

South Sudan's bold climate change commitment: A Journey from vision to action

By Kitab Unango

With a combination of strategic efforts and creative planning, South Sudan, the youngest country in the world, is making great progress in combating climate change.

Not only is it responding to the effects of the phenomenon, but it is also setting an example for emission reduction.


This feature explores South Sudan's ambitious climate journey, highlighting its proactive involvement in global climate action forums and its forward-thinking policies.

A comprehensive plan for sustainable development has been

outlined by the government under the South Sudan Vision 2040. Numerous climate projects that address both adaptation and mitigation are essential to this strategy.

A key component of this endeavor has been the National Environment Policy (2015–2025), which established the framework for further plans and initiatives. The creation of South Sudan's first National Adaptation Plan (NAP) in 2021 was made possible by this strategy, which was a major step in the direction of climate resilience.

"South Sudan's commitment to climate action is unwavering.

A woman, Nyadeng Majok, stands in a flooded sorghum field. She is wearing a purple dress with red floral patterns. The field is surrounded by water, and the sorghum plants are partially submerged. The background shows a clear blue sky with some clouds.

Nyadeng Majok stands in her sorghum plantation destroyed by the floods in Padeah, Unity State, South Sudan. | Credit | Gabriela Vivacqua/WFP

Our policies and plans, including Vision 2040 and the National Adaptation Plan, are designed to build a resilient and sustainable future for our people," said the then Minister of Finance and Planning, Daniel Awow, emphasizing the country's dedication to these climate initiatives.

"We understand the urgency of addressing climate change and are taking concrete steps to mitigate its impacts and adapt to its effects."

The first Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) submitted by South Sudan in 2017 and its more comprehensive second version on September 21, 2021, following a thorough review, demonstrate the country's commitment to reducing national emissions and adapting to climate impacts.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Secretariat records these NDCs in a public registry, and South Sudan's targets are currently active.

The NDCs of South Sudan embody the country's efforts to transition towards a low-carbon economy, outlining specific targets and actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve energy efficiency, and enhance renewable energy adoption.

The submission of the second NDC highlights South Sudan's ongoing commitment to international climate agreements and its proactive approach to climate action.

The National Adaptation Plan (NAP), developed in 2021, is a critical component of the country's commitment to climate strategy, which aims to strengthen resilience to climate impacts, such as extreme weather events, droughts, and floods.

The NAP outlines various adaptation measures across different sectors, including agriculture, water resources, health, and infrastructure, integrating climate considerations into national planning and development processes, and ensuring that its communities are better prepared for the challenges posed by a changing climate.

Again, the Comprehensive Agriculture Master Plan (2015–2040) reflects the government's commitment to sustainable agricultural practices with the aim of increasing agricultural productivity, promoting climate-smart agriculture, and enhancing food security by adopting innovative farming techniques and improving access to climate-resilient seeds and technologies.

In July 2024, South Sudan will present its first Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) national voluntary review report to the High-Level Political Forum in New York. This marks a significant milestone for the country, as it actively participates in the review of SDG implementation status.

The report will highlight the progress made in various areas,

including climate action, and underscore South Sudan's commitment to achieving the SDGs.

Development partners have also played a crucial role in supporting South Sudan's climate initiatives, remarked Anita Kiki Gheho, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General, who doubles as Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator of the United Nations, during the recent official validation of the NVR in Juba.

"The international community recognizes the significant efforts South Sudan is making in climate action. The collaboration between the government and development partners has been instrumental in advancing these initiatives. We are committed to continuing our support to ensure that South Sudan can achieve its climate and sustainable development goals," Kiki stated.

While South Sudan has made commendable progress in its climate initiatives, the journey is not without challenges, including political instability, limited financial resources, and capacity constraints that pose significant hurdles.

Nonetheless, these obstacles also offer chances for cooperation and assistance from the global community. In order to overcome these obstacles and quicken its efforts to combat climate change, South Sudan can benefit from strengthening relationships with development organizations, utilizing climate finance channels, and improving technical support.

The government of South Sudan is steadfast in its commitment to carrying out and expanding its climate efforts as the country moves forward toward a sustainable future. Juba is also committed to addressing climate change, as seen by the incorporation of climate issues into national policies and its active engagement in international climate forums.

As the nation builds on its achievements and draws help from international partners that may strengthen its resilience to climate impacts and contribute to global climate goals, the path ahead will require persistent work, creativity, and collaboration.

The newest country in Africa is showing that even the newest countries can set the standard for climate action by actively pursuing a sustainable future rather than just dreaming about one.

