

Tanzania steps up in global climate talks

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CLIMATE change is no longer a distant threat, but it is a lived reality marked by rising seas, erratic weather and growing food insecurity.

In response, global platforms like the UN's Conference of the Parties (COP) aim to coordinate action, mobilise finance and protect vulnerable communities.

Nevertheless, as these meetings grow in scale and ambition, too does public skepticism, especially in regions like Sub-Saharan Africa, where climate literacy is uneven and access to verified information remains limited.

In Tanzania, misinformation and conspiracy theories have led some communities to question the legitimacy of donor-funded adaptation programmes. This erosion of trust is compounded by persistent shortfalls in climate finance and the visible influence of fossil fuel interests at COP negotiations.

The result is a credibility gap that threatens not just global cooperation, but Tanzania's ability to secure resources and implement resilience strategies. This opinion series explores the intersection of

climate conspiracies and global governance, drawing on academic research, COP outcomes and Tanzania's lived experience.

It calls for a strategic reset and that is one that confronts misinformation, amplifies community voices and advocates for fair, transparent climate finance.

For Tanzania, restoring trust is not just a diplomatic priority, it is a developmental necessity. Imperative for Change at the Heart of Climate Governance As I sit down to reflect on the current situation regarding climate change and the global response to it, I can't help but be struck by the inherent paradox at the heart of the issue.

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Reflecting on the current state of global climate response, one cannot ignore the paradox that sits at its core. On one hand, there is unprecedented awareness and urgency surrounding climate change.

Scientific consensus is stronger than ever, with the IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report (2021) warning that the window to limit warming to 1.5°C is rapidly closing.

Policymakers, civil society and the public increasingly recognise the need for decisive action. On the other hand, the very mechanisms established to drive this action most notably the UNFCCC's Conference of the Parties (COP) meetings are themselves contributing to the problem.

The contradiction raises difficult questions about the sincerity and sustainability of our collective efforts. This paradox is further complicated by the rise of climate change conspiracies.

As Wedding (2022) documents, misinformation and skepticism have gained traction across various segments of society, often portraying climate change as a fabricated crisis engineered by governments, scientists or environmental organisations for political or financial gain.

These narratives undermine the legitimacy of climate science and show confusion among the public. In Tanzania, such conspiracies have surfaced in community dialogues and social media spaces, sometimes leading to resistance against donor-funded adaptation programmes or skepticism toward international climate frameworks.

The IPCC (2014, 2021) has repeatedly emphasised that public trust and informed engagement are essential to mobilising political will and implementing effective climate policy—yet these are precisely the areas being eroded. The outcomes of recent COP meetings have done little to ease these concerns.

COP29, held in Baku, Azerbaijan, was branded as the “Finance COP,” with expectations of unlocking transformative funding for climate resilience. Instead, it concluded amid widespread criticism.

Stakeholders lamented the lack of meaningful financial commitments, the disproportionate influence of fossil fuel interests and the failure to address systemic inequities between developed and developing nations.

Tanzania, like many climate-vulnerable countries, continues to advocate for the fulfillment of the 100 billion US dollars annual climate finance pledge made at COP15.

Yet the mechanisms for disbursement remain opaque and the promised funds have yet to materialise on a scale. In parallel, disinformation campaigns have increasingly undermined public trust in climate negotiations.

The Global Initiative for Information Integrity (2023) highlights how digital platforms have been used to cast doubt on the legitimacy of COP outcomes, portraying them as performative or politically compromised.

This trend is particularly damaging in regions like Sub-Saharan Africa, where climate impacts are severe and institutional capacity to counter misinformation is limited.

In Tanzania, where adaptation efforts depend heavily on international support, the erosion of trust in global governance frameworks poses a direct threat to progress. Despite these challenges, COP meetings remain a vital forum for international collaboration.

They bring together representatives from nearly every country to negotiate emissions reductions, adaptation strategies and support mechanisms for vulnerable nations.

However, the persistent prevalence of climate conspiracies threatens to undermine the efficacy of these efforts. Without public trust and transparent communication, even the most ambitious agreements risk faltering in implementation.

Scholars such as Naomi Klein, Tim Jackson and Bill McKibben have long argued that climate action must go beyond technical solutions. Klein's critique of capitalism's role in climate degradation, Jackson's call for post-growth economics and McKibben's emphasis on ecological resilience all point to the need for a multifaceted approach.

This includes confronting misinformation through robust science communication, investing in media literacy and engaging communities in meaningful dialogue. In Tanzania, this could involve expanding climate education in schools, partnering with local radio stations to disseminate accurate information and training community leaders to serve as climate ambassadors.

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