

*By Uhuru Kenyatta, President of Kenya and Patrick Verkooijen, CEO of the Global Center on Adaptation;*

- *Africa's best efforts at development have been repeatedly dashed by events beyond our control—with climate change the most destructive force*

The G7 will convene shortly to agree on a common response to the multiple crises buffeting our world. War, food shortages, energy shocks and inflation are causing havoc in nations both rich and poor, but Africa has been here many times before. Through long and painful experience, it has learned much about managing crises. What can Africa teach the rest of us?

First and foremost, Africa's new approach is to look beyond immediate crisis to tackle the deeper causes of recurrent catastrophes.

It is a strategy born of necessity. Africa's best efforts at development have been repeatedly dashed by events beyond our control—with climate change the most destructive force. Kenya estimates it is losing 3-4 percent of GDP a year to the multiple impacts of global warming (<https://bit.ly/3HQkR3o>). Other countries are equally impacted. The entire Horn of Africa is suffering its worst drought in decades. South Sudan was hit by floods last year that displaced 850,000 people.

Money spent on recovering from man-made climate catastrophes—which Africa did virtually nothing to cause—is money that does not go to education, health care, sanitation or to extending power and telecommunications networks. Climate change has come to dominate our lives in ways that people in the rich world can scarcely begin to imagine. It is consuming an increasing amount of scarce budgetary resources while steadily eroding the advances we have achieved in the past two decades.

### Building Greater Resilience

For a long time, the continent has depended on aid and grants to fight climate impacts. But these are often emergency responses, when what Africa needs is to build long-term resilience to both current and future shocks.

So now we are trying a new approach. Last year, the 55 member states of the African Union backed a plan to accelerate adaptation to climate change across the continent. This is not a new development fad: It's about survival. The Global Center

on Adaptation (GCA) and African Development Bank (AfDB) are mobilizing \$25 billion toward a 5-year Africa Adaptation Acceleration Program (AAAP). African governments are backing it with funds and other resources. The G7 summit in Germany later this week will be a good opportunity to discuss the longer-term commitments that need to be put in place—urgently—to help Africa and other regions adapt to the effects of climate change.

We are not suggesting for a moment that the G7 ignore the emergencies on their doorstep. But a more balanced approach is needed. Instead of lurching from crisis to crisis, and from short-term fix to short-term fix, we will all benefit if we plan ahead and lay the foundations for a more resilient world.

This is the lesson we have drawn from our recurrent crises, and we hope it might inform the G7 as it debates how to respond to the seismic shocks that are shaking all our economies and people.

### Balancing Needs

The G7 must address the immediate global food crisis, the fuel shortages that are hobbling Africa's non-oil-producing nations and may soon lead to rationing in Europe (<https://bit.ly/3Nj1YHt>), and other pressing problems.

But in Africa, as in other regions, immediate needs must be balanced with longer-term support for development and prosperity, for which climate adaptation is critical. This is where Africa is now putting its talent, its efforts and its money. The continent deserves full support from the G7.

If the G7 were to match just half of AAAP's funding, the AAAP could accelerate projects that will strengthen Africa's ability to withstand the impacts of climate change, and hopefully lay the foundations for a new kind of development.

There are big differences between the old approach and the new. Emergency funding for climate catastrophes is a sunk cost. It is a response to life-and-death situations. Spending on climate adaptation is an investment. It requires long-term planning and can deliver healthy returns. The Global Center on Adaptation estimates that the annual agricultural adaptation cost for Sub-Saharan Africa is \$15 billion but the cost of inaction could be more than \$201 billion) (<https://bit.ly/3HRIXMr>). The losses avoided by climate-proofing our economies are far greater.

The AAAP is an example of how Africa is thinking collectively about its future. Just in the past year, through its upstream financing facility, the initiative has helped enhance the climate-adaptation features of \$3 billion worth of investments. Examples include projects to strengthen the resilience of infrastructure connecting farms and markets; civil works to protect seaports in Gambia and Benin from storm surges and rising sea levels; and a plan to address climate vulnerabilities in Ghana's road and power networks. This is on top of the \$66 billion African governments have already pledged (<https://bit.ly/39U54nt>) to meet their commitments to the Paris climate agreement.

Clearly, these initiatives are a drop in the ocean compared to Africa's total investment needs, but they are steps in the right direction. Money invested in strengthening Africa's ability to adapt to climate change is money that will not go to waste. Investing in adaptation will not eradicate hunger today, but it will radically improve Africa's ability to feed itself tomorrow—and with it, the food security of the entire world.

Despite the clamor of events on its doorstep, the G7 should not forget Africa when it meets in Germany. We live in one, interconnected world—and only when we share lessons, solutions and resources will we all thrive.

The views expressed in this article are the writers' own.

This opinion piece was first published on Newsweek: