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# Recommendations for the Dutch Africa strategy

**Based on input sessions organised by Partos and its members**

August 2022

# Introduction

There is every reason to be hopeful about the future of the African continent. This was the overarching conclusion of the input sessions for the Dutch government's upcoming Africa strategy, organised in June 2022 by Partos, the Dutch umbrella organisation for development cooperation, together with its members. Indeed, the input sessions provided ample evidence of positive developments in African countries: whether it is the fact that African smallholder farmers use their land, water and nutrients so efficiently that they feed entire communities or the fact that young African women and girls increasingly use online spaces to stand up for their rights.

At the same time, we should not ignore the current and future challenges facing the African continent. These were highlighted during the input sessions as well. With climate change threatening the subsistence of millions of people, health financing at stake due to interlocking crises and most of the labour force without decent work conditions, there are numerous challenges ahead. Partos welcomes the Dutch government's decision to formulate an Africa strategy that describes how the Netherlands can support African countries, civil society organisations (CSOs) and citizens in addressing these challenges.

Convinced of the ingenuity and the demonstrated impact of civil society in responding to such current and future challenges, African and Dutch CSOs decided to organise a series of online sessions. The purpose of these sessions was to provide recommendations for the Dutch Africa strategy, based on input from African and other experts. Each session was organised by a small group of CSOs with similar expertise, who jointly chose a theme, reached out to African experts and invited relevant stakeholders. As a result, the sessions greatly benefited from the insightful contributions of African panellists and participants. Afterwards, the organisers summarised the main recommendations for the Africa strategy formulated during their session. In this document, Partos has compiled these recommendations, presenting them in the order in which the sessions took place. In addition to the recommendations resulting from the input sessions, some recommendations concerning biodiversity were added as well.

Although the recommendations range from food security to digitalisation, several common themes can nevertheless be identified. These common themes have resulted in several overarching recommendations for the Africa strategy, namely:

1. **Ensure the meaningful participation of African citizens and civil society organisations in the creation of the Dutch Africa strategy.**
   After all, citizens and civil society have expert knowledge of the local context, know best what their local communities need and are well-placed to come up with solutions that address the needs of the most marginalized groups. In this regard, it has been good to see that the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs – which is tasked with preparing the Africa strategy – has attended every input session to hear the various contributions. Partos hopes that the Ministry will continue to actively consult African citizens and CSOs, encouraged by a broadly supported motion in the Dutch Parliament and a recent letter from the Dutch Advisory Council on International Affairs. To encourage African participation, the consultation process, as well as the strategy itself, should be available in multiple languages.

2. **For maximum sustainable impact, prioritise support to African civil society in all its diversity.**
   In line with the previous recommendation, civil society should also play a crucial role in the implementation of the Africa strategy through programmes funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its embassies. Given civil society's excellent knowledge of the local context, it knows which solutions will have a sustainable impact and it can make these solutions work. If the Dutch government is serious about making a long-term impact, supporting African civil society should thus be a priority. In this regard, it is important to be mindful of the enormous diversity of civil society, which includes trade unions, faith-based actors, formal civil society organisations as well as less formal groups that directly voice the needs of local communities. Funding programmes should be open to all of these actors.

3. **Respect the principle of policy coherence for development.**
   Too often, Dutch development cooperation efforts in African countries are counteracted by Dutch policies in other areas, such as trade, investment or taxation. For instance, in 2022, Uganda received € 39 million in Official Development Assistance (ODA) from the Netherlands. At the same time, through a tax avoidance construction facilitated by Dutch tax policies, Uganda risked [losing](#) € 236 million in tax revenue. It is imperative that the Africa strategy avoids such costly incoherencies and brings its trade, investment, tax, climate and other policies in line with its development cooperation objectives on the African continent.

4. **Establish clear links between different policy areas.**
   In line with the previous recommendation, the Africa strategy must reflect the intricate connections between policy areas. For instance, climate change robs people of their means of subsistence, thereby displacing them and fuelling conflicts. There is thus a clear link between climate policy, food security policy, and peace and security policy. Addressing challenges in one area requires action in other areas. The Africa strategy must make these links between policy areas explicit and refrain from treating policy areas separately. This also means that the strategy must be connected to other international strategy documents that are currently being prepared by the Dutch government (among others the global health strategy, natural resources strategy, human rights strategy et cetera), which requires close collaboration between the government departments involved.

5. **Focus on inclusivity and empower marginalised groups.**
   Projects and programmes supported by the Dutch government on the African continent must involve and empower marginalised groups, among others women, girls, the LGBTIQ+ community and people with a disability. Importantly, according to the principle of intersectionality, people can and do belong to multiple marginalised groups at the same time. Empowering marginalised groups allows communities to thrive as a whole and ensures that no one is left behind.

6. **Adopt a human rights-based approach.**
   Human rights must be a guiding principle throughout the Africa strategy. This means that Dutch-supported projects and programmes on the African continent must always respect human rights. However, a human rights-based approach requires more than a mere do-no-harm policy. A true commitment to these rights also requires active support to human rights defenders (especially when they are being repressed), the adoption of mandatory due diligence and Corporate Social Responsibility laws, calling out human rights violations

perpetrated by governments, companies and other actors and being an international advocate for human rights (both in bilateral relations with African governments and in multilateral bodies such as the United Nations).

7. **Establish equal partnerships with African governments, while also promoting good governance and raising relevant concerns.**
   The Dutch government must engage in meaningful dialogue and equal partnerships with its African counterparts. Yet, as is common practice between equals, it should not hesitate to raise concerns around civic space restrictions, repression of civil society or human rights violations. In addition, it should attempt to promote good governance both in its bilateral relations with African governments and by supporting local institutions that track and report on good governance.

8. **The private sector has an important role to play, but engagement with private actors must take place according to clear rules of engagement.**
   The private sector can complement the role of governments and can thus play an important role in delivering the objectives of the Africa strategy. However, private involvement does not automatically yield desirable outcomes. Furthermore, mutual expectations between the African private sector and African governments must be managed. Therefore, as one of the first steps in the implementation of the Africa strategy, the Dutch government must develop clear rules for engagement with the private sector. These rules must depend on the particular type of private actor involved. After all, the private sector includes a wide range of actors, including small and medium-sized enterprises, multinational corporations et cetera.

## Themes

Each section of this document contains the practical details of the respective session, as well as a list of panellists and the main recommendations formulated during the session. Some recommendations concerning biodiversity have been added as well.

1. Civic space
2. Climate justice
3. Food security
4. Gender equality
5. Health systems
6. Youth employment and private sector development
7. Peace and security
8. Due diligence and fair work
9. Digitalisation
10. Biodiversity loss

# 1. Civic space

Date:                  June 2, 2022
Organised by:          Breed Mensenrechten Overleg (BMO), Prisma and Partos
Speakers:              David Kodé (Civicus), Diana Nabiruma (Africa Institute for Energy
                       Governance - AFIEGO) and Rhoda Udanyi (Scripture Union West Africa)

During the first part of the session, the panel discussed the question of how the Netherlands can commit to a 'safe and enabling civic space' in Africa and how this should be reflected in the Dutch Africa strategy. The panel's main recommendations are summarised below.

**Recommendations – Panel**

1. **Enter into meaningful dialogue with authorities.**
   According to the panel, the Dutch government must enter into meaningful dialogue with African governments to advocate for the added value of an enabled and open civic space, including in the context of economic and trade relations. Concerns around civic space restrictions should be raised regularly, especially ahead of critical moments, such as elections or constitutional changes, as these occurrences have the potential to foster change and open up civic space. Repression of civil society should not be tolerated, and in situations where human rights defenders are threatened or arrested, representatives of the Dutch government should show public support to discourage further repression and embolden civil society actors to continue their work. In cases of stressful dialogue because of ongoing conflicts, the Netherlands should profile itself as a zero-tolerance actor, emphasising the importance of resolving conflicts and allowing civic actors to solve conflicts at local levels.

2. **Engage with civil society itself.**
   It is important to leave no one behind. Therefore, the Dutch Government should actively engage with and offer support to a variety of local civil society actors, including less formal groups who can express the needs of local communities. Moreover, it is important to recognise the intersections of different rights and facilitate partnerships between those working on socio-economic rights and human rights groups, and equip them to do what they do best. Specific attention and dialogue are required for faith-based actors, who are at the grassroots of the community since more than 80% of the population in Africa is religious and religion plays a crucial role in many lives. The inclusion of local civil society, such as faith-based actors, will make interventions sustainable.

3. **Build on existing efforts.**
   According to the panel, the Netherlands should make sure to learn from its previous interventions and evaluate the impact of its previous efforts in different countries. It is important to build on previous gains and to support organisations that can transform these gains into narratives for positive change, to achieve lasting improvements.

After the panel discussion, the break-out discussions led to a wide array of recommendations from the different participants. A summary follows below.

4. **Stand up for press freedom.**
   Many participants stressed the importance of a free press. The Netherlands should ensure in its policies that journalists and other media makers are enabled to do their work freely and to assist other civil society actors in making their voices heard.

5. **Be mindful of the diversity of civil society.**
   Another important point that was raised is the diversity of civil society. Civil society consists of many different actors in many different environments. As such, a coherent top-down policy by the Dutch government will not work if it wants to address all facets of civic space. Rather, the Dutch government should foster dialogues both between and with different civil society actors.

6. **Take a human rights-based approach.**
   If the Dutch government wants to improve civic space, it should apply a human rights-based approach. This applies to trade policies as well. Such a human rights-based approach can be based, for example, on mandatory due diligence and Corporate Social Responsibility laws which protect human rights and the environment, which are both vital for reducing conflict and achieving a healthy civic space. Existing treaties should be used to empower local organisations and groups, mainly if they are vulnerable.

7. **Consult local civil society organisations.**
   The last main recommendation of the participants was the importance of local consultation. Local civil society organisations should be consulted about the Africa strategy of the Netherlands, as they know the local contexts best and can provide useful insights into how to achieve holistic and optimal results.

## 2. Climate justice

Date:           June 7, 2022
Organised by:   Cordaid, ZOA, Oxfam and CARE
Speakers:       Juliet Suliwa (Oxfam GB), Marlene Achoki (CARE International UK), Pim de
                Beer (IOB), Marit van Zomeren (IOB), Marius Troost (Both ENDS), Rigobert
                Minani (REBAC) and Atsbha Gebrekidan (ZOA Ethiopia)

### Loss and damage – *Juliet Suliwa (Oxfam GB)*

The recent IPCC impacts report shows extreme climatic events have been observed in all regions, with unprecedented consequences. Loss and damage (L&D) due to climate change are driving up inequality in the world's poorest countries and communities. The causes and consequences of the climate crisis are unequal; wealthy countries are responsible for 79% of emissions (from 1850-2013) and 100 companies are responsible for more than 70% of emissions worldwide since 1978. Establishing a Loss & Damage Finance Facility is not only a moral and just obligation, but it also makes political and economic sense:

- The costs will add up since disasters are projected to increase in the near future. Accepting financial responsibility for loss and damage (L&D) stimulates investment in mitigation and adaptation now, as this will reduce much higher costs in the future;
- Litigation will increasingly replace collaborative efforts. For instance, Small Island States are using legal levers to hold historical polluters accountable;
- L&D will affect the global economy and erode development gains. If they occur in one region, this will have carryover effects in others;
- Failure to take action on L&D will delay global mitigation and adaptation actions since the ability of the rich and the poor to absorb shocks differs.
- Inaction will further erode global trust in institutions, which is already fragile due to vaccine inequality and the failure to achieve the USD 100 billion climate finance goal.

### Recommendations

1. **The Dutch government needs to comprehensively address loss and damage.**
   It must do so through:
   - the establishment of a facility for finance to address L&D;
   - ensuring L&D becomes a core element of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change Global Stocktake;
   - the inclusion of L&D in the new quantified climate finance goal post-2025;
   - L&D becoming a standing agenda item at future UNFCC Conferences of the Parties (COPs).

### The adaptation gap in Africa - *Marlene Achoki (CARE International UK)*

The recent IPCC impact report shows that although the African continent has contributed very little to global emissions (around 4%), it will be affected more by the impacts of climate change than any other continent. Adaptation costs in low-income countries will reach up to 127 billion USD and Africa needs up to 86 billion USD every year by 2030 to be able to address the impacts of climate change, build resilience and strengthen capacities for communities. High and middle-income countries have a responsibility under the Paris Agreement to assist low-income countries to cope with climate change by mobilizing climate finance. Unfortunately, the continent's adaptation challenges are far from being met due to a huge gap in adaptation finance, a lack of inclusive climate action planning and decision-making, a focus on short-term rather than long-term planning, and a lack of investment in African locally-led initiatives and institutions.

## Recommendations

2.  **Climate adaptation priorities in the Dutch Africa strategy must be based on a robust understanding of climate risks and uncertainties in areas to be reached.**
    Combining local, traditional, indigenous, intergenerational and scientific knowledge will result in a set of future climate scenarios that will address the needs of all relevant groups.

3.  **Invest in and improve the capacities of local institutions and communities.**
    They understand climate risks, can generate solutions and can independently facilitate and manage long-term adaptation initiatives.

4.  **Unintended costs and harm through maladaptation need to be avoided.**

## Climate finance and ODA blended finance - *Pim de Beer and Marit van Zomeren (IOB)*

According to the 2021 IOB evaluation of climate finance, 60% of Dutch public climate finance was spent in low-income countries (mostly in Africa), and 69% on adaptation. This was mainly done through climate mainstreaming in activities with other development objectives. The IOB study, however, noted a lack of strategic assessment of how to increase climate resilience at the start of a project, limiting the climate adaptation impact of projects. Moreover, target groups - women, poor and vulnerable groups, farmers and youth - are not consistently included in project design, approval, monitoring and reporting.

The IOB study also looked into the additionality of ODA in blended finance for climate action. It found that not all climate action can be supported by blended finance. Blended finance fills a niche of temporary support between what can be funded commercially (e.g. activities within the energy sector) and what requires continued public support (e.g. public activities in the water sector). The possibilities for commercial climate finance also depend on the country: for projects to be viable, less public finance is needed in middle-income countries. In lower-income countries and fragile states, concessional finance will remain necessary, especially for adaptation.

## Recommendations

5.  **Fully integrate climate considerations into policy planning (e.g. the Africa strategy) and projects.**
    This can be achieved by focusing more strategically on climate change resilience and reaching vulnerable communities/target groups at the start while keeping a clear focus on lower-income countries and climate adaptation.

6.  **Promote policy coherence for development and avoid negative climate effects of Dutch development cooperation as well as other Dutch policies.**
    To that end, assess trade-offs in advance and integrate them into long-term strategies.

7.  **Use private funding where possible and public funding where needed**.
    Draft a strategy to identify and address the gap between public and private funding. Where private finance is possible, invest in an enabling environment for companies to engage and develop climate action.

### Dutch export credit agencies and climate change mitigation - *Marius Troost (Both ENDS)*

In November 2021, during the COP in Glasgow, the Netherlands and 33 other countries signed a declaration to stop all public support for fossil projects by the end of 2022. This also included fossil fuel support through Export Credit Agencies (ECAs), government-backed institutions that provide insurance for domestic companies against risks of non-payment for international projects. Although necessary, stopping Dutch ECA support for fossil fuels does not directly mean that ECA support will always be beneficial for the communities living in the areas where projects take place. Projects supported by ECAs – even when 'green' – are often so large that they almost inevitably harm human rights, women's rights or biodiversity. Accordingly, while we need to move away from fossil fuels towards renewables, we must support a just transition.

8. **ECA support by the Dutch government needs to be based on the principles of a just transition.**
   Such support must adhere to the following key values: respect for human rights and do no harm principles, the promotion of equitable, inclusive and community-led renewable energy development, and the building of resilience with an intersectional and gender perspective.

### Addressing the link between climate change and conflict - *Rigobert Minani (REBAC) and Atsbha Gebrekidan (ZOA Ethiopia)*

Both speakers highlighted the indirect and more direct linkages between the impact of climate change and conflict in Africa. For example, Rigobert explained that, since the 1960s, Lake Chad has lost 90% of its contents, resulting in a loss of livelihood for millions of people. Pastoralist communities are forced to move from the Sahel to East Africa while bringing arms, which leads to tensions with local communities. Furthermore, apart from the US and the EU, Russia, China and India are also becoming involved in natural resource extraction, fuelling ongoing conflicts with local communities caught in between. Atsbha Gebrekidan spoke about the impact of drought on internal conflicts in Ethiopia, with the most remote and vulnerable people, including women and children, being negatively affected. Ethiopia now has the most displaced people in the world, fuelling ethnic conflicts.

9. **Comprehensively address the link between climate and conflict.**
   To that end, the Netherlands should increase funding for:
   - triple nexus programming strategies (relief, development and peacebuilding) to resolve drought and conflict-related disasters that trigger migration;
   - sustainable solutions to the drought and conflict disasters in the Horn of Africa, especially in Somalia, Ethiopia and Northern Kenya, such as integrated/sustainable water (shade) management or the introduction of disaster/drought tolerant agriculture practices (Climate Smart Agriculture);
   - immediate lifesaving programs in agriculture, water supply, animal feed, animal vet supply, and link with recovery programming such as peacebuilding, and natural resource management;
   - job-creating activities (green jobs), specifically for youths who are becoming actively involved in conflict issues and who must be trained on livelihood and employability actions;
   - Reforestation programs that aim to redress the desertification around the Sahara and Kalahari deserts, affecting forest areas and community livelihoods in Central Africa;
   - Local community organisations that strengthen local communities in formulating and voicing concerns to local governments.

## 3. Food security

Date:              June 9, 2022
Organised by:      Woord en Daad, Oxfam Novib and The Hunger Project
Speakers:          Dejene Minliku (Organisation for Rehabilitation and Development - ORDA),
                   Donald Ola Smart (Mountain Lion Agriculture), Rosinah Mbenya
                   (Participatory Ecological Land Use Management - PELUM), Andrew Mushita
                   (Community Technology Development Trust - CDTD) and Peter
                   Gildemacher (Royal Tropical Institute KIT)

On June 9, we entered into a dialogue about the challenge of global food security with a group of representatives of partner organisations from Zimbabwe, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Sierra Leone. One of the recurring themes during the session was that there should be a focus on regional trade promotion in the Africa strategy. Several speakers suggested that we should reject the notion that the food security situation on the African continent is all doom and gloom. Yes, there are worrying developments, but higher food prices have also meant that food has become a business opportunity for smallholder farmers in some contexts. We have a collective job ahead of us to rebrand agriculture: make it sexy and popular, as food is great and important. Young people in Africa must begin to see that running a productive farm is cool! Dutch policymakers should pledge their commitment to the promotion of local sourcing by institutional food buyers, among other things. Local markets should come first, procurement is hardly inclusive or sustainable. Ad-hoc political responses to national food shortages – both internationally and domestically –can have good short-term results, but do not fix the problem of import dependency and an unsustainable global food system. Together, we have formulated some recommendations.

## Recommendations

1. **Take a food systems approach, connecting food security, nutrition, agricultural business development and (environmental) sustainability.**
   - Opt for a multi-sectoral approach, including the private sector;
   - Quality, not quantity. There's nothing wrong with making innovative food business models scalable, but it should be about producing good, safe and nutritious food;
   - Around 45% of deaths among children under five years of age are linked to undernutrition. Therefore, prioritize the fight against under-nutrition among under-five children.

2. **Appreciate domestic and regional food chains as major development opportunities.**
   - Adopt a strong focus on food import substitution as a business opportunity;
   - Stop over-focusing on export crops – these are important, but there must be a balance with local and regional markets;
   - Dismiss the global free trade doctrine for food, since African smallholder farmers are not competitive with global markets. Support modest, predictable and stable national tariff barriers on food crops, to promote local innovation and investments;
   - Embrace and build on local food market systems.

3. **Embrace family farms as a robust system contributing to food security, price stability and economic development.**
   Some important elements of this approach would be:
   - Real investment in family farming;
   - Focus on resilience;
   - Food sovereignty, appreciation of local knowledge, seed systems and food systems;

- Soil fertility;
- Seed systems for smallholder farmers;
- Worry about improving the local seed systems before worrying about regional and global harmonisation;
- There is no evidence for the doctrine that larger farms and fields use resources more effectively. Smallholders can be efficient food producers (using land, water and nutrients efficiently);
- Support smallholder producers with the professionalization and optimization of their production systems, as well as the large-scale roll-out of farmer field schools;
- Green and sustainable does not mean using any fertilizer or pesticides in Sub-Saharan Africa. It means using them sparsely and effectively;
- Optimizing land use is essential for nature conservation and food security.

4. **Support the specialisation and professionalisation of the inputs and food industry (and do not assume that farmers can do everything).**
Do not focus on the cottage industry. Instead, focus on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and business development in seed, inputs, trade and processing.

5. **Avoid naivety about collaboration with public actors.**
- Yes, we should strive for an equal partnership, but we should also encourage good governance;
- Work with the government, but do not have blind trust in all African public institutions. Food is political and food is business;
- Engage with civil society as much as possible. CSOs are often best equipped to estimate the trustworthiness of local institutions and are indispensable partners when it comes to lobby and advocacy towards the government;
- Try to link directly to farmers, civil society organisations and the private sector.

## 4. Gender equality

Date:            June 16, 2022
Organised by:    Plan Nederland, Cordaid and WO=MEN Dutch Gender Platform
Speakers:        Marieke van Egmond (IOB), Paul de Nooijer (IOB), Helen Kezie Nwoha
                 (Women's International Peace Centre – WIPC), Anne Kwakkenbos (Cordaid),
                 Tinotenda Hondo (Plan International), Phionah Kyokusiima (Action Alliance
                 Uganda) and Hellen Alobo (Plan International South Sudan), Wanja Ngure
                 (UHAI)

## Recommendations

### Gender mainstreaming and the need for a gender transformative approach

1. **Develop clear criteria for the desired outcomes and impact of gender mainstreaming.**
   Gender mainstreaming is not a goal in itself but a means to an end. There is a need for clear
   criteria and understanding to define desired outcomes and track impact once gender
   mainstreaming is achieved. For clear criteria, we refer to the indicators of the third European
   Gender Action Plan (GAP-III), the IOB evaluation 'Gender mainstreaming in the Dutch Ministry
   of Foreign Affairs' and the four R's of the Dutch feminist foreign policy.

2. **Champion a gender transformative and intersectional approach.**
   In the Africa strategy, the Dutch government should incorporate a gender transformative and
   intersectional approach, which takes into account the specific needs of women, men, girls,
   boys and non-binary people, to be ambitious, progressive and future-proof.

3. **Address root causes and systemic issues of inequality.**
   Therefore, the strategy must address root causes and embedded systemic issues of inequality,
   taking into account the various intersections, and looking at transforming power dynamics.
   This includes removing structural barriers to women's, men's, girls', boys' and non-binary
   people's access to SRHR services, decision-making at all political levels, financial loans and
   land.  access to SRHR services, decision-making at all political levels, financial loans and land.

4. **Take a comprehensive approach to gender mainstreaming (incorporating it in every
   project phase) and be realistic about results.**
   If gender mainstreaming is to be truly transformative – gender mainstreaming *can* indeed
   contribute to gender equality – a comprehensive approach is needed from the initial phase of
   project/policy design to completion and meta-evaluations. Be realistic about achieving
   transformative change in short-term and small-scale projects.

### An inclusive Africa strategy with the needs and voices of communities at its core

5. **Listen to and incorporate the voices of African communities in all their diversity.**
   An inclusive Africa strategy, that responds to the needs of people in communities (in all their
   diversities, women, men, girls, boys and non-binary) requires listening and incorporating the
   voices from these very communities to address poverty and inequality. One should refrain from
   donor-driven or supply-driven policies.

### A gender perspective on trade and economic empowerment

6. **When it comes to doing business with Africa, empower women, youth and LGBTIQ+ people.**
   Concerning doing business with Africa, the Africa strategy must empower women and youth, as well as people from the LGBTIQ+ community. Its aim must be to improve the lives of families and improve the access of women, girls and non-binary people to and their control of resources such as land. To tackle homelessness, hunger and poverty, the strategy must aim to remove existing (patriarchal) barriers to marginalised people's access to and control of resources.

7. **Support businesses that uphold women's dignity and rights and adopt a strong national due diligence law that incorporates gender.**
   The Dutch Africa strategy must support businesses that uphold women's dignity and rights and adopt a strong national due diligence law as one of its pillars. Make sure that the new Dutch due diligence framework structurally incorporates a gender lens in each step of the due diligence process.

### Countering gender-based violence (GBV) as a driver of conflict

8. **Tackle all forms of gender-based violence as drivers of conflict.**
   Tackling issues related to GBV, which are the drivers of many issues concerning inequality, is vital for any Africa strategy. In promoting peace, security and stability, the Africa strategy must address all forms of GBV, such as sexual GBV and Child Early and Forced Marriages, as these are drivers of conflict. The strategy must also promote the participation of women in peace processes.

## 5. Health systems

Date:                June 21, 2022
Organised by:        Cordaid (on behalf of the Global Health Alliance)
Speakers:            Lydia Selby (former CEO of National Health Insurance Authority Ghana),
                     Ellen van de Poel (World Bank Group) and Kalipso Chalkidou (The Global
                     Fund and Imperial College London)

This session aimed to bring together members active in global health to discuss the crucial role of health financing for health system strengthening and universal health coverage (UHC) in Africa to support the development of the Dutch Africa strategy. To inform the discussion, we invited expert speakers on health financing:

### Lydia Selby – former CEO of National Health Insurance Authority Ghana

Key messages shared by Lydia Selby linked the importance of promoting ownership over health decisions by citizens, the integration of donor funding into systems that already exist, and working within the fiscal space of the country. Furthermore, health actors need to use evidence to build the case of why investing in health is a priority – this is why data is key to simplifying the tracking of health expenditure and implementation. Finally, Selby addressed how COVID-19 has encouraged countries to build up internal manufacturing standards and increase local manufacturing of medicines and commodities.

### Ellen van de Poel – World Bank Group

Key messages shared by Ellen van de Poel relate to the challenges in raising domestic resources. This needs to be done realistically, according to the fiscal space of the country involved and connected to a macroeconomic strategy. In addition, funding must be integrated and not fragmented. Van de Poel also highlighted the importance of good data on fund flows – both from donors and governments – for efficiency discussions. In addition, alignment with the channels and systems that governments use is essential for scale-up. Furthermore, getting more flexible resources to frontline facilities with the right accountability measures in place is always a good idea. In addition, Van de Poel underlined the importance of the alignment agenda: development partners and donors need to push this forward, as pooled financing in countries can be a powerful tool to align resources. Finally, donors and multilaterals must move from attribution to contribution, as the fixation on attribution doesn't help the overall agenda for alignment.

### Kalipso Chalkidou - The Global Fund and Imperial College London

Kalipso Chalkidou addressed the current issues facing health financing. Despite COVID highlighting the importance of health, there are still issues that hinder health financing efforts. There is a perfect storm brewing, with inflation, the Ukraine crisis, devaluation of currencies, ballooning of debt and debt servicing, amongst others. Because of these uncertainties and worries, Chalkidou pointed out that our allocation of resources must become more efficient. In doing so, we need to keep the goal of equity in mind. She further highlighted the importance of data for managing a country's performance and for holding it accountable. In addition, pooling resources for health makes sense, but we should consider countries' ability to absorb resources as well. Finally, we need to think about how to provide resources while at the same time strengthening these countries' systems.

## Recommendations

Breakout session 1: What are the experiences and lessons learned from past and current health financing systems in sub-Saharan Africa, in building resilient health systems to contribute to stimulating strong and universally accessible primary health care and extending access to care?

1. **Highlight the importance of health financing and be aware of the discrepancy between the local level and the central level.**

2. **Consider to what extent the Netherlands can advise other countries.**

3. **Work with local partners and civil society organisations (capacity-building).**
   This would ensure that plans are developed at national levels and that there is an optimal understanding of context.

4. **Focus on integrating existing health systems.**
   We need to integrate existing systems and make sure that countries take the lead in developing their plans.

5. **Make sure that finance reaches facility and primary health care level, with appropriate accountability.**

Breakout session 2: What are the key challenges faced by governments in mobilizing financing for health and how can these challenges be addressed? How can we ensure the sustainability of health financing for continuity of equitable access, affordability of health care and better impact?

6. **Keep in mind the limited fiscal space of some African countries.**
   Normally, there is a focus on infrastructure (like hospitals) rather than the software that facilitates the use of healthcare.

7. **Provide clarity and guidance as to the different funding streams for global health.**
   There are many competing Dutch funding streams for global health and there are ODA budget tensions as well. Global health could be financed by other ministries too.

8. **Share expertise in terms of 1) monitoring successes in health expenditure and 2) domestic health financing.**
   There is some scepticism concerning what the Netherlands can do to stimulate domestic resource mobilisation for health. One thing that it could do is share expertise in terms of data monitoring of health expenditure successes, as well as share expertise on how domestic health financing could be better promoted domestically.

9. **Be an international advocate for global health.**
   The Dutch government could be a global health advocate by talking to other governments about the importance of health investment, sharing good practices with other countries and advising them on how to use these good practices in their advocacy strategy.

10. **Provide sustainable and reliable funding to global health institutions.**
    The Netherlands needs to provide proper, sustainable and reliable funding to international institutions that work in global health, like the Global Fund and the Global Financing Facility. It should also support these institutions by linking their investments to the question of domestic

resource mobilisation and the question of what countries can do domestically. Also, it is key that these institutions' efforts correspond to countries' abilities and agendas.

Breakout session 3: What are the key challenges that governments face when making strategic decisions for purchasing care?

Since not many participants were familiar with the issue of purchasing, the discussion mainly covered other topics.

11. **Interventions and programmes need to be as inclusive as possible.**
It's important that when we talk about any intervention or programme, we need to make sure they are as inclusive as possible. Inclusivity does not need to be expensive. It is key that the Netherlands become an advocate for inclusivity.

12. **Ongoing policy processes such as the development of the Africa strategy and the global health strategy must be interconnected.**
Ongoing policy processes (e.g. Africa strategy, Global Health Strategy, etc.) must not take place in silos. Competition between these processes must be avoided.

Breakout session 4: What is the role of technology in strengthening health financing systems to deliver UHC?

13. **Technology is useful for understanding context, for real-time data collection, processing and decision making, the decentralisation of financing and for making health systems more agile.**

Breakout session 5: What is the role of the private sector in health financing and UHC? How can the private sector be leveraged to attract funding and investment for the health sector? What are the risks and challenges for governments around equitable accessibility and health as a human right when working with the private sector?

14. **The private sector can complement the role of governments.**
The private sector must be seen as an entity that complements the role of governments. We should not accept the assumption that private sector engagement automatically equals good outcomes. It's important to think about equity in access, not just about access for those who can pay.

15. **The type of private actor involved has consequences for the rules of engagement.**
It's important to determine the type of private actor involved (e.g. private for profit, private not for profit, multinationals, etc), as this makes a difference in the rules of engagement applicable to that actor.

16. **Develop clear rules for engagement with the private sector.**
The private sector can contribute towards innovation in service delivery and roll-out. In doing so, it can be complementary to public sector service delivery. However, there must be clear rules for engagement with the private sector, so that mutual expectations between the government and the private sector can be managed.

## 6.  Youth employment and private sector development

Date:                June 23, 2022
Organised by:        Woord en Daad, Edukans, VSO, Dorcas and Red een Kind
Speakers:            Nhial Majur Nhial (Dorcas South Sudan), Lindah Cherop (Edukans Kenya),
                     Lucy Schalkwijk (Liliane Foundation), Robert Jjuuko (researcher,
                     educationist and development consultant) and Hyacinthe Ndolenodji (Job
                     Booster Chad, social enterprise Woord en Daad)

### First round: How to match demand and supply in the African labour market?

During this round, multiple speakers emphasized the importance of an inclusive approach towards TVET and skills training. Involving persons with a disability and other marginalized youth allows the community to thrive as a whole, and ensures that 'No One is Left Behind'. By investing in improving the quality, relevance, inclusiveness and labour market linkages of TVETs and skills, the Netherlands can also contribute to ensuring that youth become self-reliant and can create job opportunities for themselves. In this regard, it is essential to enhance inclusion within the mainstream TVET sector. Separate special education structures for people with a disability has their role, but it is also crucial that mainstream TVET is more inclusive. One could achieve this by ensuring that 'regular' programs comply with norms enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with a Disability (CRPD).

In addition, speakers reiterated that the issue of matching labour demand and supply needs to be addressed urgently. There is a great number of young people who enter the labour market, but there are not enough jobs for all of them. In many African countries, over 3 in every 4 people entering the labour market do so through informal jobs. Often, in these jobs, labour conditions are lacking and the decency of the work is not ensured. Decent work with the right conditions should have a central role in the Africa strategy. However, not just any jobs should be created, since current TVET programs are not always tailored to meet market demands. One way to change this is to enable local (young) entrepreneurs to create more work-based learning opportunities so that there are more diverse opportunities in the labour market. Also, closer coordination between TVET-centres and factories/businesses is needed to better coordinate the supply and demand of labour skills. This also demands a focus on the future of the labour market. In practice, this could mean a more prominent place for digital and soft skills.

### Second round: Youth participation, leadership and private sector development

Regarding youth leadership, the panellists agreed that youth should be empowered and involved in the development of their communities. The Dutch government must ensure the meaningful involvement and participation of young Africans with different backgrounds in the creation of the Africa strategy.

Regarding private sector development, the panellists reiterated that development has to be as inclusive as possible. In most African countries, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are the backbone of the economy. But many development projects focus on larger companies. This often does not benefit local communities as much. Access to finance should be more inclusive and should be facilitated for start-ups and entrepreneurs. Furthermore, as for SMEs, it is important to ensure that the work that is created is decent and inclusively accessible.

If the informal sector is left out in the Africa strategy, the Dutch government will miss its targets, because a large part of the economy and population is active there. This does not mean that informal companies should remain informal forever. After all, Dutch support could help them move from the informal to the formal sector, or, for instance, help them acquire support from their government. The link between non-formal and formal TVET is also important in terms of inclusion. People with disabilities or very poor people are more likely to drop out of the formal schooling system and end up in the informal system. Consequently, the formal and informal sectors should be linked and it must become easier to switch from one to the other.

## Recommendations

1. **CSOs should be invited to conversations between the government and the private sector, and be treated as equal partners.**
   CSOs have good access to the most marginalised, often know the local context best and can ensure the voices of marginalised people are heard. They can create an enabling environment in which youth have access to markets and capital.

2. **Within TVET, there should be more focus on inclusivity, so that all young people have access to proper training.**
   All young people, regardless of their background, gender, sexual orientation, means or other identity factors, must have access to proper TVET. This can be achieved by ensuring that 'regular' programs comply with CRPD norms. Additionally, the link between informal and formal schooling/TVET systems should be strengthened, so that people that have dropped out of the formal system can more easily return.

3. **Closer coordination between TVET centres and factories/businesses is needed.**
   This helps to better coordinate the supply and demand of labour skills. In rural areas, this might be different, as opportunities there are mostly found in the agricultural sector. Accordingly, skills training programs should be adapted to that reality.

4. **Funding schemes must be accessible for local SMEs.**
   Funding schemes must be as accessible for local SMEs as they are for large (Dutch) companies. In addition, they should take into account the added value of public-private partnerships in which CSOs, companies and governments cooperate. This will make development efforts more inclusive, given that SMEs are locally rooted, and will ensure that 'No One is Left Behind'. However, preference should be given to those SMEs that have scaling potential.

5. **The Africa strategy should be developed and implemented together with young people from African countries.**
   Youth participation should be organised in a meaningful way with people from different backgrounds being able to give input throughout the process. In this regard, the Ministry must live up to the Youth@Heart principles.

## 7.  Peace and security

Date:              June 27, 2022
Organised by:      CARE, Cordaid and PAX
Speakers:          Helen Kezie-Nwoha (Women's International Peace Centre - WIPC), Niagalé
                   Bagayoko (African Security Sector Network - ASSN), Levina Addae-Mensah
                   (West Africa Network for Peacebuilding - WANEP) and Fathima Azmiya
                   Badurdeen (Technical University of Mombasa and International Centre for
                   Counter-Terrorism)

Overall, the discussion converged around the idea that the Dutch government's Africa strategy needs to be based on African realities and the priorities of African citizens. Citizens' highest priority is security and stability in their communities and wider society: an environment that allows them to build their future. Furthermore, investing in security and stability in Africa is the best way to serve the interests of citizens and the corporate sector in the Netherlands and Europe.

## Recommendations

1. **The focus should not be on hard security, but rather on the protection of civilians and human security.**
   This will prioritise the voice of citizens, especially those of women, youth, refugees and IDPs, in security issues and aligns with the current Integrated Foreign and Security Policy (GBVS). NL should invest in instruments like local peacebuilding, reconciliation and transitional justice, and follow up on relevant UN instruments: UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security.

2. **The promotion of women's rights and the protection of women's rights defenders should be preconditions for development assistance to African focus countries.**
   As part of defending civic space, the Dutch government should set the promotion of women's rights and the protection of women's rights defenders as preconditions for development assistance to focus on countries in Africa. This also aligns with the recently adopted Feminist Foreign Policy. The promotion of women's rights must include support for holistic community approaches, engaging men and boys to work on changing social norms, creating space for women's political engagement, and fighting sexual and gender-based violence. Sustainable peace, stability and security are built on inclusive, bottom-up processes.

3. **Support African institutions that track and report on good governance and stability on the African continent.**
   The Dutch government should support African institutions that track and report on good (inclusive, transparent, accountable) governance and stability on the African continent.

4. **Security and justice programmes should be based on specific circumstances in focus countries.**
   Context matters. The Netherlands should design security and justice programmes based on the specific circumstances in focus countries, as opposed to preconceived, standardized 'one size fits all' approaches. What is more, it should encourage other donors to do the same. Working on contextualized security means investing more in understanding local conflict dynamics, displacement drivers and root causes. It also means generating local knowledge via existing platforms and networks. This should include a stronger analysis of and strategic response to

the negative aspects of the growing influence of Russia and China as well as regional powers in Africa.

5. **The Dutch Africa strategy should be based on the aspiration to have a truly equal relationship with African countries and must try to find a proper balance between the supply of and demand for development interventions.**

6. **Encourage local ownership of and participation in the design and implementation of the Africa strategy.**
   To that end, the consultation process, as well as the strategy itself, should be available and accessible in multiple languages.

7. **Inclusive peace processes and efforts towards secure and stable societies are preconditions for the eradication of poverty and for development that benefits all.**
   An OECD analysis quoted in the Pathways for Peace study by the World Bank and UNDP (2018) predicts that more than half of the world's poor will be living in countries affected by high levels of violent conflict. Many of these countries can be found in Africa. Contextualised analysis of conflict, power relations, processes of exclusion and inequalities will need to be the starting point of any strategy for Africa. Based on such an analysis, the Dutch government would be well-placed to provide support when it comes to peace, security and stability. Furthermore, to contribute to that goal, the government can make use of a civil society sector with strong networks in Africa.

## 8. Due diligence and fair work

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| Date: | June 28, 2022 |
| Organised by: | MVO Platform and Mondiaal FNV |
| Speakers: | Nyaradzo Mutonhori (Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association), Darlington Chidarara (ActionAid Zimbabwe), Lucia van Westerlaak (FNV), Janepher Nassali (Uganda Horticulture, Industrial, Service Providers and Allied Workers Union), Caroline Khamati Mugalla (East African Trade Union Confederation) and Tetteh Hormeku-Ajei (Third World Network-Africa) |

Speakers from civil society organisations in Zimbabwe, Uganda and regional offices were very much on the same page as it comes to the importance of Responsible Business Conduct (RBC). Companies have to behave responsibly, seek community development, respect human rights and protect the environment. This is still not standard practice in African countries and the (ever-growing) foreign direct investments make this even more important. Companies entering the continent should implement human rights due diligence[1] processes in line with the OECD *Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises* and United Nations Guiding Principles.

### Risks for people and the environment

Human rights risks related to mining in Zimbabwe show how important it is that companies are held to account. The loss of livestock due to water pollution seriously impacts local communities. Women are exposed to hazardous chemicals and communities suffer devastating environmental and socio-economic consequences. Company activity on the African continent risks affecting smallholder farming, artisanal mining and conflict-affected areas.

### Coherence, coherence, coherence

Coherence between Dutch foreign trade policy (through the European Commission's positions in international trade negotiations such as the WTO) and the proclaimed objectives of Dutch development cooperation in African countries is still very important and lacking. The Netherlands is serious about the Sustainable Development Goals and shows its involvement. However, trade and investment regimes still focus on securing profits for corporations and foreign investors above all else, sometimes ignoring the negative impact these regimes can have on African countries. Therefore, the Netherlands should bring its trade and investment policy in line with its development cooperation efforts, thereby ensuring policy coherence for development.

### Recommendations

1. **The Africa strategy must align with the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises on Responsible Business Conduct, which should be a cross-cutting standard.**
   Dutch MPs recently adopted a motion which calls on the government to put the OECD Guidelines at the heart of the Africa strategy. This means that all policy measures should be coherent with the letter and the spirit of the OECD Guidelines and that RBC should be a cross-cutting issue in the strategy. A thorough overview of social and environmental risks on the

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[1] The *OECD Guidelines* expect companies to carry out risk-based due diligence: "to identify, prevent and mitigate actual and potential adverse impacts" on all matters covered by the guidelines (e.g. human rights, environment, labour rights). Due diligence implies more than just an assessment of risks for the company, the purpose is to understand and address risks and abuses that the company's activities pose to rights holders, including in its supply chain and through its other business relationships. Companies are also expected to be transparent about the specific measures they have taken to prevent or mitigate each of those risks and impacts.

country level should be included in the Africa strategy. The government should lead by example and show how it lives up to its duty to protect human rights.

2. **The Africa strategy should promote the rights of freedom of association and collective bargaining in all (high-risk) sectors.**
   The enabling rights of freedom of association and collective bargaining are crucial to making structural improvements in working conditions. Therefore, the Africa strategy should promote these rights in all (high-risk) sectors.

3. **Meaningful engagement and proactive consultation with stakeholders and the provision of remedies for affected communities should receive special attention.**
   Meaningful engagement and proactive consultation with workers, trade unions, local community members, including youth, and other relevant or affected stakeholders are key to doing business right. The same goes for providing a remedy for affected communities in vulnerable situations. These issues should receive special, tailored attention in the Africa strategy.

4. **Adopt and promote binding national and European due diligence measures.**
   A 'smart mix' of policy instruments that aim at improving RBC in Africa should include binding measures, namely national and European mandatory due diligence. This legislation should be in line with the OECD Guidelines. Protection of human rights defenders, gender-sensitive due diligence obligations and enabling labour rights should be included in the law.

5. **In the Africa strategy, RBC policy measures should be specific, measurable and time-bound (SMART).**

6. **The Africa strategy must clarify how the Dutch government will advocate and push for a legally binding UN treaty on business and human rights.**

7. **Make serious use of diplomatic ties to facilitate multi-stakeholder engagements and spaces to discuss ways to improve RBC-related issues.**

8. **Ensure true coherence for development, in particular between Dutch *aid* and *trade* policies.**

## 9. Digitalisation

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| Date: | June 28, 2022 |
| Organised by: | RNW Media and Plan International |
| Speakers: | Dougoukolo Alpha Oumar Ba Konaré (clinical psychologist and consultant), Sandy Abdelmessih (Love Matters Arabic), Ema-Olori A. (Media Health and Rights Initiative of Nigeria) and Jennifer Delgado (Plan International) |

RNW Media invited several African experts to share their first-hand experience in building, protecting and moderating digital communities of young people, their potential for social change and their significant digital challenges and opportunities. Access to the often young, online voices allows the development sector to understand them, define priorities and adapt strategies. Therefore, we chose to zoom in on the role of young people in building and advancing inclusive communities and tech. We hope that young voices, their challenges and opportunities are given their due importance in global discussions about digitalisation.

Dougoukolo Alpha Oumar Ba Konaré, an expert from Mali, talked about inclusive technologies in the Sahel region, the influence of colonisation on the internet, and solutions that can work locally. Sandy Abdelmessih, an expert from Egypt, talked about young people's access to technology and safe online spaces and laid out a roadmap for using these spaces to amplify young voices. Ema-Olori A., an expert from Nigeria, shared her valuable experience in creating gender-inclusive online communities in which women are encouraged to engage with important topics. Finally, Jennifer Delgado of Plan International discussed the Girls Our Loud Programme which focuses on the role of women and girls in leading change online.

## Recommendations

1. **Improve internet access, lobby for data protection policies and work towards embedding human rights in digital spaces.**
   Young people are increasingly using online spaces to express their opinion and engage with important topics. We need to tap into the potential of these online spaces to reach young people at scale and engage with them in a meaningful way. On the other hand, we need to be mindful of the challenges posed to young people's rights online. Censorship, compromised user data privacy, organised hate-speech campaigns and cyberbullying are some examples of violations of digital rights. Activists, citizen journalists and online media makers should be able to freely express themselves in online spaces. The Dutch government can protect their freedom of speech by improving access to the internet, lobbying for data protection policies and overall embedding human rights in digital spaces.

2. **Support already existing online platforms and media outlets by improving free speech and supporting inclusive online communities.**
   Internet prices seem to be a major factor in creating inequality in access to the internet. Censorship, government-backed propaganda, dis-information and hate speech are among other challenges once online spaces are accessed. Authoritarian regimes use subjective methods to judge whether online behaviour is punishable. Yet, social media – WhatsApp in particular – is the window to connect with the outside world. In such a context, young people use the power of online spaces to organise themselves, debate important topics and exchange viewpoints. In addition, in the absence of free media, citizens turn to online spaces to find their desired content. Therefore, social media has a significant power to shift narratives and influence the political sphere. The Dutch government can promote a culture of peace and

justice in countries like Mali by supporting already existing online platforms and media outlets so they can continue to improve free-speech and inclusive communities based on truth-seeking and fact-checking.

3. **Digitally empower girls and young women to access, use and create technology so that they can lead the process of digitalisation in their societies.**
Plan International's research conducted within their Girls Out Loud programme in seven African countries shows that young women and girls are talking about leadership, activism, and their rights – particularly gender-based violence and access to contraceptives. They are concerned about access to devices such as smartphones and unaffordable internet bundles. Once online, they are also worried about their safety. The future of the world is digital. That goes for anything from access to information, services and jobs to participating in political discussions and meaningful debates. Women cannot be left behind. The Dutch government can digitally empower girls and young women to access, use and create technology and lead the process of digitalisation in their societies.

4. **Invest in inclusive tech to improve user choice, soft representation and access to diverse content.**
Women in online communities are focused on learning about their sexual health and rights. Their social identity (consisting of gender, sexual orientation, race, (dis)abilities, etc.) affects how they engage with content online. Therefore, we need to pay extra attention to building inclusive digital spaces in which women from all backgrounds can participate. In addition, in Africa, during the COVID-19 pandemic, smartphones transitioned from luxury devices to lifelines, creating access to most essential information and services – even if, nowadays, a regular data bundle costs more compared to pre-pandemic prices. Therefore, affordability and accessibility of tech have become hot topics. Finally, as the influence of AI tech pierces deeper into online spaces, we need to significantly increase human moderation to protect inclusivity online. The Dutch government can invest in inclusive tech to improve user choice, soft representation and access to diverse content that can empower users, particularly women, to interact online authentically and freely.

5. **Adopt a multistakeholder approach (involving governments, tech companies, civil society and users) that focuses on the inclusion and equality of online spaces.**
A multistakeholder approach should be encouraged that recognises the role of governments in introducing more regulatory obligations – such as the Digital Service Act package – with a focus on inclusion and equality of online spaces. There's a strong need to develop frameworks to make sure that human rights exist virtually as well and that we have the tools to enforce them. Digital norms and standards are set by global technology companies, which make money by modifying users' interactions and communications. The tech industry can be held accountable for offering responsible and transparent content and moderation strategies. Civil society needs to serve its role as the watchdog of online violations of human rights. More investment is needed in users for increased digital literacy, education and access.

## 10. Biodiversity loss

Put together by:        IUCN Netherlands, Wetlands International and WWF-NL

**Biodiversity as a cross-cutting theme**
The Dutch government is making biodiversity a stronger crosscutting theme in development cooperation. We welcome this ambition, as healthy ecosystems and biodiversity are preconditions for achieving other SDGs related to water, forests, food and climate. It also accounts for the Dutch ecological footprint in low-income countries. Biodiversity loss as a cross-cutting issue must be firmly established in the Africa strategy to achieve the desired results. A concrete approach is needed to better connect the role of ecosystems, biodiversity and climate, with social issues such as poverty, trade, gender, food, water and migration. In doing this, the important role of Indigenous People and Local Communities (IPLC) in natural resource management and forest conservation should be safeguarded.

**Recommendations**

1.  **Make nature-based solutions the cornerstone of policy, as solutions to societal challenges.**
    The last two IPCC reports show that nature-based solutions are a crucial element for solutions relating to adaptation and mitigation. Healthy ecosystems can absorb large amounts of $CO_2$ and provide essential services for people. As ecosystems collapse due to rising temperatures and loss of biodiversity, the worlds poorest will also be the first victims of conflicts and food and drinking water shortages. Therefore, nature-based solutions should be carried out or even led by these communities themselves. In supporting nature-based solutions the Locally Led Adaptation (LLA) principles, endorsed by the Dutch government, should be taken into account. Moreover, the Dutch private sector (agricultural sector, water sector, financial sector) can be of help as it already has years of experience with agroecological innovation, building with nature and green finance.

2.  **In addressing climate change, also commit to halting biodiversity loss and halting and reversing water and land degradation through nature-based solutions.**
    Ensure that climate funds are effectively spent, not towards large-scale technical solutions but on integral solutions tackling multiple problems at the time. Providing access to these funds for the most vulnerable groups, such as women, indigenous and local communities and youth is essential.

3.  **Prioritise full integration and alignment of all climate and biodiversity actions.**
    This guarantees that climate policies and actions are not detrimental to the conservation, restoration and sustainable management of ecosystems, nature and biodiversity. It also ensures that nature conservation measures maximise their potential contribution to (locally run, small scale) climate change mitigation and adaptation.

4.  **Accelerate the phase-out of fossil fuels and ensure that, with our support, African developing countries can make the transition to sustainable energy security instead of ending up in a vulnerable fossil lock-in.**

5. **In addition to offering support, speak out against violence against nature conservationists and environmental activists at an international political level and promote adequate international Corporate Social Responsibility legislation at national, European and UN levels.**
   Violence against environmentalists is increasing worldwide. Furthermore, in the African context, violence against (but also in some cases by) rangers is a problem. The causes lie in illegal trade, discrimination, marginalisation of ethnic groups, or unjust displacement through large-scale infrastructure and agricultural projects. According to the UN, 80% of the world's biodiversity is contained within indigenous territories. Supporting these communities in protecting their habitat is of global importance.

6. **Help countries avoid, minimize and compensate for environmental and social impacts of large-scale infrastructure development.**
   Across the African continent, large-scale investments in infrastructure development are planned to accommodate increasing needs for transport, trade, infrastructure and housing. Ill-informed planning of such projects has far-reaching and cascading environmental and social impacts. There is an immediate need to build capacities to adopt inclusive infrastructure development approaches that maintain the ecological integrity of freshwater, coastal and terrestrial ecosystems, accommodate community needs and respect their rights.

7. **Involve nature and environmental organisations in public and private cooperation.**
   Nature and environmental organisations are also linked to the Dutch network of embassies, consulates and permanent representations through (but not exclusively) Strategic Partnerships.

8. **Better involve local NGOs in the formulation and implementation of policy and take a critical look at the reporting requirements for local NGOs so that these requirements accommodate their local working methods.**
   The most effective and sustainable climate (adaptation) and biodiversity solutions emerge from the actions of local grassroots initiatives and NGOs. Solutions that are designed and supported locally fit best in the local context and are more effective in the long run. Access to climate finance for precisely these groups must be made easier. This can be done, for example, by focusing more flexibly on direct access to small grant funds and by lowering the access barriers associated with larger funds. Especially in Africa, administrative requirements often restrict the access of small NGOs to international (climate and development) finance. Many grassroots initiatives in Africa are youth-led. Youth play a crucial role in combatting the climate crisis in Africa. They create awareness within their communities and with older generations and spread information about climate change to remote communities. By combining local traditional knowledge with modern technologies and approaches, they are great agents of change. Yet, they have very limited access to climate finance.

9. **Consider Priority Conservation Areas (PCAs) as one of the key options for climate adaptation and mitigation and as nature-based solutions to address both the climate and biodiversity crises through mutually beneficial action.**
   By protecting ecosystems, natural habitats and the ecosystem services they provide, PCAs act as nature-based solutions that help people cope with the impacts of climate change, health and disaster risks. We call on the Dutch government to recognise that climate change will lead to geographic shifts in the distribution of species and habitats, and will impact human livelihoods and migration. African Protected Area Networks should be re-evaluated and

redesigned to secure natural habitats and improve connectivity, thereby enhancing the resilience of biodiversity and communities.

10. **Support large-scale commitments towards the conservation and restoration of critical ecosystems, including Sahelian wetlands, the Congo basin and vulnerable coasts.**
    Many countries, including the UK, France, Germany and Norway, have announced largescale commitments and established corresponding funding instruments for the conservation and restoration of ecosystems to fulfil their international commitments under climate and biodiversity frameworks. The Dutch government must follow course, also in light of the disproportionate environmental footprint of Dutch (international trade) activities.

11. **Support African countries in implementing the new Global Biodiversity Framework, which is expected to be adopted at COP15 in Montreal.**
    In this regard, focus on capacity building and cross-sectoral integrated approaches at local, regional and national levels, and support the development of strong national biodiversity strategies and action plans and effective national biodiversity financing plans. Particular attention must be paid to aligning all financial flows with both biodiversity and climate objectives.

12. **Take note of and support African countries in the implementation of the [Kigali Call to Action for People and Nature](), adopted on July 23, 2022.**
    The Call to Action promotes inclusive and equitable governance in conservation and mobilizes sustainable financing of PCAs.

13. **Contribute to the recovery of fragmented and degraded ecosystems, avoid or mitigate the impacts of climate change, new infrastructure, land degradation and environmentally destructive activities and maintain ecological connectivity through networks of protected and conserved areas, including other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) and transboundary areas.**

14. **Work towards a circular economy with commitment and attention to the ecological and social footprint of our energy transition and its relation to deforestation and ecosystem disruption in African mineral-rich countries.**
    Make sure the minerals imported for the energy transition come from reliable sources and are mined sustainably, with the protection of essential ecosystems, threatened species and the rights of local communities. To this end, stringent Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) rules for responsible sourcing and circularity must be set and implemented.

15. **Prioritise the management of the water cycle from source to sea, including rivers, lakes, peatlands and the shallow seas, as this will create system change, address the root causes of current problems and will unlock opportunities for real improvement even with further climate change.**
    Water, and especially water scarcity and flooding, is a key factor that causes conflict, reduces livelihood and food production opportunities, reduces biodiversity and increases greenhouse gas emissions. Water management should maximise water retention in the system, for example in peatlands and groundwater, so that these sources can naturally contribute to water availability during droughts and at the same time reduce peak flood events.