



POSITION PAPER

Albertine Rift Conservation Society (ARCOS Network), Africa Regional Mountain Forum (ARMF), Africa NGOs Alliance for Environmental Sustainability (ANAES)

Position Paper on UNFCCC COP 29

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

Twenty-ninth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP29)

11 - 22 November 2024, Baku, Azerbaijan.

Integrate Africa mountain ecosystems and communities within COP29 ambitions and planned actions

Mountains account for about 27% of the global terrestrial ecosystems and 20% of the land in Africa. Mountains, also called “islands in the sky” are home to a rich biodiversity characterized by high endemism with 34 world’s biodiversity hotspots found in these landscapes a. Due to this rich array of fauna and flora, they are important sources of many ecosystem services to a half of the global human population¹. Almost half of the world’s population depends on mountain water ². They are also home to over 1 billion people and significant touristic attractions due to their scenery and source of inspiration and recreation.

These water towers have been increasingly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change with significant implications for biodiversity, human health, safety, and security³. Mountain climate change threats remain unabated, destructive and catastrophic for both high and lowland communities. This is particular for Africa due to communities’ low adaptive capacity and coping mechanisms. With limited or no coping mechanisms, communities in most cases have been left to the mercy of nature for survival and adaptation.

While there is growing attention to mountain climate change threats, there remains dismal focus within the UNFCCC arrangements and related COP meetings. As parties convene for COP29, it is urgent and high time that the world, not only sets ambitious targets, but also includes specific, bold and actual climate actions for sustainable mountain development.

¹ Messerli, B. & Ives, J., eds. 1997. Mountains of the world - a global priority. New York, USA and Carnforth, UK, Parthenon.

² <http://www.fao.org/docrep/w9300e/w9300e03.htm>.

³ <https://www.unep.org/topics/fresh-water/disasters-and-climate-change/climate-change-and-security-risks>.

The Albertine Rift Conservation Society (ARCOS Network), Africa Regional Mountain Forum (ARMF), and the African NGOs Alliance for Environmental Sustainability (ANAES) call on the world and parties to prioritise and integrate ambitious and actual actions for particularly Africa's mountain ecosystems and communities during the COP29 meeting. We call on the world and parties to expeditiously raise ambition and climate action on sustainable mountain development prioritizing the following six areas:

1 Integrate sustainable mountain development issues into the new Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and across all global and national climate change policy and planning mechanisms.

We note with concern low integration of sustainable mountain development into national and global climate change frameworks. Many parties from the developing world have not developed sustainable mountain development strategies and neither submitted their climate change National Adaptation Plans (NAPs)-a critical mechanism for implementing NDCs. As of 24 September 2024, 22 LDCs had prepared NAPs and submitted them on NAP Central, 18 were in the process of formulating while 4 had not yet started formulating⁴.

A number of developing parties in Africa have submitted their NDCs but most do not mention or provide explicit targets on the mountain ecosystems. Most of these countries report limited progress in implementation of both NAPs and NDCs due to financial and capacity constraints^{5,6}. The current NDCs are not ambitious enough but they too do not respond to the mountain climate crisis. With the scheduled next round of NDCs in early 2025, ARCOS Network calls on all parties to seize the opportunity to integrate mountain issues within new NDCs and across national and global planning mechanisms.

2 Empower mountain communities with local resource management capacities for climate resilience and adaptation using traditional and indigenous knowledge.

Mountain landscapes are among the most affected by climate change and pose a hazardous risk to the surrounding communities⁷. The effect is more pronounced for rural mountain communities in developing countries due to their remoteness, high incidences of food insecurity, low levels of service provision, and dependence on agriculture and natural resources⁸. Indigenous communities predominantly occupy African mountains. Despite their high vulnerability, these communities possess rich traditional and local climate change adaptation knowledge. This knowledge has largely not been tapped or optimized for mountain climate change adaptation solutions. We call upon parties to support mechanisms that empower mountain communities through building and implementing an evidence base that is supported by indigenous and local knowledge.

⁴ [Messerli, B. & Ives, J., eds. 1997. Mountains of the world - a global priority. New York, USA and Carnforth, UK, Parthenon.](#)

⁵ UNFCCC LDC Expert group. National Adaptation Plans 2023.

⁶ https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/NAPs_SBI60_0.pdf.

⁷ Kohler T. and Maselli D. (eds) 2009. Mountains and Climate Change.

⁸ Barrott, J., Witton, R. and Hocquet, R. (2024). Leave No Mountain Behind: The Synthesis Series – Migration, mobility and immobility in the mountains.

3 Operationalise the loss and damage fund to support recovery and build resilience particularly for smallholder farmers in mountains and their surrounding lowlands.

Most of the mountain communities in Africa are smallholder farmers who feed from hand to mouth. The farmers and their families are particularly vulnerable because they have few assets to fall back on and limited ability to recover from climate extremes⁹. These farmers need support to recover from shock and losses and build resilience. Developing country parties are constrained in shock absorbing the damage and losses from their citizens. At COP27 in 2022, countries agreed to establish new funding arrangements for assisting developing countries negatively impacted by climate change. There is currently a debate on how and who should qualify for this fund. We note that the fund is long overdue and parties need to move beyond debate and negotiations to action. The mountain communities and smallholder farmers in Africa who are amongst the most affected should take the first priority.

4 Urgent attention on mountain glacier and snow cover retreat and disappearance through an integrated mitigation, ecosystems and biodiversity restoration agenda.

The world's glaciers are retreating at unprecedented rate due to climate change. Mountain glaciers are projected to lose up to a half of their mass by 2100¹⁰. In Africa, the only remaining glaciers are already receding on Mt Kilimanjaro, Mt Rwenzori and Mt Kenya and are set to completely disappear by 2040. This presents unabated threats to human existence and continues to erode the quality and functionality of the cryosphere. The recent UN General Assembly declaration of 2025-2034 as the Decade of Action for Cryospheric Sciences also coincides with the new 2025 NDC period and the International Year of Glaciers' Preservation (IYGP). We call upon COP29 to prioritise glacier conservation and preservation through an ambitious mitigation and emissions reduction, and ecosystems and biodiversity restoration agenda.

5 Strengthen institutional mechanisms for management of national and regional mountain climate change effects through coordinated transboundary frameworks.

Most of the prominent mountains landscapes across Africa are transboundary and pose related climate risks. As affirmed by UNFCCC, the global nature of climate change calls for the widest cooperation by all parties. The current national and transboundary mechanisms for management of shared environment, natural resources and ecosystems are still limited. The policy, legal and institutional framework for governance and management of such ecosystems and climate change effects are equally either nonexistent or only under review.

⁹ United Nations Environment Programme and GRID-Arendal (2022). Mountains ADAPT: Solutions from East Africa. Nairobi: United Nations Environment Programme.

¹⁰ Rounce et.al 2023. Global glacier change in the 21st Century: Every increase in temperature matters. Science, Vol 379, Issue 6627.

These coupled with absence of a global mountain convention and national geo political limitations continue to exacerbate mountain climate effects beyond borders. It is imperative that COP29 supports mechanisms for such cooperation particularly for transboundary mountain climate issues.

6 Accelerate progress on new financing to integrate mountain ecosystem-climate issues.

New ambitions require new financing. Currently, climate financials flow to developing parties are both insufficient and unevenly distributed. The adaptation-mitigation finance balance remains uneven and insufficient. The different mechanisms under Article 6 of Paris Agreement including on rules and modalities for a carbon crediting mechanism are not operational while the carbon budget has reduced and nearing depletion. In all this, neither the climate change plans nor their budgets and financing have been explicit on mountain climate change issues. The New Collective Quantified Goal NCQG provides a promising climate finance framework for mountain issues. While the negotiations for NCQG operationalization are moving at slower pace than expected, there is still room for positioning climate-mountain issues. ARCOS Network implores all parties to urgently widen and provide for an ambitious and favorable new climate financing mechanism that includes funding for African mountain climate actions.

Let us all keep **‘In Solidarity for a Green World’!**

About ARCOS

The Albertine Rift Conservation (ARCOS) is an international conservation and development organization that focuses its interventions in the Albertine Rift Region, and Africa Mountains and Great Lakes. ARCOS puts healthy biodiversity and proper management of natural resources at the forefront of its mission. ARCOS has a network made up of close to 1800 members and has engaged over 54000 farmer households in different sustainable initiatives across the African Continent. ARCOS is a member of the Mountain Partnership and it leads Africa Sustainable Mountain Development Agenda and works with several partners including governments, Civil Society, Private Sectors and Community.

About ARMF

The Africa Regional Mountain Forum (ARMF) is a platform that convenes various stakeholders—including government representatives, researchers, and members of mountain communities—to discuss issues related to mountainous regions in Africa.

About ANAES

ANAES (African NGOs Alliance for Environmental Sustainability) was launched on October 20, 2023, in Kigali, Rwanda. The alliance unites African NGOs focused on conservation, fostering leadership, sharing experiences, and promoting active engagement among its members.

For Further Information

ARCOS Head Office
Rwanda: KN 14 Avenue, No. 47 Kigali

info@arcosnetwork.org
www.arcosnetwork.org

+250-795-045-022