SECTION V: CLIMATE CHANGE, HEALTH DIPLOMACY AND GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 11

The Ripple Effect of Trump's Paris Agreement Withdrawal on Climate Adaptation Funding for Women-Led Initiatives in Sub-Saharan Africa

Gugulethu Lethu Ngwenya
Department of Political Sciences, University of Pretoria, South Africa

Introduction

President Donald Trump has signed an executive order to withdraw the United States (US) from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Paris Agreement in his second term in office. This did not come as a surprise, as President Trump had taken the same step in 2017, at the beginning of his first term in office. Unlike the previous exit, which lasted only 107 days before Former President Biden rejoined the agreement in 2021, there is now a reasonable time for significant harm to global action efforts' (Naidoo 2025). The decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement underscores the Trump administration's broader pattern of dramatic departures from established international organisations, leading to shifting global power dynamics.

The global climate crisis is exacerbated by the rapid industrialisation of developing nations seeking to meet their development targets. Therefore, an emerging energy crisis is compounded by the escalating risks of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, which contribute significantly to intensifying climate change.

All countries are vulnerable to environmental degradation. International co-operation becomes essential to addressing these problems as they are transnational and cannot be dealt with unilaterally. The US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement as well as the halt in USAID funding for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives will undoubtedly disrupt global climate actions and have a ripple effect on women-led climate change initiatives on the African

continent (Horsfield 2025). USAID has long been a pillar of America's soft power in the international realm. However, these abrupt decisions and geopolitical shifts pose questions about climate leadership and how, potentially, the African continent can rise to be victors rather than defeated victims.

Against this background, this paper argues that a new strategy of continental autonomy could emerge if African countries seize this opportunity to shift global power dynamics and take centre stage in global climate action. Mokgonyana (cited in Madegwa 2026) postulates that, amid Trump's withdrawal from the global initiative, African nations could double down on initiatives such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to create economies of scale for renewable energy investments. Mokgonyana further describes the mechanism as discriminatory, applying tariffs without accounting for historical responsibility or capacity to decarbonise (Madegwa 2026). Ensuring that women are central to these debates would also help place gender equality aspirations at the forefront of economic development. The bitter truth is that Western nations have never had the interest of African nations at heart. Monetary investments that exploit Africa's resources are disguised as goodwill investments. Similarly, 'global climate policy and mechanisms reflect Western priorities, not those of the Global South' (Ramachandran 2025).

Using postcolonial theory, the paper argues that reintroducing Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) to tackle climate change in Africa is essential. IKS offers sustainable, local solutions to climate adaptation and thus should be integrated within the broader geopolitical discourse. This will reinforce the fundamental nature of spiritual beliefs that were defining features of pre-colonial Africa but suppressed by Western colonisers. It is important that climate action not only be centred around states but extend beyond the state apparatuses and multilateral institutions to meaningfully integrate women's discourse in the debate. To this end, the essay will begin by conceptualising climate change in the context of the African continent.

This paper contends that although the environmental crisis is a transnational discourse and cannot be regarded unilaterally, its consequences are experienced differently by different states around the world. Therefore, conceptualisation is fundamental to underscore the ripple effect of Trump's withdrawal from the climate agreement in the global discourse. The first part of the essay will examine the shifting geopolitical order and what this could mean for Africa. It will then

provide context by using a case study, namely Kenya's Green Belt Movement, to analyse women's impact in climate action and how the withdrawal from the agreement and the freezing of USAID investments could potentially slow down their progress. The essay will then proceed to introduce the fundamental aspects of IKS and how the continent could use these systems in conjunction with modern science to tackle climate action, ultimately assuming strategic autonomy and shifting away from dependency on developed nations like the United States. The paper will then conclude by providing recommendations for how IKS and modern science can offer medium- to long-term solutions to the environmental crisis.

Shifting geopolitical order

Climate diplomacy is a global and co-operative initiative that addresses the effects of climate change. Through the Paris Agreement, states were legally bound to:

> ..."set long-term goals to guide all nations to substantially reduce global greenhouse gas emissions to hold global temperature increase to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursue efforts to limit it to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, recognizing *[sic]* that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change, periodically assess the collective progress towards achieving the purpose of this agreement and its long-term goals, provide financing to developing countries to mitigate climate change, strengthen resilience and enhance abilities to adapt to climate impacts" (United Nations 2021).

US disengagement in climate diplomacy (that is, the Paris agreement) results in a seismic change in geopolitical order within the climate action realm and will have implications for climate financing as the United States was the major contributor to climate action initiatives. It is deeply ironic that the United States, the world's second-largest emitter of CO_2, due to its reliance on fossil fuels (Markey-Towler 2025; Le Roux and Cilliers 2025: 12) after China, chose to withdraw from a major global climate initiative. Such a decision, if taken by an African or other Global South nation, would likely have been framed as a defiant act undermining the legitimacy of international institutions. This double standard highlights the

asymmetries and hypocrisy in global governance, where actions by powerful nations are justified, while similar moves by less powerful states are often met with criticism and political consequences, such as the infamous economic sanctions imposed on, for example, Sudan, Zimbabwe and Libya.

Western hypocrisy can also be seen in climate governance. For example, Ramachandrum (2025) asserts that, 'impoverished African countries that cumulatively account for 0.55 per cent of global emissions have been told that they cannot exploit their natural gas reserves; instead, they must spend valuable resources preparing net-zero targets'. However, at the same time, ExxonMobil (a private US oil and gas company) is involved in the Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) project in Mozambique, estimated to be worth US$60 billion (Neethling 2021). To justify this action, energy experts assert that transporting LNG is low on carbon emissions; however, during the process of extraction and liquefaction, there is a release of carbon emissions (CO_2) that will have an environmental impact in the long run (Halsey et al. 2023: 5), thus contributing to environmental degradation in Africa. Furthermore, Trump's 'Drill baby, drill' mantra undermines the goals and aspirations set in the Paris Accord, which the US was central in formulating. This underscores the exploitative nature of neocolonial policies, which are often disguised under the rhetoric of free market systems and liberal economic frameworks.

The Paris Agreement 'emphasised equitable climate action, with developed nations committing to providing $100 billion annually to support mitigation and adaptation in developing countries' (Madegwa 2026). It is therefore worth noting that 'many nations in the African continent have long been reliant on foreign aid, including U.S. assistance, to sustain vital health, education, and climate adaptation projects' (Horsfield 2025). For instance, the Green Climate Fund (GCF) serves as a key source of funding for developing nations in the global fight against climate change, especially in areas where women are at the forefront. Consequently, Trump's withdrawal of USAID in Africa 'is likely to rescind US$ 3 billion commitment pledge to the GCF at COP28' (Horsfield 2025). The GCF was a critical source of financing for gender-responsive projects. It helped women's groups access training, tools and climate-resilient infrastructure. Without that support, women-led climate efforts stall (Horsfield 2025).

Africa's increasing vulnerability to climate change, along with the withdrawal of the US from key climate agreements, carries significant long-term global

implications. In distancing itself from international climate commitments and criticising the Paris Agreement as a one-sided deal (as suggested by President Trump) (Markey-Towler 2025) and indulging in 'climate denialism', the US risks diminishing its global influence. Moreover, the US withdrawal may not necessarily be detrimental for Africa. Instead, it might allow Global South countries to exercise control over their own concerns without Trump's corrosive influence (Markey-Towler 2025). In fact, these developments present an opportunity for Africa to assume a more prominent leadership role in climate action.

While such a withdrawal may therefore be perceived as a strategic move by the US to undermine the autonomy of African states, it may, in effect, attenuate Africa's dependency on US support. This shift is not limited to environmental governance. It opens broader avenues for Africa to assert itself in global economic and political arenas. The weakening of US influence may encourage African states, along with global powers such as China, to adopt more independent geoeconomic strategies, including but not limited to indigenous knowledges, and to position themselves as active players in institutions such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO) through AfCFTA. As noted by Chin and Bartos (2024: 127), one reason for Africa's heightened importance is the use that China and Russia are making of the region 'to challenge the rules-based international order. In addition, the strategy notes growing economic interests, with AfCFTA set to make Africa one of the largest free trade areas in the world (and make Africa the fifth largest economy in the world)'. Consequently, these geopolitical shifts may open an avenue for Africa to reshape its international role and advocate for more equitable global partnerships rooted in regional empowerment, collaboration and the spirit of Pan Africanism.

Climate change in Africa

Climate change is a global phenomenon and requires global attention and solutions. Many have argued that climate change, stemming from rapid globalisation, is one of the most catastrophic events to ever hit planet Earth (Smillie 2023). The argument put forward by Wapmuk and Tar (2016) is that because globalisation is accelerating, the African continent is doubly exposed to the impact of climate change as well as globalisation. The unprecedented flow of goods within the African continent is bringing about development to some

extent but is also increasing the risk of exposure to climate change. According to the United Nations (2021) website, 'climate change refers to long-term shifts in the temperature and weather patterns' and that 'such shifts can be natural due to changes in the sun's activity or large volcanic eruptions'. On the other hand, the IPCC (United Nations 2021) points out that 'climate change is a result of man-made emissions of greenhouse gases'. This impact is mainly due to the burning of fossil fuels, which produces greenhouse gas emissions including carbon dioxide (CO_2), nitrous oxides, chlorofluorocarbons, hydrocarbons such as methane, ozone and water vapour (Wapmuk and Tar 2016). The definition provided by the IPCC clearly illustrates the interconnectedness between climate change and globalisation. This view tends to sideline concerns for justice and equity, particularly for women on the African continent. As highlighted by the IPCC, climate change is anthropogenic, and primarily motivated by economic objectives within a capitalist, industrialised world. These activities, which facilitate globalisation, often occur with insufficient attention paid to their environmental and social consequences.

However, it should also be noted that climate change cannot be solely regarded as a consequence of globalisation, even though it plays a significant role, particularly through its integration into the political economy. Nevertheless, it is not the only factor contributing to climate change. For example, migration can be considered a contributing factor, and 'the World Bank estimates that climate change could cause more than 86 million people to migrate within Africa by 2050' (Amadi and Vundamina 2023: 35). The movement of people, whether fleeing conflict zones or poverty, among other things, often involves the use of motor vehicles, which emit significant amounts of carbon dioxide (CO_2) due to their fuel consumption (*Dekra* 2024). Moreover, 'vehicle emissions can harm ecosystems by contaminating soil and water, affecting plant and animal life' (*Dekra* 2024). Consequently, this has a direct impact on communities, especially women who depend on livestock for socioeconomic survival.

Gendered impact of climate change

Conceptualising climate change in Africa should not be solely about the impact it has on economic and political aspects. Rather, the social aspects should also be prioritised to determine how vulnerable various referent objects are. As alluded

to by Egeru et al. (2016), 'vulnerability is a function of the degree of exposures, sensitivity, and adaptive capacity of a given natural or social system'. To this end, it is fundamental to question the degree of exposure for women as a consequence of climate change because they are often more susceptible to such effects. Shifting the focus to understanding the ripple effects that environmental degradation has on women will ultimately lead to influencing 'strategic development discourses, actions of governments, communities and development actors' (Egeru et al. 2016). It is also important to analyse the impact of climate change from a gender perspective because women and men experience the effects of climate change differently. Furthermore, now that the major contributor to climate financing (being the United States) has withdrawn from the Paris Agreement and halted USAID funding, the women of Africa are sure to suffer.

Women in many parts of the world are relegated to the periphery, treated as an afterthought in the political discourse. In addition to this, women are sidelined from decision-making platforms and regarded as objects rather than human beings. According to Perkins (2018), women's exclusion has extended beyond representation in scientific research, negotiations and law-making processes. Women have been excluded from scientific research into the climate change phenomenon, as well as how climate change programmes can be integrated within the African context. However, women's participation is fundamental not only for a gendered perspective on climate action, but also because women are mainly employed in the agricultural sector in sub-Saharan Africa, accounting for about 74% of working women, in contrast to 61% for working men (UN Women n.d; ILO 2015). For instance, 'gender specific patterns show in general that the polluter is a man, whether poor or rich, but women feel the most effects' (Arora-Jonsson 2011: 755). Often, women are reliant on men for financial assistance as climate change affects agricultural productivity and the ability of female farmers to earn a livelihood (Adeola, Evans and Ngare 2014: 36). This vulnerability is compounded by the interconnected nature of climate change effects with broader challenges such as food security and water access.

The United Nations Development Programme argues that "climate change actions need to be based on consultation with women, to build and incorporate their skills and knowledge as this would result in more environmental and productivity gains and would create mutual benefits and greater returns" (Habtezion 2016: 6). This is a sensible approach, if the many women-

centred initiates in Africa, such as the Green Belt Movement—a response to environmental degradation in postcolonial Kenya—are taken into consideration (Hunt 2014: 236). The Green Belt Movement was notable for its empowering approach, as it was structured to work primarily with poor, rural women mobilised around environmental and civic engagement campaigns (Hunt 2014: 235). Failing to address climate issues that affect women can have long-term consequences. Without gender-sensitive climate policies, gender-based violence against women in sub-Saharan Africa is projected to triple by 2060, according to Hunt (2014) and Muzenda (2024). Climate change will also exacerbate the income gap between men and women and impact land ownership and resource allocation (Muzenda 2024). For instance, COP29 fails to address gender-based justice within climate change despite gender being on the agenda. Furthermore,

> "The COP29 Presidency did not initially include any women in the 28-person Organising Committee and only included 12 women in the panel after social outcries. At the summit itself, only eight of the 78 heads of state and government were women, with women making up 34% of national delegates" (Muzenda 2024).

This significantly highlights the gender imbalance in leadership and decision-making platforms on climate action. The inclusion of '12 women in the panel after social outcries' suggests a patronising attitude towards women and a reactive approach rather than a proactive approach to the inclusion of women. This ultimately contradicts the principles of gender inclusivity (Sustainable Development Goal 5: Gender Equality). (United Nations South Africa 2026). Moreover, meaningful discussions on gender issues require the active participation of those directly affected. Without adequate representation of women, these conversations risk lacking authenticity and depth. While policies and international institutions can play a supportive role, genuine advocacy for women's rights must centre the voices and lived experiences of women themselves. In addition, 'the growth of farmers' knowledge, expertise and ability in relation to climate-smart technologies and related services can be facilitated through local institutions like churches, traditional leadership, schools, and other organizations *[sic]*, which can improve climate change management' (Adeola, Evans and Ngare 2024: 175). The case of Kenya's women-led initiative

highlights women's expertise in this field, necessitating stronger support for political stakeholders' participation and funding. Thus, this argument brings to the discourse an understanding of the intricate relationship between gender and climate change, and how the withdrawal of the US from the Paris Agreement will affect mostly women in communities that heavily rely on agricultural livestock and fisheries for survival.

Case study: Kenya's Green Belt Movement

Guided by a feminist agenda and embedded in the spirit of resilience and empowerment, the Green Belt Movement (GBM) initiative was founded by Wangari Muta Maathai as a response to environmental degradation. Kenya experienced widespread demonstrations from 1977 to 1993, advocating for tree-planting initiatives to combat environmental degradation (Hunt 2014). This was indeed a period of environmental and political injustice as Kenya experienced extreme deforestation, soil erosion, malnutrition and political corruption (Hunt 2014: 236). Therefore, the purpose of GBM 'was to establish greenbelts and fuel wood plots by local people, particularly women' (Muthuki 2006: 85). This initiative was guided by an ecofeminist[1] agenda, which stresses the importance of women's empowerment in decision-making processes. Maaithai argues that the capitalist systems continue to undermine women's worth and value. This is most prevalent among indigenous women, who are constantly marginalised and reduced to economic dependence. This is reinforced through foreign investments through the capitalist mode of production and resource exploitation, often leading to environmental degradation and impoverishment (Muthuki 2006: 87). Often these foreign investments do not benefit local people, and women are often left to deal with the consequences of climate change. GBM places its efforts in indigenous knowledges passed down from generation to generation. To put it in context, when the colonial project was initiated, deforestation increased rapidly as a result of the demands to meet the capitalist mode of production through industrial factories (Njagi 2022). At the same time, because of the devaluation of cultural and traditional beliefs and practices that would have allowed for the natural conservation of the forest, rivers dried, and there was a lack of rain and a shortage of indigenous foods and medicine (Njagi 2022: 68).

Notably, it can be argued that to be one with nature requires a shift in

consciousness, and thus GBM sought to be indigenous in its nature in order to reconstruct how Africans can use their own cultural and spiritual ties for the preservation of the environment. In practice, the GBM 'preserved indigenous knowledges by maintaining sacred forests, groves, trees, reverence for totemic animals and limiting entrance in some parts of the Mount Kenya forest' (Njagi 2022: 70). This allowed community members to embrace their cultural heritage and dismantle the colonial ideological conquest (which is the root cause of the deforestation in Mount Kenya). Importantly, this woman-led initiative wanted to 'decolonize *[sic]* the anthropogenic, profit-making attitudes towards the natural world' (Rush 2020: 4). In contrast to the post-colonial approach, GBM sought to empower women and embark on a de-patriarchal project to challenge patriarchal norms of domination over women and their relationship with the environment. Further, this movement recognised that African women should not be seen as monolithic compared to Western women.

Essentially, it is important to understand how colonialism shaped and changed the relationship between humans and the environment, particularly in the African context (Nkomo 2021; Stoddard 2022; Rush 2020). As alluded to by Rush (2020: 2), prior to colonialism, indigenous people in Kenya made use of forest resources through a system of traditional rules and rights. However, Stoddard (2022) notes that the prevailing narrative of international experts was that 'in order to save nature, African states must evict those living within the national parks'. Indigenous people living in the forests were therefore displaced, which eroded people's ability to be in tune with the environment.

Following the aftermath of conquest by colonial masters, the relationship between humankind and the environment changed dramatically as land was now utilised as an economic resource for profit-making by these new masters. This was enforced by forcefully seizing land from indigenous people and handing it to white settlers for the purpose of producing profitable commodities such as food. Further, as claimed by Nkomo (2021), 'the so-called protection of wildlife and nature was the primary tool in the disenfranchisement of tribes of people and the forced displacement of many groups from important ancestral lands central to their ways of life'. As a result, this eroded the indigenous heritage and history of these sacred places. For instance, 'indigenous groups in central Kenya like the Kikuyu used land for more purposes like ceremonial sacrifices for rain and bountiful harvest' (Rush 2020: 3). However, colonialism led to major

deforestation, which impacted rural women in agricultural settings in particular.

However, in light of Trump's dramatic departure from the Paris Agreement and the withdrawal of USAID in Africa, critical questions emerge regarding the implications for women-led initiatives and the broader consequences for gender equality objectives, considering that the US was one of the partners of GBM[2]. Undoubtedly, there might be financial setbacks that might contribute to the existing patriarchal norms that disempower women. Conversely, the exit of the US undermines the very international institutions they created for global order (Naidoo 2025). Therefore, the world can expect to witness more African nations pivoting to alternative financial sources, such as China (the biggest rival of the US) and Russia. From a postcolonial view, it is evident that indigenous systems were utilised to adapt to environmental changes long before the colonial masters invaded Africa. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that although Trump's withdrawal will hit Africa badly financially, this may reinforce the rethinking of IKS might be re-established as an African-based climate agenda, centred around gender equality.

Role of IKS in climate adaptation: Africa's ideological shift

Climate change is not a new phenomenon in Africa. Indigenous cultures have been managing and adapting to the changes of the environment for the longest time, with original knowledge passed down from generation to generation through the "characteristics of informal education as a contact for individuals to have a variety of environmental influences that result from day-to-day learning" (Seroto 2011: 79). The author is of the view that the use of the term "indigenous" is derogatory and perpetuates the marginalisation or subaltern of African philosophical and cultural thinking. However, for the purpose of the paper within the academic discourse, the term will be applied because it is not within the scope of the paper to critique the usage of terms and concepts but to apply them to the central argument.

IKS refer to the 'institutionalised local knowledge that has been developed and handed down from one generation to the next, typically by word of mouth' (Adeola, Evans and Ngare 2024: 170). Africa's IKS is rooted in spiritual, philosophical and cultural worldviews of how African people lived in the pre-colonial era, guiding them in their long-existing relationship with the environment. In contrast to

science knowledge, 'IKS is non-formal and orally transmitted, not typically codified and closely linked to the survival and subsistence of particular local and cultural group' (Apraku, Morton and Gyampoh 2020: 3). Many of the climate and gender problems were 'generated from Western conceptions of oppression, gender, and equality and as a result represents a subtle form of cultural imperialism when applied to non-Western contexts' (Hunt 2014: 237). Practically:

> "African women's participation in industry and services has increased since 2010, they are still most often employed in the agricultural sector. In fact, in 2019, about half of all female workers in sub-Saharan Africa were still employed in agriculture". In most African states, economies are predominantly agrarian, with a significant proportion of women engaged in agricultural labour. This contrasts with patterns in many developed countries, where women are more frequently employed in lower-tier industrial or manufacturing sectors" (Ordu 2022: 60).

Thus, movements such as the GBM recognised that women should not be treated as monolithic when compared to Western women (Hunt 2014; Oyěwùmí 1997). In the African context, women, who are central to food production, water collection and local environmental stewardship, are frequently excluded from policy design and resource allocation in climate change action. Furthermore, 'this also puts added pressure on girls, who sometimes have to leave school to help their mothers manage the increased burden' (UN Women 2025). As a result, the withdrawal of funds from the US will cause disruptions in funding flow for initiatives that empower women and young girls, thus exacerbating gender inequalities and reinforcing neocolonial tendencies of inequality.

Rooted in the critique of colonialism, 'postcolonialism acknowledges that politics is not limited to one area or region and that it is vital to include the voices of individuals from other parts of the world' (Gold and McGlinchey 2022: 51). Further, 'the philosophy underlying this is not one of declaring war on the past, but declaring war against the present realities which, implicitly or explicitly, are consequences of that past' (Rukundwa and van Aarder 2016: 75). This manifests itself in the exclusion of African cultural experiences and, most notably, the interactions of man and the environment within the African context (particularly in the context of women). Consequently, the lack of recognition for indigenous

knowledges, has perpetuated a homogenised approach to climate action. Postcolonial theory contends that Western epistemology has delegitimised African philosophies and cultural ways of thinking, and thus the indigenous knowledges are often sidelined and ostracised as subaltern (Rukundwa and van Aarde 2007). Notably, this epistemological injustice manifests since Western scientific knowledge dominates popular discourse. This is seen in language and framing of terms like 'capacity building' or 'aid' to African nations. This phrasing makes it appear as though Africans are lacking and thus should be dependent on the West, to be rescued from the shackles of poverty exacerbated by climate change effects. This ignores the fact that communities in Africa have been using IKS to adapt to environmental degradation, mostly led by women's initiatives. Notably, movements such as GBM have extended their purposes beyond just planting trees to deal with deforestation. It has reinforced their image of themselves as giving people, particularly women, and has provided a reason to stand up for their rights through cultural sovereignty orchestrated through IKS (Hunt 2014: 241; Merton and Darter 2008).

Africa's heightened vulnerability to climate change, coupled with the US withdrawal from key climate commitments, presents long-term global implications (Mina 2025). However, these challenges also create an opportunity for the emergence of new leadership in climate action, potentially led by Africa through the African Union and other regional economic communities, which will reinforce women's position in climate action initiatives. This leadership could elevate the relevance of IKS, which have historically guided sustainable environmental practices (Muthuki 2006: 89). While the integration of such systems alone will not resolve the continent's climate crisis, it presents a critical step towards asserting African sovereignty and addressing environmental issues through context-specific, localised solutions (related to decolonial approaches) (Rush 2011). Although environmental degradation is a global concern, its causes and effects vary significantly across regions. In Africa, for instance, women often disproportionately bear the brunt of climate-related hardships. Unlike in industrialised regions, Africa's environmental issues are not primarily driven by industrialisation but are instead rooted in complex socioeconomic challenges. One example is climate-related migration, often linked to conflict and instability. These interconnected challenges demand context-specific solutions and can amplify the agency for African-led climate strategies that prioritise equity,

resilience and sustainable development.

Consequently, intertwining indigenous knowledge with contemporary scientific approaches may facilitate not only more effective climate adaptation strategies but also promote strategic autonomy. Notably, 'fusing indigenous knowledge with scientific methods and expertise can provide usefulness and viability may be substantially increased' (Basdew, Jiri and Mafongoya 2017). Such steps can open avenues for further exploration of indigenous ecological practices through policy and academic research, offering insights that have long been overlooked or undervalued in mainstream environmental discourse. Despite being historically marginalised, IKS can offer rich, localised insights that can complement and enrich formal scientific understanding. Moreover, sometimes IKS, at least for weather prediction, might be limited by a lack of access to science-based weather information or time-delayed dissemination of such forecasts (Filho et al. 2022: 8). Emphasising this synergy may help shift dominant paradigms towards more inclusive and sustainable models, while also reclaiming and affirming African intellectual and cultural heritage in the face of global environmental challenges.

Conclusion and recommendations

The withdrawal of the United States from the Paris Agreement under President Trump's leadership marks a critical point in global climate governance and exposes longstanding inequalities in international relations. This is witnessed through the sudden withdrawal of the financial assistance normally provided by the United States. Furthermore, despite African countries cumulatively accounting for only 0.55% of global emissions, they are often pressured not to exploit their natural gas reserves; instead, they are forced to spend valuable resources preparing for net-zero targets. Meanwhile, Western corporations like ExxonMobil continue to exploit African resources, as seen in their involvement in the Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) project in Mozambique. This further reflects a broader neocolonial exploitative pattern disguised under international treaties and agreements. Further, this disengagement, coupled with halted funding to gender-responsive initiatives like USAID, disproportionately affects vulnerable communities, especially women-led climate action initiatives in Africa. However, this crisis also presents a unique opportunity for African nations to assert strategic

autonomy in the climate change agenda. By embracing IKS and aligning them with contemporary scientific practices, African countries can develop localised, sustainable and culturally grounded climate adaptation strategies. Initiatives like Kenya's Green Belt Movement, started by Wangari Maathai, exemplify how IKS can drive environmental and gender empowerment. These shifts signal a potential ideological realignment away from a dependency culture on Western aid and towards Pan-African collaboration and self-reliance. From a postcolonial lens, this moment challenges the dominance of Western epistemologies and underscores the importance of decolonising environmental governance. To ensure lasting impact, African leadership must prioritise inclusive frameworks that centre around women and youth and integrate traditional ecological knowledge with modern science. This dual approach not only reclaims Africa's historical environmental agency but also offers a viable path for equitable climate action and long-term resilience in the face of global environmental uncertainty.

Based on the arguments presented above, the following recommendations aim to highlight the significant intersection of gender, climate change and IKS in the African context amidst the shifting geopolitical order in climate action. African states need to calibrate on:

- Integrating IKS into academic discourse and promoting education that reflects local cultural and environmental contexts.
- Encouraging further research on how IKS can complement modern science, particularly in areas such as weather prediction and sustainable agricultural practices. This will contribute to the broader agenda of decolonising climate action knowledge and strategies.
- Accelerating the implementation of AfCFTA to boost regional revenue streams that can support climate action initiatives.
- Fostering government partnerships with local communities, traditional leaders and Indigenous groups to gather grassroots knowledge on historical survival strategies and exploring their relevance in contemporary climate adaptation.
- Increasing government investment in women-led climate initiatives, such as Kenya's Green Belt Movement, to empower women's leadership and advance sustainable environmental solutions.

The implementation of these strategies will have a significant impact on the creation of an equitable, sustainable and inclusive climate action strategy in Africa.

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Endnotes

1 Ecofeminism is of the view that domination over women leads to domination over nature. This is a radical ecology shift in advocating for a revolutionary change in sustainability. It further postulates that men are the enemy of nature, and this is reinforced through the capitalist system (Heywood 2011: 390).

2 http://greenbeltmovement.org/get-involved/partners#:~:text