



Final Statement of the West Africa Climate Summit "From Climate Crisis to Climate Resilience"

Pathways for West Africa and the Sahelian Region at Local and Regional Levels



We, the co-organizers of the Regional Conference *"From Climate Crisis to Climate Resilience: Pathways for West Africa and the Sahelian Region at Local and Regional Levels,"* held in Dakar, Senegal, from March 23 – March 24, 2026, under the auspices of the Pontifical Academies of Sciences and Social Sciences and in partnership with AKADEMIYA2063 & Centre de Suivi Ecologique, affirm our commitment to contribute to building a climate-resilient Africa, recognizing our ties to diverse stakeholder communities.

This Conference builds on and draws on the foundations laid by African initiatives and action plans, such as the 2023 African Climate Summit[1] and the Africa Youth Climate Assembly Declaration[2]. It connects to climate ethics and planetary stewardship, as articulated by the Pontifical Academies in the Vatican, and adds a critical dimension: elevating resilience through Mitigation, Adaptation, and Societal Transformation (MAST), with an emphasis on locally-led actions and systemic change[3].

We emphasize West Africa and the Sahel's disproportionate vulnerability to climate change, despite their minimal contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions. In light of this, we reiterate the urgency of placing climate resilience—particularly at the local and regional levels—at the heart of Africa's climate agenda.

Strategic Orientations

1. MAST: A Three-Pillar Resilience Framework - MAST is a call for the due care of the value of nature as a common good, relying on justice and prudence as important virtues in facing emerging climate change challenges. We endorse the MAST framework as a cornerstone of Africa's climate resilience strategy:

- **Mitigation:** We support urgent actions to bend the global warming curve below 2°C. Mitigation must be scaled up with justice, recognizing Africa's right to sustainable development as the continent transitions toward low-carbon futures.
- **Adaptation:** Given Africa's acute exposure to climate risks, adaptation must become a central priority. Local resilience must anticipate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from climate shocks—from droughts and floods to food and water insecurity.
- **Societal Transformation:** Deep behavioral, institutional, and systemic shifts are essential. This includes promoting sustainable land use, circular economies, and the transformative role of forests and nature-based solutions.

2. Local Leadership and Decentralized Governance

The participation of **mayors, governors, and local leaders** from urban and rural constituencies reaffirmed the central role of decentralized governance in advancing climate resilience. Cities and subnational governments must be empowered with finance, capacity, and decision-making authority to deliver tailored resilience plans and policies. The West Africa Summit demonstrated that resilient futures arise when decentralized governance is supported by finance, local political empowerment, science, nature-based solutions, indigenous knowledge, capacity building, and the implementation of community-driven, people-centered approaches to building climate resilience.

3. Youth as Agents of Transformation

We commend the active engagement, energy and creativity of West Africa's youth throughout the summit. The Youth MAST Dialogues provided a vital space for intergenerational exchange and bold calls to action. Youth must not only be included—they must be **co-leaders** of intergenerational policy-making, planning, execution, accountability and implementation of resilience solutions at all levels.

4. Science, Policy, and Community Synergies

The Conference benefited from strong contributions from African academies of science, research organizations, Indigenous knowledge holders, and religious communities. We reaffirm that **climate resilience must be informed by robust science**, inclusive policy dialogues, and bottom-up community engagement. West African universities and colleges are well positioned to enhance the region's climate science capacity and thereby strengthen the region's voice on climate resilience in international forums. We will sustain a platform for continuous dialogue that translates data, early

warning systems and local knowledge into scalable action.

5. Faith-Based and Civil Society Engagement

By harnessing people's faith, community engagement can be a powerful lever to move beyond stewardship and embrace the principle of care as an intimate approach to resource conservation and use. We honor the spiritual and ethical dimensions of resilience. Faith-based organizations and civil society will continue to mobilize moral will, foster solidarity, and amplify equitable outcomes across all communities. The engagement of regional faith leaders and civil society actors enriched our deliberations. Inspired by Pope Francis' May 2024 call for a **Universal Protocol of Resilience**, and heeding Pope Leo's call for action, we echo their appeal for ethical urgency, social justice, and planetary care. Faith-based institutions are uniquely positioned to mobilize moral will and community-based resilience.

Tangible Outcomes and Commitments

The Conference concludes with the following actionable commitments:

- **City and Regional Climate Resilience Protocols:** We commit to developing localized resilience blueprints—tailored city-by-city and province-by-province—with clear implementation pathways, finance mechanisms, and community ownership. Communities are the right scale of climate responses. Improved data collection, including satellite-based information to support better governance and decision-making, should therefore be grounded in local aspirations and capacities.
- **Investable Business Plans for Resilience:** Municipalities and regions will partner with financial institutions to develop practical, bankable climate resilience plans that prioritize nature-based solutions, agroecological transitions, and resilient infrastructure.
- **Platform for Science Guided Policy Dialogue:** We support establishing regular high-level policy dialogues to track progress using sound data and science-based evidence, exchange best practices, and prepare structured contributions for future COPs and the Final Vatican Resilience Summit in 2027, in collaboration with communities from other hemispheres.
- **Resilience Capacity-Building:** Institutions will be strengthened at the local level, including technical, educational, and financial capacities, to implement adaptation and resilience strategies, particularly in vulnerable communities.

Key Areas of Action and Shared Priorities

Thematic dialogues during the conference provided critical insights and recommendations across the following areas:

- **Urban and Rural Resilience:** Mayors and local leaders shared success stories and challenges in addressing floods, heatwaves, and drought, emphasizing the need for localized planning

and inclusive governance.

- **National Adaptation Plans:** We applaud the efforts of West African governments to integrate their National Adaptation Plans into both national and sectoral development plans. This approach is crucial for securing funding and prioritizing climate resilience initiatives at both national and local levels. Needed are policy and legal frameworks that enable action at the local level and supported by sound data and finance based on local risk assessment.
- **Innovative Climate Finance:** West Africa's Sahel is rich in renewable and human resources, which require innovative financial systems to accelerate social transformation. Experts identified urgent priorities for financing climate adaptation and resilience, calling for new instruments and direct access mechanisms for cities and local governments.
- **Innovation for Energy Systems and Bioeconomy:** Transforming biomass-based primary energy use, such as wood burning and charcoal, is contributing importantly to a more efficient and sustainable bioeconomy and to people's health. We recognize the important work being done by the African Development Bank and its partners in providing clean energy access to local communities lacking electricity. Localized resilience blueprints with clear implementation pathways and finance mechanisms must be operationalized. Public-private partnerships and direct access to finance will accelerate on-the-ground delivery.
- **Food, Land, and Water Systems:** Building resilience in Africa's food and water systems is essential. This requires strong African science systems, integrated land-use policies, climate-smart agriculture, plant breeding, livestock innovations, and water harvesting techniques, all of which were emphasized as transformative pathways. Rule-based, open trade in food and agriculture-related products and inputs in the West Africa region and beyond is important for adaptation.
- **Nature-Based Solutions:** Forest conservation, reforestation, and nature-based infrastructure emerged as cost-effective, community-supported responses that are foundational to resilience and align with scientific, ecological and spiritual values. We will scale nature-based infrastructure, restoration, and sustainable agriculture as cost-effective, locally supported pathways.
- **Disaster Preparedness, Recovery & Equitability:** Participants emphasized the need for improved early warning systems, post-disaster recovery strategies, and insurance mechanisms for vulnerable populations. These efforts must be grounded in equity —protecting children, women, farmers, pastoralists, coastal communities, and marginalized groups from climate shocks and cascading risks.
- **School Curricula:** We recommend strengthening efforts to incorporate climate change adaptation into school curricula. This will better prepare students for future careers in green technologies and enhance their understanding of climate resilience.
- **Climate-Induced Migration:** Addressing the root causes and human rights implications of climate-related migration was identified as a key priority for resilience planning. Several lessons exist for increasing social capital through green jobs, often from circular economic actions, to reduce the mass migration of youth. This includes improved agriculture and pastoral systems based on local varieties and practices.

- **Prioritizing Budgets:** Dedicate a minimum of 2% of development budget to finance climate adaptation projects that are locally identified priorities. Ensuring community engagement and support will ensure accountability.
- **Accountability:** Establish regular, science-based policy dialogues to track progress, share best practices, and collaboratively develop inputs for COP processes and resilience platforms, ensuring transparency and measurability at local, regional, and continental levels.

Looking Forward: Africa's Call to Action for future COPs

This Conference **calls to:**

- Increase climate finance to support **locally-led adaptation and resilience**;
- Promote the adoption of a **Universal Protocol for Resilience**, rooted in justice, science, and solidarity;
- A **Pan-African Resilience Alliance**, which includes cities, youth, academia, faith-based organizations, and civil society;
- Ensure youth are **formally included** in all regional and global climate negotiations, including future COPs and beyond.

We commit to a new era of climate action anchored in resilience, rooted in Africa's realities, and powered by its people. Let this Dakar Conference exhibit best practices for development of an African-led, globally supported movement for **resilient futures for all**.

Adopted in Dakar, Senegal 25 March 2026

Pontifical Academies of Sciences (PAS) and Social Sciences (PASS) with AKADEMIYA2063 & Centre de Suivi Ecologique March 23 – March 24, 2026 | Dakar, Senegal

[1] <https://africaclimatesummit.org/downloads/post-summit/ACS-commitments-and-announcement-compilation.pdf> and <https://africaclimatesummit.org/downloads/post-summit/THE-INAUGURAL-AFRICA-CLIMATE-SUMMIT.pdf>

[2] https://media.africaclimatesummit.org/ACS+Africa+Youth+Climate+Assembly+Declaration+AYCA_231003_200635.pdf?request-content-type=%22application/force-download%22

[3] In July of 2022, PAS organized a meeting of experts, at which the [*MAST concept for resilience was proposed*](#) and accepted by all the experts attending the meeting in a conference declaration. This led to the realization that resilience must be built at the local level of cities and states.

A Global summit was organized jointly by PAS and PASS during May 15 - 17, 2024, assembling from all hemispheres a group of mayors and governors to discuss and showcase innovative solutions for climate resilience. The outcome of the summit was a *Planetary Call to Action for*

Climate Change Resilience (Pope Francis, Ramanathan, V; Suárez-Orozco, M; von Braun, J; Alford, H; Turkson, P; and 15 other authors by PAS and PASS, signed by all attendees, including all the attending Mayors and Governors. The document

https://www.pas.va/en/events/2024/climate_resilience/call_to_action_climate_change.html

recognizes that the climate crisis is upon us already, and we need a new expanded approach beyond emissions mitigation to protect people and ecosystems, and need to engage with global reach at the local level.