

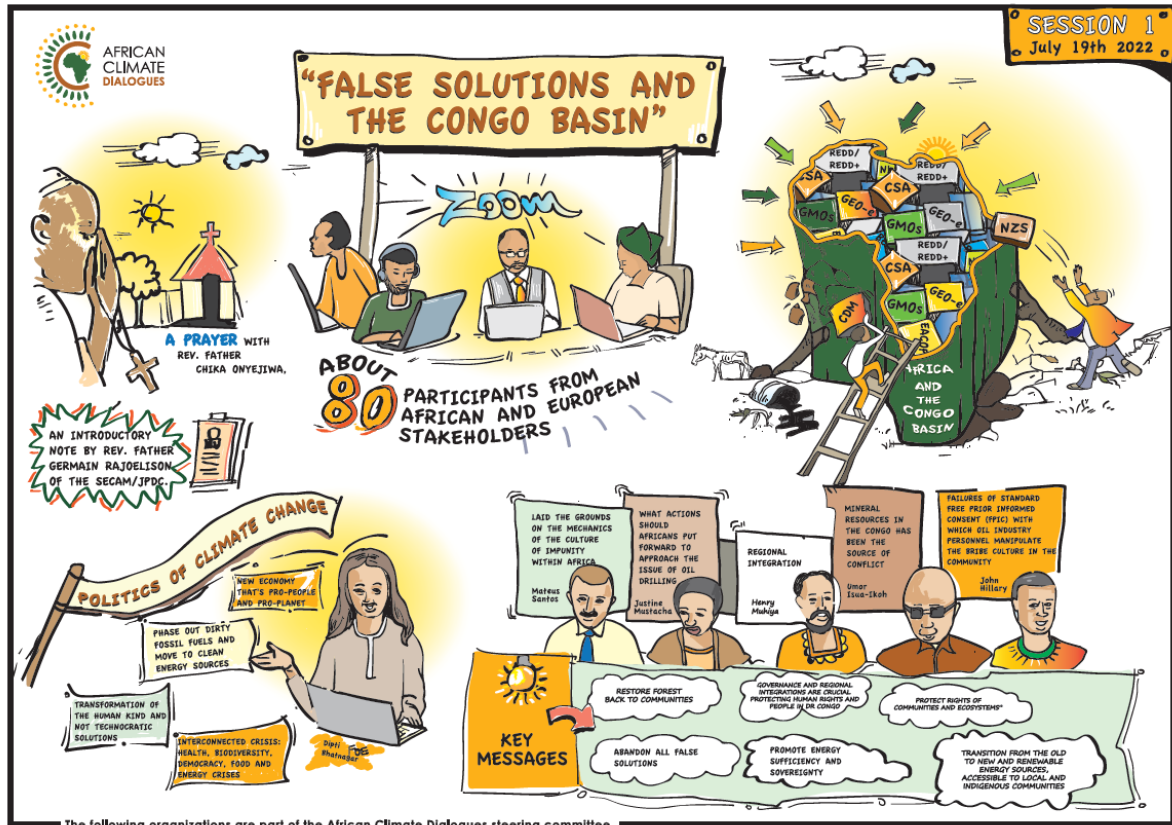
Newsletter

following the

'False Climate Solutions and the Congo Basin'

First African Climate Dialogue

July 19, 2022 Hosted on Zoom



The following organizations are part of the African Climate Dialogues steering committee



This event is co-funded by the European Union

Sketch by Andrew Baingana

INTRODUCTION

Father Jean Germain Rajoelison (Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar or SECAM) started the session by emphasizing Noah's ark as a biblical example of social equity grounded in ecology and ecology grounded in social equity. The African Climate Dialogue (ACD) exemplifies the church's social solidarity mission in Africa and around the world, in line with *Fratelli Tutti* and our church leaders' guidance on synodality among key faith-based and civil society actors. He believes that the ACD will better prepare the stakeholders to participate meaningfully in this year's COP27 in Egypt. About 80 stakeholders from faith and civil society organizations as well as social movements joined this session.

HIGHLIGHTS

The Keynote: The Politics of Climate Change

Dipti Bhatnagar, Coordinator for Climate Justice and Energy of Friends of the Earth (FoE) International, described how the current global context is experiencing multiple interrelated crises such as the health, biodiversity, democracy, food and energy crises, and as an amplifier, climate change continues to devastate many communities worldwide, particularly in Africa. She stressed the importance of addressing inequality while tackling climate change ahead of COP27, as the *Laudato Si'* calls for a transformation of the human kind and not just technocratic solutions. Bhatnagar also warned against fossil fuel industries' plan to extract more fossil fuels than what is constantly prescribed by science. In addition, with the Russia-Ukraine war, the fragility of our global energy systems and fossil fuel dependency is increasingly put into question. Also, the gas in Northern Mozambique has sparked conflict and militarization. She warned that *"it was previously frowned upon, but is now deemed critical because Europe now needs it"*. Such intentions including the Net zero pledge (a scheme driven by the fossil fuel industry) are misleading and can be used as an excuse to continue emitting more fossil fuels. She is worried that the focus is now on exploiting Africa's oil and gas. *"We need to phase out dirty energy while thinking about solving the energy access problem in Africa but from clean alternative energy sources"* Dipti said. Some of the resolutions from Bhatnagar's inputs include economic justice solutions such as the support for *"a new type of economy that is pro-people and pro-planet"*, which can only be achieved through binding corporate regulations aimed at protecting the environment and affected communities.

The Panel of Discussion

Mateus Santos from the Mozambican peasants' civil society known as *"La Via Campesina"* (LVC) hammered on how parties (about 40% of the signatories) had submitted new Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) or commitments to reach the 1.5 degrees Celsius temperature by 2030 in the latest submission cycle of the Paris Agreement (PA). In this context, false solutions include mechanisms and solutions that are primarily promoted by large corporations, agribusiness and governments to weaken other legitimate or real solutions. For example, market solutions, commodifying resource base, extractivism, massive production of GMOs, and climate smart agriculture consequentially promoting exploitation sustain the same capitalist practices. He emphasized how the current food system destroys life in the soil, and biodiversity from the land to the ocean, thy accelerating climate change, which models death, oppression and violence. Santos calls for the need to overhaul the food system in order to achieve climate justice and food sovereignty.

Justine Mutabesha, (*Laudato Si'* Movement Coordinator, DR Congo) denounced the failure of parties to meet their emission reduction and financial pledges made in Paris since 2015. He also expressed concern about numerous challenges that most African countries face. For instance, there are increasing gas and oil deals in DR Congo since Glasgow. *"...we are witnessing the selling of oil drilling concessions in protected areas. Some of these (16) blocks are affecting many parts of the country, for example, Ingunga National Park, which is home to our national biodiversity that often attracts tourists"*. COP27 is an opportunity for CSOs in Africa to expose realities on the ground and to demand compensation for such actions as parties fail to respect their PA commitments.

Henry Muhiya (Ecclesial Network for the Congo River Basin - REBAC coordinator, DR Congo) underscored that the rich mineral resources such as aluminium, iron, cobalt, copper, lithium and nickel in DRC, which are necessary for a just energy transition, have now become a source of conflict. *"We need peace in order to contribute to the transition....., neighbouring countries take advantage of Congo and our land is being attacked,"* he said. Muhiya provided data on how Africa has been a source of mineral resources for various industries and utilities in countries other than Africa including Canada, China and the European Union. Despite this, Africa lacks the resources to sustain its own needs. Additionally, human rights are also violated when extracting these mineral resources, which worsens poverty. Neighbouring and international countries must discuss justice in accessing these minerals to protect human rights and people in DR Congo. Finally, attaining good governance and regional integration are crucial since certain leaders have some complicity in these actions which worsen climate change, and there is a need to raise awareness in the public about these issues. Ahead of COP27, we can see that true solutions are not supported by governments and we must align environmental and human rights solutions together.

From Uganda, **John Hillary** (Laudato Si' Movement chapter leader) shared about the current situation at the grassroots where oil and gas fracking projects were initiated in Chilinga, King fisher and Hoima District called the East-African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP), which moves oil from Uganda to the coast of Tanzania. These projects, he claimed, were acquired through bribery and without the free and prior informed consent (FIPC) and proper environmental impact assessments (EIA). John Hillary shared about the plight of the people of Uganda duped to believe in the false hope that the oil industry will deliver jobs and move the country from poverty to a middle-income state. In 2006, Ugandans were told that their country was rich in oil to exploit. The Ugandan government used an oil industry campaign dubbed as the *"90-days oil campaign"* paying media outlets large sums of money to preach the gospel about *"God's gift"* of oil in the land (and this campaign would return in the coming months). The problem is that the campaign's message framing emphasized only the positive effects of oil exploration but avoided the negative effects, which resulted in environmental destruction and community displacements. Sadly, the public fell for it. TOTAL Company has started a biodiversity restoration campaign in Virunga National Park, which is contradictory because the pipeline will go through the western river valley, a seismically active region that will be impacted the most. *"SINOC and TOTAL evicted people from their ancestral land without fairly compensating them.....We can't trust their promises to protect us against oil spills"* he said.

A series of films were presented in between the panel discussions including the ["Black tide of the magic delta"](#) and the Fossil Free [Virunga](#).

Umor Isua-Ikoh of the Peace Point Development Foundation (PPDF, Nigeria) presented about community testimonies and false solutions on forest conservation. His presentation covered the plight of communities under the hands of so-called *"anti-deforestation task-force"* under the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (i.e., UN REDD+ program) in Nigeria. The program ironically deprived people from accessing their forests, but has come to be understood by impacted communities as a new form of colonialism. Meanwhile the government benefitted from the \$ 5 million USD, from logging and fines from apprehended violators. The community eventually lost their forest, the traditional place of worship, watershed, source of traditional livelihood, and water source that they and their ancestors had preserved for over 5,000 years. A super highway was built and traversed these lands dislocating some 165 communities with a population of 600,000. Their livelihoods were also destroyed when developing these projects, leaving them in distress, without homes and without forests. *"They became strangers to their own land"* he said.

One of the online participants, Marie Dorote Lisenga (an environmental activist from Rwanda) raised the issue and difficulties concerning how to unite African actors' response at COP27. *"We are currently preparing for COP and if CSOs participate, we need to go there in a united front. Indigenous groups are very vulnerable but we have many resources. Our fight at the*

grassroot level is nowhere to be found since it is ignored by the authorities especially concerning unequal expropriation of resources".

KEY MESSAGES AND CALLS OF THE DIALOGUE

- Transform Africa's fossil fuel energy system to one that is powered by renewable energy sources fairly and equitably to provide energy for people promoting energy sufficiency and sovereignty, while protecting inherent rights of communities and ecosystems.
- Peace and regional integration in Africa are urgently required especially in the DRC and must be addressed by protecting ecosystems, human rights, binding regulations, and public sensitization on climate change impacts.
- World leaders must abandon all false solutions such as the net zero, failed emissions-trading and offsetting schemes, or so-called nature-based solutions and tech-fix false solutions like geoengineering, as well as dangerous genetic modification and manipulation.
- Africa needs to urgently transition from the old to new sources of energy to respond to the existing energy crises by substituting imported or foreign energy to achieve cheap and accessible energy to local and indigenous communities in Africa.
- The government and corporations in Nigeria must remove the moratorium on community forests by giving back the forests to the communities to enhance their socio-economic wellbeing and compensate those whose livelihoods were destroyed by the construction of the super highway.

CONCLUSION

The participants will organize national and international advocacy initiatives to engage their governments on this topic ahead of COP27 in Egypt.

- ✓ The session was moderated by Caroline Kiiru of the Laudato Si' Movement and Ubrei-Joe of the Friends of the Earth Africa and was closed by Father Robert Minami (SECAM) in prayer.
- ✓ Newsletter prepared by: Prof. Phoebe Zoe Maria Umbay-Sanchez, Ph. D. (email: pusanchez1@up.edu.ph) and Lydia Machaka (email: machaka@cidse.org).