African leaders have used COP27 – “the African COP” – to undermine the goals of the Paris Agreement by pushing for more fossil fuel deals at the expense of people and the continent, a coalition of African activists protested Wednesday at ‘sidelining of social justice’ at UN climate talks in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt.

Beyond voicing collective demands on an agreement for a dedicated finance facility for Loss and Damage under the UNFCCC at COP27 and asking richer nations to deliver on their climate pledges for adaptation and mitigation, activists deplore the fact that African delegations have used the conference to embrace the new scramble for oil and gas in the continent.

In a petition on the sidelines of COP27, International, pan-African and national civil society organisations and activists are dismayed at the threat of locking communities and economies in more oil and gas production for decades to come.

They said that African leaders’ actions fly in the face of warnings by the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) that existing fossil fuel infrastructure was already sufficient to breach the 1.5c limit and by the International Energy Agency (IEA) that no new oil and gas fields approved for development are compatible with the pathway to a 1.5c.

For any meaningful outcome to be achieved in Egypt, activists urge delegates for listening to the people of Africa – not the fossil fuel sector, and collectively commit to a phase out of all fossil fuels and reflect this commitment in the cover decision, as well as agree to the establishment of a Loss and Damage Finance Facility.

In advance of the official close of the climate negotiations in Sharm el-Sheikh, African activists spoke put at a press conference pledging their concerted resistance to further fossil fuel expansion on the continent:

Citing another example, Barbara Kangwana, activist from Kenyan-based Safe Lamu and Climate pointed out that the Kenyan government proposed coal plant at Lamu, a UNESCO world heritage site, in the name of boosting the national electricity supply back in 2019.

“Trying to fathom the damage that would have happened to the small coastal town left us restless because locals were given the false hope of getting jobs at the plant,” Kaganwa said.

In Uganda, Patience Nabukalu, another activist from Stop EACOP and Fridays for Future observed that EACOP, the East African crude oil pipeline French-Chinese project is a clear example of colonial exploitation in Africa and across the global south, with 1444km running from Uganda to Tanzania.

“EACOP is not going to develop our country: peoples’ land was taken, leaving many homeless and poor and critical ecosystems and biodiversity at risk of oil spills such as Lake Victoria, rivers, National Parks, animals and birds, as well as aquatic life, “she said

Speaking in the same vein, Mbong Akiy, Head of Communication for Greenpeace Africa observed that the fossil fuel industry has degraded our people, our lands, our oceans and our air.

“Enough is enough. No matter how many deals they sign, no matter how many bribes they pay, or how fancy the suits they wear: we shall wait for them in our communities, we will wait for them on the frontlines,” she said.

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