Concept Note

Side Event at COP30, Belém, Brazil
Title: Recognising Energy Access as a Climate Goal in the UNFCCC Process
Date + Venue: 17 Nov. 2025 | 15:30 – 17:00 | Africa Pavilion
Format: 1.5 hours (Keynote + Multi-Stakeholder Panel Discussion)

Background and Rationale

Global climate frameworks under the UNFCCC have prioritized mitigation, adaptation, and finance. Yet, energy access, one of Africa's most urgent development and climate challenges, remains absent as an explicit global climate goal. Today, more than 630 million people in sub-Saharan Africa lack access to electricity, while nearly one billion rely on polluting cooking fuels.

This omission creates a paradox. The world expects Africa to decarbonize rapidly, yet it denies recognition of Africa's right to build energy systems that both lift people out of poverty and strengthen climate resilience. Without addressing energy poverty, the energy transition remains incomplete.

In addition to being a critical requirement for development, energy access is:

- A *climate issue*, because reliance on firewood, charcoal, and kerosene drives deforestation, emissions, and indoor pollution.
- An *adaptation issue*, because hospitals, schools, and communities cannot withstand climate shocks without reliable power.
- An *equity issue*, because denying Africa's energy rights deepens injustice in the global response.
- A *finance issue*, because what is not recognized in the UNFCCC is not adequately funded.

This side event will argue that recognising universal energy access as a climate goal is central to justice, resilience, and effective global climate action.

Objectives

1. Raise the profile of energy access as a climate imperative at COP30.
2. Build consensus among African governments, civil society, and global partners for its formal recognition in the UNFCCC process.
3. Highlight evidence that energy poverty is both a driver and a consequence of climate vulnerability.
4. Propose pathways for integrating energy access into key UNFCCC outcomes, including the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA), the Global Stocktake (GST), and the New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance (NCQG).

Event Format

Duration: 1.5 hours

1. *Opening Keynote (15 minutes)*
    - A high-level African leader, negotiator or expert will set the stage, outlining why recognition of energy access as a climate goal is a moral, political, and practical necessity.
2. *Panel Discussion (60 minutes)*
    - Multi-stakeholder panel including:
        - African government negotiators
        - UNFCCC representatives or climate finance experts
        - Civil society leaders (e.g., ACSEA, PACJA, Six30 Campaign partners)
        - Private sector/energy innovators
        - Representatives of frontline communities, especially women and youth
    - Panelists will address guiding questions:
        - Why must energy access be explicitly recognised as a climate goal?
        - How can it be integrated into the GGA, NCQG, and GST?
        - What balance should Africa strike between renewables and transitional resources?
        - How should global finance and technology flows be structured to ensure justice and access?
3. **Interactive Q&A (10 minutes)**
    - Engaging the audience, especially negotiators and observers, to secure political and technical buy-in.
4. **Closing Reflections (5 minutes)**
    - Summarize commitments and next steps toward embedding energy access into COP30 outcomes.

Expected Outcomes

- *Political momentum***:** Stronger African position that universal energy access is a legitimate climate goal.
- *Negotiation influence:* Clear entry points for energy access into COP30 deliberations on GGA, NCQG, and fossil fuel phase-out debates.

- *Visibility:* Amplified voice of African civil society and the Six30 Campaign on the global stage.
- *Partnerships:* Strengthened coalitions between governments, CSOs, private sector, and development partners around energy justice.

Organizers

- African Coalition for Sustainable Energy and Access (ACSEA)
- Pan-African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA)
- Partners of the Six30 Campaign

Contact

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