



25/11/2025

FROM REFLECTION TO RECLAIMING CREDIBILITY IN CLIMATE GOVERNANCE

*HOW TO QUOTE: CHAGONJA, R. (NOVEMBER 24, 2025). FROM REFLECTION TO
RECLAIMING CREDIBILITY IN CLIMATE GOVERNANCE (OPINION PIECE NO. 2)*

AUTHORED BY

RACHEAL CHAGONJA
SUSTAINABLE FUTURE NEXUS CONSULTANTS
info@sfnexus.or.tz
www.sfnexus.or.tz



INTRODUCTION

While climate diplomacy is vital, it frequently fails to fulfill its transformative potential. For Tanzania—a country facing the severe consequences of floods, droughts, and unpredictable weather—the credibility of climate governance is not measured by the number of delegates attending summits. Rather, it relies on actual outcomes, transparency, and inclusive practices. To ensure that climate diplomacy remains relevant and effective, it must move beyond mere symbolism and adopt authentic accountability that addresses the concerns of those most at risk.

ABSTRACT

For many years, global climate summits like the Conference of Parties (COP) have made bold promises for significant change; however, they often end in delays, clouded by rhetoric, unmet commitments, and procedural drama that fail to provide real benefits for frontline communities. This is not an argument against climate action; rather, it serves as a strong call for reform. From Tanzania's perspective—where the effects of climate change are not theoretical but actual experiences—credibility must be assessed based on deliverables, transparency, and inclusivity. For climate diplomacy to maintain its relevance, it must move beyond mere symbolism and encourage accountability that resonates with those most affected.

A 30-YEAR ANALYSIS OF CLIMATE GOVERNANCE AND DIPLOMACY

From 1995 to 2025, there has been a notable evolution in the structure of the COP, with participation widening across various continents. However, the effectiveness of these participants has been inconsistent. For instance, the European Union has led the way in compliance, achieving a collective reduction of over 20% in greenhouse gas emissions from 1990 levels. This achievement is largely due to internal burden-sharing, the implementation of carbon pricing, and the aggressive adoption of renewable energy policies among its member states.

In contrast, countries in the Asia-Pacific region, such as Japan and New Zealand, have primarily met their Kyoto targets using offsets. On the other hand, China and India have experienced a tripling of their emissions between 1990 and 2020, propelled by industrial growth and increasing energy demands. North America's commitment has been erratic; the United States never ratified the Kyoto Protocol, while Canada formally withdrew in 2012, citing economic concerns. Additionally, Eurasia surpassed its Kyoto targets, but this was mainly a result of post-Soviet economic

contraction, which inadvertently generated surplus credits that distorted carbon markets.

Table 1: 1995–2025 Climate Governance Diagnosis

Phase	Key Developments	Observation
1995–2005 (Kyoto Era and Early Commitments)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Kyoto Protocol (1997) introduced binding targets for Annex I countries. ➤ EU led compliance through burden-sharing, carbon pricing, and renewable energy adoption. ➤ Japan and New Zealand relied on offsets to meet targets. ➤ U.S. never ratified Kyoto; Canada’s commitment weakened ➤ Eurasia surpassed targets due to post-Soviet economic contraction, creating surplus credits. 	<p>Binding commitments exposed structural divides: while the EU demonstrated leadership, reliance on offsets and economic collapse distorted carbon markets, raising questions of fairness and credibility.</p>
2005–2015 (Fragmentation and Emerging Economies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Kyoto’s first commitment period ended in 2012 with mixed results. ➤ China and India’s emissions tripled between 1990–2010 due to industrial growth. ➤ Canada formally withdrew in 2012, citing economic concerns. ➤ EU deepened climate leadership with expanded renewable energy and emissions trading. ➤ Negotiations struggled over developed vs. developing country responsibilities. 	<p>The binary system of Kyoto proved unsustainable as emerging economies became major emitters but resisted binding obligations, widening the credibility gap and fueling calls for universal participation.</p>

<p>2015–2025 Agreement Universal Participation) (Paris and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Paris Agreement (2015) introduced voluntary Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). ➤ All countries pledged action, but ambition and delivery varied widely. ➤ Finance and transparency became central issues, with Africa demanding accountability. ➤ EU maintained leadership; North America remained inconsistent. ➤ China and India expanded emissions but invested heavily in renewables. 	<p>Paris broadened participation but weakened enforcement. The credibility of climate diplomacy now depends on delivery, transparency, and inclusion, especially for vulnerable regions like Africa.</p>
--	--	--

Kenya’s Lake Turkana Wind Power Project exemplifies this issue. Although its potential was evident, support from the Green Climate Fund (GCF) was delayed for years due to procedural obstacles—risk assessments, compliance checks, and institutional hesitance—while communities awaited results.

Similarly, Mozambique’s experience following Cyclone Idai highlights the same weaknesses: significant pledges, but only partial and delayed funding disbursements, coupled with limited transparency that marginalized civil society and eroded trust.

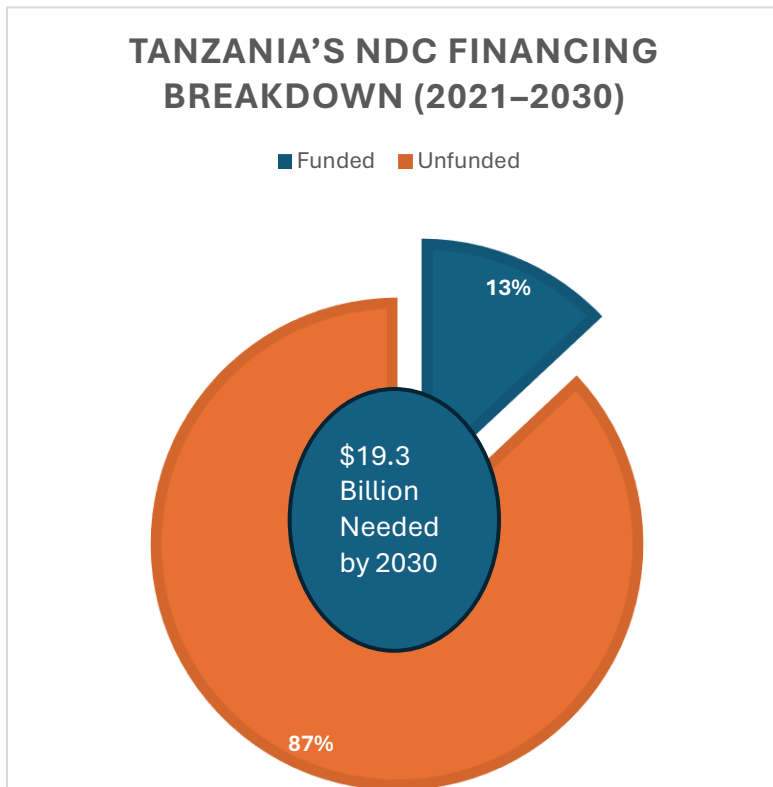
Uganda’s REDD+ pilot projects further demonstrate how ambiguous benefit-sharing and governance gaps can hinder well-meaning initiatives. Once again, systems designed for assurance overshadowed effective delivery and inclusiveness.

Collectively, these examples frame Tanzania’s situation. The 2021 Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) indicate a need of \$19.3 billion through 2030; however, by 2024, only 13% had been secured. With most assistance linked to slow, conditional, or difficult-to-access funding, communities in Dar es Salaam and Dodoma are

facing immediate dangers (World Bank, Tanzania Country Climate and Development Report, December 2024). This is not a dismissal of climate action, but

rather a call to restore credibility through transparent and timely financing that effectively reaches the people who need it.

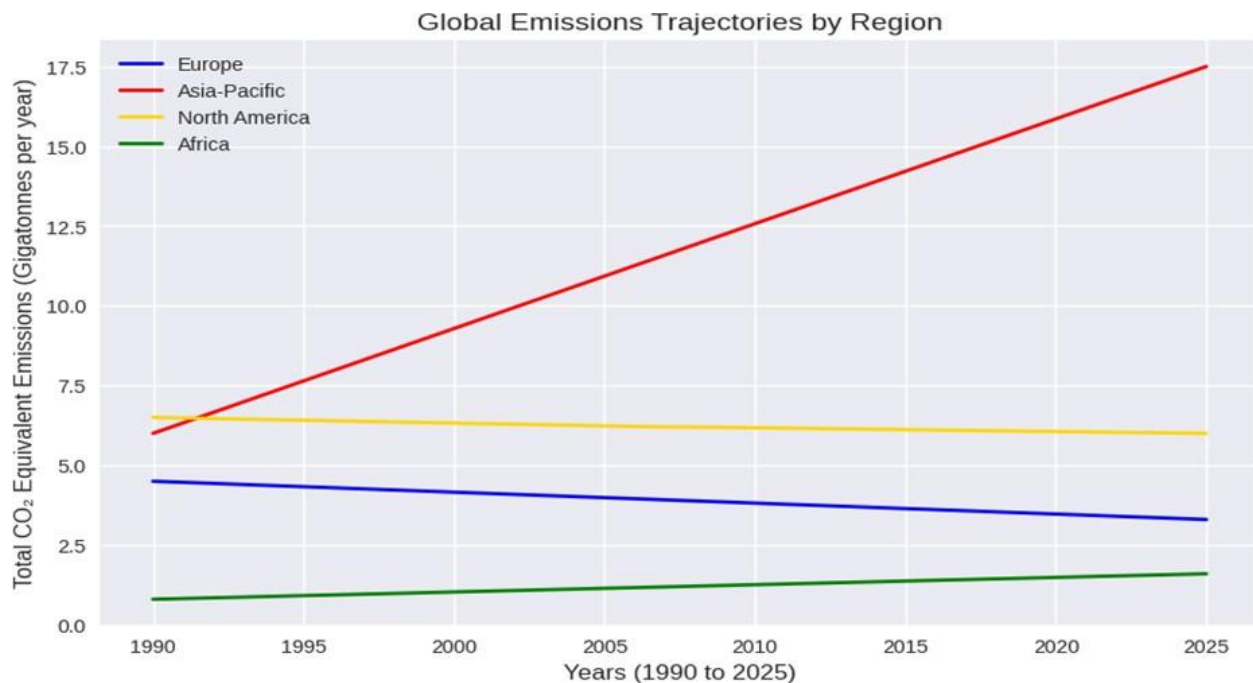
Chart: Tanzania’s NDC Financing Gap (2021–2030)



Consequently, Tanzania's perspective in climate diplomacy should reflect this real-life experience in negotiation arenas—not as a complaint, but as a strategic necessity. This perspective, grounded in realism and community involvement, can guide global climate governance from mere rhetoric to accountable action.

The graph below illustrates the varied trajectories of regional emissions over 35 years, highlighting:

- ■ Europe: Shows a *consistent decline*, decreasing from approximately 4.5 Gt in 1990 to 3.3 Gt by 2025. This trend is fueled by robust climate policies, carbon pricing, and the growth of renewable energy
- ■ Asia-Pacific: Exhibits a *dramatic increase*, soaring from 6 Gt in 1990 to over 17.5 Gt by 2025. This surge reflects rapid industrialization and heavy reliance on coal in China, India, and Southeast Asia
- ■ North America: Displays a *plateau followed by a gentle decline*, peaking around 2007 and gradually reducing from 6.5 Gt to 6 Gt, influenced by voluntary initiatives and evolving energy policies.
- ■ Africa: Shows a *steady increase from a low starting point*, rising from 0.8 Gt to 1.6 Gt. This growth signifies emissions related to development while still representing a minor share of global emissions



Source: Chagonja, 2025

(Data synthesized from *Global Carbon Atlas* (Global Carbon Atlas (2023): <https://www.globalcarbonatlas.org>); *UNFCCC Emissions Data Portal* (2022): <https://di.unfccc.int>; *Climate Watch – World Resources Institute* (2023): <https://www.climatewatchdata.org>, and *IEA CO₂ Emissions Report* (2022): International Energy Agency).

CALL TO ACTION: TANZANIA'S FUTURE ROLE IN CLIMATE DIPLOMACY

1. The Tanzanian government, through the Ministry of Finance and Planning and the Vice President's Office (Environment), should advocate at COP summits for tangible, measurable outcomes instead of merely symbolic commitments
2. The UNFCCC Secretariat, alongside donor governments and multilateral funds like the Green Climate Fund, must create transparent systems to monitor climate finance, while Tanzania and the African Group of Negotiators (AGN) demand accountability to ensure that promised funds are disbursed and accessible
3. Civil society organizations, community networks, and national platforms such as the National Multi-Stakeholder Forums should be empowered and formally included in COP processes to enhance inclusivity and a sense of ownership

4. Tanzania, in collaboration with the African Union and AGN, should bolster its regional bargaining power by promoting cohesive African positions on adaptation, finance, and accountability, thereby enhancing the continent's influence
5. Tanzania, together with other African nations and regional groups, should confront restrictive donor conditions and advocate for simplified, equitable access to climate finance by eliminating bureaucratic delays imposed by international partners
6. Tanzanian leaders and policymakers should position the nation not only as one facing vulnerability, but also as a champion for reform across the continent, advocating for credibility and accountability in global climate governance.

REFERENCES

1. Global Carbon Atlas. (2023). *Global carbon emissions data*. Retrieved from <https://www.globalcarbonatlas.org>
2. International Energy Agency. (2022). *CO₂ emissions report*. Paris: IEA.
3. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). (2022). *Emissions data portal*. Retrieved from <https://di.unfccc.int>
4. World Bank. (2024, December). *Tanzania country climate and development report*. Washington, DC: World Bank
5. World Resources Institute. (2023). Climate Watch data. Retrieved from <https://www.climatewatchdata.org>