



OP-ED Article Climate Justice

In today's environment, change and uncertainty seem to be the only constants. The 3 Cs – Climate change, COVID-19 and Conflict have adversely affected global economies. Just as the world was beginning to adapt to the new normal of the pandemic, came the Russia-Ukraine war which utterly destabilized global markets in a world already ravaged by climate change. The March 2022 Global Climate Report reveals that the last 7 years have been the warmest ever recorded, with sea-level rise accelerated to a new high from 2013 to 2021.

Climate justice is a concept that looks at equal distribution of benefits and burdens of climate change. It acknowledges that climate change has differing social, economic, public health and other adverse impacts on underprivileged populations. As the effects of climate change hasten, the toll is majorly felt in developing countries due to extreme weather. It is increasingly threatening future development plans and sustainability of existing infrastructure.

The construction sector contributes 37% energy-related carbon dioxide emissions, reports UNEP in the 2021 Global Status Report for Building and Construction. This figure comprises both the operational carbon and the ongoing carbon emission from its daily use, and carbon emission from the production and transportation of construction materials. The World Green Building Council estimates that there are only 500 net-zero commercial buildings and 2000 net-zero homes around the globe; this is under 1 percent of buildings worldwide. While the COVID-19 pandemic reduced emissions, the worry is that construction demand and infrastructure boom due to rapid urbanization will increase emission as normalcy returns.

Climate action has been placed as a priority item globally and Kenya should follow suit. We need to avert the effects of global warming. Kenya must remain committed to implementing the National Adaptation Plan 2015-2030 as per the Paris agreement and adopt strategies for zero-net emissions by 2050.

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IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

AAK calls on the new government to: Advocate for green building solutions for all upcoming developments in the built environment sector including the affordable housing project making use of locally available material; Ensure that public funds are only used for green and sustainable buildings in government funded construction projects; Implement a carrot and stick approach to incentivize green buildings and punish non-green buildings to encourage uptake by the private sector. The AAK Safari Green Building Index tool can be used to rate and qualify incentives; Advocate for innovative eco-friendly buildings that agree with our favorable climatic conditions e.g GreenHouse; and encourage green public transport, including electric vehicles and buses, non motorized transport among others.

Sustainable ways of living improves the quality of our lives, safeguards our ecosystem, and preserves our natural resources for future generations.

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