UNFCCC must adopt universal energy access as a climate goal on par with mitigation, adaptation and finance. Energy poverty is a driver of vulnerability, deforestation, and inequality. Ending it will accelerate both resilience and decarbonization.

2. *Context-Appropriate Pathways:* Africa must have the policy space to pursue all legitimate options to close the energy gap, including justifiable use of its existing natural resources while rapidly scaling up renewables. It must retain the right to balance decarbonisation with development and energy sovereignty.

3. *Finance and Technology for Access*: The New Collective Quantifiable Goal on Climate Finance (NCQG) must dedicate scaled up, grant-based finance to support universal energy access. Developed countries must also support Africa's energy transition with technology and partnerships that prioritize decentralized renewable energy systems, off-grid solutions, and clean cooking technologies.

4. *Integration into Adaptation*: Energy access metrics must be explicitly included in the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) and assessed in future Global Stocktakes as a marker of progress. Leaving it out makes climate frameworks incomplete and morally indefensible.

CALL TO ACTION FOR ACS-2 AND COP30

The Africa Climate Summit II (ACS-II) in Addis Ababa (September 2025) and COP30 in Belém, Brazil (November 2025) are decisive moments.

- ACS-2: Africa must consolidate a united position that universal energy access is central to its climate vision.
- COP30: Negotiators will define fossil fuel phase-out trajectories, the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA), and the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) on climate finance. Africa must ensure that energy access is explicitly integrated into these outcomes.

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[i] The African Coalition for Sustainable Energy and Access (ACSEA) is a broad-based platform of civil society organizations working to promote people-centered energy systems across Africa. With members in more than 25 countries, ACSEA advocates for policies and investments that expand sustainable energy access, protect communities from the impacts of the energy transition, and ensure that Africa's development trajectory is consistent with equity and dignity.

[ii] ACSEA, PACJA and other CSOs launched the 630 Campaign in 2024 to shine a spotlight on the staggering reality that over 630 million people in sub-Saharan Africa still live without electricity. The campaign frames this crisis as a moral and political failure that undermines human rights, deepens poverty, and perpetuates inequality. Its central demand is for a massive scale-up of investments in sustainable energy systems that not only close the access gap but also align with climate justice principles. By mobilizing grassroots voices, policymakers, and international partners, the 630 Campaign underscores that leaving millions in darkness is incompatible with the goals of the Paris Agreement.

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