

# STATEMENT OF THE WOMEN LEADERS NETWORK OF THE AFRICA-EUROPE FOUNDATION.



## AHEAD OF COP28 UAE.

The Africa-Europe Foundation's (AEF) Women Leaders' Network (WLN) provides a platform for eminent and strong-minded women to debate some of the world's greatest challenges and to advocate for joint actions by Africa and Europe. We are convinced that by strengthening co-operation between our two continents, we can create momentum for climate positive growth, aligned with the outcome of the Africa Climate Summit Nairobi Declaration. We focus on tasks which require urgent attention and offer a frank assessment of what needs to be done to achieve progress for our mutual benefits as partners. Our discussions draw from the diverse roles played by WLN members, and build on remarkable work done by the membership, in fields of multilateralism, finance, climate justice, and local action. We recognise there are no simple solutions to the problems we face, but rather a mix of actions, both short and longer term. At this time, when war and conflict are opening up serious divisions between nations, it is urgent that we maintain our focus on a unified women leaders' climate movement to tackle this existential crisis.

### **Climate, peace and security a single seamless whole**

We face an unprecedented combination of crises – climate, food, energy, and debt – now magnified many-fold by conflicts in Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. People, communities, nations and entire regions are under ever-greater stress. Only working together in close partnership, can we create the radical collaboration from which solidarity will flourish and the foundations of peace, security, development and a climate-resilient future be built.

The WLN recognises that peace, climate security, and development make up a seamless whole. There is never a time for war, and especially not today. The impact of climate change on peace and security has risen high on international agendas with growing recognition of the need for actions to address the compounding risks of climate and conflict. Seventy percent of the most climate change vulnerable countries are also among the most fragile in political and economic terms. Achieving the commitment in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to leave no-one behind requires a greater focus on those living in fragile and conflict-affected countries and regions. Attention to climate and fragility demands an understanding of both the global and local level roots of conflict. The recent and more distant past hold clues to political contest and persistent injustices felt by different groups and communities. We recognise that peace will only be achieved if the roots of conflict are properly addressed, and not just treatment of the symptoms.

### **Global climate goals in peril says the first Global Stocktake**

The first Global Stocktake is a wake-up call to meet the climate challenge with far greater ambition. COP28 will hear from all nations on their stocktake of progress in meeting promises for climate action. It is clear from the IPCC Global Stocktake report that we are greatly offtrack, and at risk of breaching our collective commitment to keeping warming below 2°C and in line with the 1.5°C aspirations for a safe future. African countries will suffer most greatly from this slippage in commitments and action. We could see that the promised NDCs and their current revisions were never going to be sufficient, but even these paper promises have been too far a stretch for most countries to turn into action.

Out of today's conflict and crisis must come new political energy and climate investment statesmanship able to achieve a much more rapid de-carbonisation of all sectors and global

reduction in greenhouse gases. None of this is “rocket-science” since the technologies and example of positive policies and solutions are all at our disposal and are ever more cost effective. It’s a doable pathway for governments across the world, but it needs a clear and consistent role for public and private sector working together to get the scale of investment needed.

World leaders must seize this moment at COP28 to agree a rapid phase out all fossil fuels, recalling the need for common but differentiated responsibilities, and to stop carbon intensive subsidies which drive us all in the wrong direction. Instead, the focus should be on global targets such as tripling renewable energy capacity and doubling energy efficiency by 2030. In one piece of good news, the IEA estimates that globally, renewable energy and electric vehicles are in fact increasing at a rate consistent with the 1.5°C target. We just need to make much faster progress in other areas, with a realistic global carbon price in all countries with significant emissions, and establishing global taxes on aviation, shipping, and financial transactions. Support to low- and middle-income countries to establish carbon taxes would help them avoid being confronted by the different carbon border adjustment mechanisms which are flourishing around the world, including in Europe.

### **Making a difference with practical measures**

There are multiple examples where simple measures can make a huge difference for millions of women and children, such as clean cooking solutions to provide them with practical ways of delivering meals for their family and improving global health. Nearly 1 billion people still lack access to modern cooking solutions in Sub-Saharan Africa, and almost 500,000 Africans die prematurely due to household air pollution every year. Considering the annual toll on human health, forests, climate and local economies, clean cooking solutions should be central to national climate, health and development strategies.

Clean cooking can save millions of deaths amongst women and children from lung disease, take pressure off scarce woodland resources, and mean women spend less time on searching for fuel, with the attendant risks of gender violence. We are witnessing with great interest a number of African countries that are putting clean cooking into their national plans – Kenya and Sierra Leone are taking first steps to establish Clean Cooking Delivery Units - but so many others lag behind, and decisive support is needed from the international community, including Europe. Realising the full potential of carbon pricing and markets could prove a powerful driver for change, by rendering affordable many such technologies and better valuing the natural environment for the ecosystems it provides.

### **Adaptation needs greater commitment and mainstreaming**

The UN’s Adaptation Gap report just out shows yet again how far adrift we are from meeting the finance needs of the most vulnerable parts of the world. The gap is growing and is currently estimated globally at US\$387 billion per year. Over the last twelve months, everyone has seen the apocalyptic visions from forest fires, devastating floods, and storms, such as the catastrophic deaths and damage in Libya’s city of Derna. There is only so much “resilience building” which can be done to cope with such powerful forces.

COP28 needs to see Africa and Europe working together to enhance funding, capacity and technology transfer for adaptation planning. We need programmatic approaches to support ambitious national adaptation plans, based on locally-led climate action, and following the

principles of Locally Led Adaptation. Ensuring these local plans are in place will enable funding to flow and for it to be used effectively.

European countries should step up their climate finance, pledging to pay at the very least their 'fair share' by 2025. They should also show how they will double their adaptation finance by 2025 from 2019 levels, and agree with the international community on the New Collective Quantified Goal for Climate Finance, putting emphasis on adaptation finance and action. Based on historic emissions, GDP per capita, and the \$100bn target agreed at COP21 only four countries have so far made climate finance commitments commensurate with their 'fair share': Norway, Sweden, France and Japan. The latest adaptation gap report shows both the big gulf between current pledges and adaptation needs, and the need for much higher quality funding, moving away from loans to grants.

European and African countries should also work together with finance providers to increase direct access to funds by African institutions. At present only four African governments can access the Green Climate Fund directly and, consequently must pay fees to intermediate agencies to access their due finance. We also need to see a major shift away from the current project-based models of funding and towards long term programmatic approaches. A greater focus on adaptation is needed at the level of the Africa-Europe partnership, one which will mainstream adaptation into both sectors of critical cooperation such as energy, agri-food systems, and infrastructure and untapped ones such as the ocean and blue economy, with tremendous potential for greater resilience.

### **Striking a deal on Loss and Damage funding and operationalisation**

Agreement seems to have been struck in early November at ways to make the Loss and Damage Fund operational and financed. Having been agreed at last year's COP in Sharm el-Sheikh, questions remain about how it will be financed. The World Bank has been agreed as the institution to manage this fund for the first 4-year period, despite serious reservations from many developing countries, who point to its operations being expensive, slow, and under Western control with all its associated ideological baggage. A committee has been proposed to oversee the operationalisation of the fund post-COP28, made up of a majority of developing nations. It is not clear yet how the fund will be filled, and from which sources. It is difficult to see it raising sufficient funds if it remains entirely voluntary, and there are sound arguments for all significant emitters, historic and present, to make contributions. Tapping into global taxation mechanisms would be a sound long term means to raise funds, at less risk from domestic political uncertainties.

### **Unlocking institutional capital and addressing the issue of access and cost of finance**

Throughout the last two years, WLN has been concerned by the very serious problems faced by many African countries in accessing affordable finance and investment funds, as well as mobilising domestic capital to deal with rising debt distress, huge increases in interest rates and the impossible burden of debt servicing. Massive increases in funding are also urgently needed from both public and private sectors to deliver infrastructure, energy, and water access, across Africa, and address an acceleration of climate and biodiversity impacts. There is a huge difference in borrowing costs faced by African countries in comparison with their European peers, with up to 10-point differences in interest rates, while access to capital is also drying up as investors seek safe havens. African countries themselves need to increase domestic resource mobilisation by broadening fiscal measures and curbing illicit financial flows.