

BORDER GREEN ALLIANCE: TRANSCENDING NIGERIA BEYOND RHETHORICS IN CLIMATE GLOBAL POLICY

Nigeria's gesture in global climate negotiations has often been painted as that of a vulnerable recipient seeking fairness and financial support. While it is true that Nigeria, like many other African nations grapples with the disproportionate impacts of climate change, the time has come to harness our unique advantages and capabilities. So, I propose the formation of a “***Border Green Alliance***” (BGA)—a regional policy framework that involves collaboration with neighboring countries aimed at combating climate change through shared initiatives such as reforestation projects and solar energy grids along the Sahel.

The stark reality of climate change has become an undeniable part of Nigeria’s narrative, with the past two years (2023 and 2024) serving as a haunting illustration of the urgency for effective climate action. Disturbing scenes unfolded across various states—Borno, Bauchi, Delta, Anambra, etc where flooded streets, failing crops, and oppressive heat waves became the new normal. Nigeria’s Vice President Kashim Shettima for example had to fold his trousers walking through water during a visit to Borno to commiserate with Governor Babagana Zulum on the devastating flood disaster in 2024. This highlights the precarious nature of the situation. This is not to mention the humongous amount both in cash and kinds branded as palliatives that came from the Nigerian government, wealthy Nigerians and even outsiders to victims of flooding. There is arguably no better time than now in our national commitments to climate change to transit from mere rhetoric into actionable initiatives that are both effective and sustainable.

As enshrined in our Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and Long-Term Low Emission Development Strategy (LT-LEDS), Nigeria has made ambitious pledges to cut greenhouse gas emissions and enhance resilience to climate impacts. However, these commitments alone are insufficient if they remain theoretical; we must seek to transcend them and engage in tangible, lasting solutions. A trans-formative approach is needed—one that shifts Nigeria's position from being a mere participant in global dialogues about climate mitigation to becoming a trailblazer of innovative solutions that could influence policy both regionally and internationally.

Hence, the *Border Green Alliance* can capitalize on Nigeria’s natural resources and strategic geography to transform the border regions into renewable energy and agricultural hubs. This initiative presents numerous opportunities, showcasing Nigeria not only as a rising leader in climate adaptation and innovation, but as a pivotal player in redefining the narrative of African nations at global climate discussions. By establishing partnerships for technological exchange, knowledge sharing, and collaborative funding opportunities, Nigeria can foster regional resilience against climate-related vulnerabilities while simultaneously promoting economic growth.

The *Border Green Alliance* can serve as a platform for developing innovative, sustainable agricultural practices that integrate traditional knowledge with modern techniques. Such practices could include agroforestry, permaculture, and organic farming, which not only fight desertification but also bolster food security in a region often devastated by erratic weather patterns. By leveraging and amplifying local knowledge systems, we can cultivate an agricultural

model that prioritizes ecological health and community livelihood, ensuring that both farmers and the ecosystem flourish.

To harness these opportunities, Nigeria must embrace a vision of itself as a proactive leader in the global climate conversation. No longer can we perceive climate change merely as an environmental threat; rather, it should be understood as an opportunity to re-frame our national identity and rapidly pivot towards a sustainable future. Nigeria can in fact set a powerful precedent for sustainable growth that resonates beyond its borders. Through creativity, collaboration, and empowerment, we can redefine Nigeria's role from a victim of climate change to a proactive architect of solutions that will be pivotal in the global response to the climate crisis.

From a closer lens, one would notice that the outcome of the November, 2024 COP29 climate talks in Baku, Azerbaijan demonstrated the persistent divide, between developed and developing countries like Nigeria over climate finance; hence, watering down the stance of negotiators from Africa. For example the draft deal of the talks did not recognise that developing nations require at least \$1 trillion annually to tackle the climate crisis. Yet, it failed to specify how much wealthy nations are willing to provide or how these funds will be disbursed—a situation that should be blamed on poor or insatiable negotiation prowess of African countries whom Nigeria is her giant.

Besides, the stakes are particularly high for Nigeria. Nigeria is among African nations grappling with the devastating impacts of climate change, including recurring floods and desertification. The absence

of concrete financial commitment poses significant challenges. But, it is apparently difficult to surmount this challenge without a native African negotiation approach like *Border Green Alliance* proposed here. This is particularly unique and feasible because it will generate a common position in the negotiations table that will favour Africa in her pursuit of climate justice in the global theatre. This initiative is clearly in consonance with the tone of the Nigeria's Minister of Environment, Balarabe Abbas Lawal who has been vocal even at the COP29 talks in calling for justice rather than charity from wealthier nations.

In 2023, President Bola Tinubu emphasised Nigeria's need for climate finance from developed countries and expressed the need for action on climate change. This can only go beyond mere wish when Nigeria wears her thinking cap in the negotiation table, deploying peculiar strategies like "*Border Green Alliance*" (BGA). The notion of *Border Green Alliance* (BGA) approach in championing Nigeria's regional climate action in the global circle holds many glaring prospects. Rather than being passive recipients of climate aid, Nigeria and its West African neighbors will spearhead the alliance to establish cross-border renewable energy grids to reduce reliance on fossil fuels; create a joint reforestation and afforestation initiative to combat desertification; advocate for regional climate financing mechanisms to attract green investors. With *Border Green Alliance* initiative, carbon markets can be expanded, climate accountability enforced and nations like Nigeria turn her climate challenges into economic and environmental opportunities even at the negotiation desk in the global scene.