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FORESIGHT AFRICA
PODCAST

**The Brookings Institution
Africa Growth Initiative**

Foresight Africa Podcast

“The world must deliver more climate finance for Africa”

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Guest:

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Episode Summary:

Bogolo Kenewendo, the UN Climate Change High-Level Champions’ special advisor, Africa director, and former minister of Investment, Trade, and Industry of Botswana, discusses the African perspective on climate action, biodiversity, climate finance, and gender-responsive solutions. She emphasizes the need for adaptation and resilience in the agricultural sector to secure livelihoods and address high poverty rates in Africa.

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ORDU: I'm Aloysius Uche Ordu, director of the Africa Growth Initiative at the Brookings Institution, and this is *Foresight Africa* podcast.

Since 2011, the Africa Growth Initiative at Brookings has published a high-profile report entitled *Foresight Africa*. The report covers key events and trends likely to shape affairs in Africa in the year ahead. On this podcast, I engage with the report authors as well as policymakers, industry leaders, Africa's youths, and other key figures. Learn more on our website, Brookings dot edu slash Foresight Africa podcast.

ORDU: My guest today is Honorable Bogolo Kenewendo from Botswana. She's an economist and a politician with expertise in international trade and development. Bogolo was formerly minister of investment, trade and industry in Botswana, the youngest minister in her country's history. She is currently a United Nations climate change high-level champion special adviser. She's managing director of an investor advisory services firm and she serves on various boards. Bogolo wrote a brilliant piece for us in *Foresight Africa 2023*, which we also launched in Gaborone, Botswana, earlier in the year. The subject of that piece is will form our conversation today on this podcast.

Bogolo, warm welcome to you.

KENEWENDO: Thank you very much. It's a pleasure to finally be able to join you. And to get an opportunity to thank you for inviting me to contribute to the report.

ORDU: So, let's start then with a little bit of background on you. After graduating from the University of Botswana, you did graduate work at Sussex University in the UK, which is also where I studied, so I must commend you for your choice of university.

KENEWENDO: We both have smart decisions in that regard.

ORDU: Exactly. Exactly. So, what was your experience in Sussex like?

KENEWENDO: I really enjoyed myself in Sussex. First, I must say I chose Sussex just because President Mogae and President Mbeki both went to Sussex, and they studied economics, and they were evidently some of the best economic brains in the continent. So, I thought if I wanted to follow suit in that same part, Sussex would certainly be a good choice. It was.

But the second reason I chose Sussex, and this is one of the most ridiculous reasons one could choose a place to study, I was looking for a warmer place in the UK, and I must tell you, when I landed, it was not as warm as I thought it would have been. So, that first experience was a little bit of a shock to what I expected Sussex to be. But generally, the academic experience was really enriching and it also was helpful that I was a Chevening Scholar and the Chevening scholarship program also gave me further exposure outside of the university. So, altogether, the master's program was one of those turning points in my career.

ORDU: In fact, I must admit that for similar reasons, when I was studying in England, I always made sure I chose places that are warmer.

KENEWENDO: But what is warmth, really, in the UK?

ORDU: I know, I know. And then you realize that what is considered warmth is very much relative. And of course, I appreciate that the fact that both President Mbeki and President Mogae also went there. Some of my visits to your country, to Gaborone, I remember discussing Sussex passionately with President Mogae as another absolutely brilliant alumni.

So, you when you are done there, you served as an ODI Fellow at the Ghanaian Ministry of Trade and Industry. What was that experience like for you?

KENEWENDO: So, actually, before I went to Ghana, I came back to Botswana and continued to work for Econsult Botswana. And I think you might have met Dr. Keith Jefferis when you were here to launch the report. And that's where I actually started my career. And Keith was an ODI Fellow when he started his career in southern Africa. And so, it was one of those opportunities that he highlighted, gave him more exposure in terms of how governments work, before entering into private sector.

And so, it really turned out to be exactly that for me, a further eye opening to how governments work. Even though we had been consulting and giving advice to governments, but being within the government machinery opened my eyes to how I must adjust the way that I advise governments if I want those recommendations to be implemented.

But also, really getting to see how policies fully impact sectors that we didn't have in Botswana or not at the same scale. For example, the agricultural sector in Ghana is huge and it was incomparable, or the Botswana one was quite incomparable to the one that was in Ghana. And so, I got to learn a lot about export policies, negotiations, and dealing with FTA in the U.S. So, I really appreciated that kind of experience.

And what was really helpful was the way that the Ghana government and the minister of trade at the time—I served, two ministers—were very open to having a young person contributing to high level discussions at the ministry. And that also helped to just build some confidence, interest in increasing my expertise, and in the end really helped be a very valuable base to when I later joined government in my own country.

ORDU: Fascinating. That must have been quite an enriching experience.

KENEWENDO: Yes, I was going to say, without sounding very cliché, I chose to go to Ghana because, one, I'm a very staunch pan-African and I wanted to walk the streets that Kwame Nkrumah walked. And it was one of those things that as a young economist and a young dreamer about what pan-Africanism means, felt like a dream come true and being able to access the libraries in Ghana, the W.E.B. Du Bois and going to the Kwame Nkrumah Museum, and just interacting with the way that some of the old papers from the '50s, the '60s, and '70s really kind of opened my eyes to what the vision was, about what African development should be, and where we are at this moment, and how we should position ourselves for the future that we want.

And I consistently say from that experience, I really got to a space where I thought about there was that generation that led political independence. And clearly where we are now is we need to be leading more of an economic independence and an

economic revolution. So, being in that space really helped me think a little bit more in-depth and critically about what the future of Africa's economy should be and what it should look like.

ORDU: You couldn't have chosen a better country for that for the reasons you outlined. Of course, President Kwame Nkrumah, absolutely one of Africa's finest, one of the best in terms of independence movement and indeed a framing of the Africa we want. He was very, very catalytic and instrumental in shaping the affairs of our continent in those days.

So, you were clearly one of the youngest cabinet ministers in Africa. And indeed, I would say globally when you are appointed. Our listeners include many young women and girls who aspire to be like you. Could you share with our listeners your journey and how that appointment came about?

KENEWENDO: Well, it was quite a long journey and it is rumored that at my appointment I was the youngest minister in Africa. And I started being involved in policymaking when I was about 16 with the Botswana National Youth Council. And I knew from an early age that this is what I wanted to do. I wanted to make policies that could impact people's lives, that could change the status quo. And so, being involved with the Botswana National Youth Council at that stage and eventually being one of the first youth representatives to the UN for Botswana, being in that space allowed for me to also interact with the political leaders.

And I remember one of my first trips serving as the Botswana's youth representative to the UN was for COP15, and it was with the former President Mogae and Minister Kitso Mokaila who's now the ambassador in DC. Those kind of interactions really built as stepping stones to me being in the end appointed as minister. Having that level of visibility of the government and then continuing to serve advisory services to cabinet. At some point we would be invited with Dr. Keith Jefferis to give some advisory on different matters, particularly economic and trade. And I think that's just level of interaction with the president then and the vice president, who now is the president, gave me space. And in the end, you know, I was challenged.

But I think that one of the moments that was a decision point was at a jobs fair. And I was giving a presentation there on what the options could be, policy options should be of improving, doing business environment and therefore creating jobs, allowing private sector to create jobs. And I remember the president was supposed to leave and he ended up saying for the entire thing. And right after I was called to the corner to say, what do you think about joining government? So, I think that potentially was one of those things.

So, I my advice to young people that want to be involved in politics, whether by joining government or just influencing policy, is to use their voices and use the various platforms in a very constructive manner, and constructive manner doesn't mean you should always be in the side of government. If you're on the side of government all the time, then you're not really adding value. But find a way that you could be adding value. Push a different narrative, seek for solutions instead of always harping on what the challenges are. We know the challenges. What I think is lacking in the world is the solutions or potential innovations around solutions and ways that we can deal with these challenges that we're facing.

ORDU: Bogolo, during your tenure as minister, you implemented reforms that improved Botswana's position in the World Bank's *Doing Business* report. What challenges did you face in that role and how did you address them?

KENEWENDO: Well, I think, when you look into some of my experiences, especially after it's been two or three years, the challenges seem lesser than they were at the time. So, if we look at what I thought were battle scars at the time or battle wounds, now they seem like little butterflies on the skin.

But I think some of the main challenges really were I had an idea, a vision, of where I wanted to take the ministry and therefore the economy. And I really needed buy-in of my leadership and buy-in of the country's leadership, and then buy-in of the ministry and the various constituents and stakeholders. And I think the first one was just really getting through the everyday, we're used to doing things this way to saying there are different ways of doing this, of approaching this, and having that rallying movement behind some of the changes that I wanted to implement.

And I must say when we got started with President Masisi, he gave me sort of *carte blanche* of what it was that I wanted to do in terms of doing business environment. And we had thought out what a transformation agenda would look like. And so it was quite easy to go back to the ministry and say, this is what we need to do.

But in order to really get buy-in off of my team, we had to engage in several powwows. We went outside with the ministry's leadership team because I didn't want it to be a top down approach. I wanted us to have a collective agreement on how we serve better the constituents that have put us in office. And I know there usually the misconception is that it's only the politicians that are being put in office. But I consistently reminded the officers that they too were put in the office by the public, and they've been entrusted to deliver on some constitutional rights. And so, I would make that sort of clarion call that all of our constituents are expecting us to do better for them to improve their lives. So, just thinking about that and changing the mindset and mentality within the ministry I would say was probably one of the largest challenges.

There is, of course, those challenges that people like to talk about, like being a young person and being a young woman in particular. Those are real challenges and I don't want to minimize them at all. But I think after, like, my maybe my third month as minister I had done enough work. I had shown that I was capable to my colleagues, particularly when I was leading trade negotiations for SACU. I remember ministers in southern Africa really had my back when we would go outside southern Africa and would challenge whoever felt that I wasn't capable because I was young or a woman.

And I want to particularly credit Minister Rob Davies. We used to joke that he had served as minister since I was born. And so, technically my coming into government was a signal for him to leave. But for somebody that had been in government for so long, he was one of the most progressive people who really helped to usher me into my role and make sure that we are doing the work that we need to do and not just focusing on optics.

ORDU: You also served on the UN Secretary-General's High Level Panel on Digital Cooperation, which was, I believe, chaired by Mrs. Melinda Gates and Jack Ma at the time. What was that experience like?

KENEWENDO: Oh, Jack Ma was fantastic. We became really good friends following that brief stint together and working with Melinda as well was really eye opening into the way that she thinks. You know, she's a very complex woman and it's really nice to see such a powerful woman owning her space.

But generally, it was the first time that I got to serve the UN secretary-general, and it was a complete honor to be able to work at that level. And this sort of experience at that space was also quite different to being in leadership in country. And I feel like there are levels to these things. You get to government and you are seen as an authority in this space and then you start to go out and open yourself up to what happens in the world.

So, I really greatly benefited from that. And some of the reforms that we ended up implementing when I was minister were because of the work that we did at that high-level panel, because it was focusing on digitization and some digital reforms. And we got some of the responses for the work that we wanted to do in the country from that panel. So, it was really useful.

ORDU: You currently lead the Molaya Kgosi Women Leadership and Mentoring Program and you serve on the board chair and of that trust. How did you approach your role as a mentor and even now, how do you approach your role as a mentor?

KENEWENDO: So, we started Molaya Kgosi Trust as a group of friends right after we finished university. And it was because I chose to study economics, again because I saw Mogae, former President Mogae, who had been an economist. And I thought at some point in my life, I would like to have that level of influence. So, I studied economics.

But the question was, between finishing university and being president, what do you need to do? And I didn't have those answers. And I felt if I had a mentor at that time, maybe I would have made better decisions and knew what path to take. I fortunately then ran into Keith Jefferis, who I've mentioned three times now, and I'm not harping on his name, but he's been so influential in how my career turned out.

And, so out of sheer luck, we had Dr. Keith Jefferis show up to one of our events when I was finishing up university, and I thought if we didn't have this event, then I wouldn't have met this gentleman who then became my mentor. So, I wanted to create a space that could provide mentorship to other young women that were in the space of we don't know what is next for our career. And what was important to us is you create space, you open yourself up as someone that is at least two steps ahead of the ones that you want to help and then allow them to lead the relationship. The way that I approach mentorship is I don't lead the relationship between myself and my mentee. I give them space and allow them to lead because it's really their needs that I'm trying to meet, and it's not myself trying to impose my perspective on what they should be doing or how life is. And that is because I think if someone comes to me and says, Oh, I actually want to be an astronaut tomorrow and I say, Oh, that is so impossible, we don't have a space station. I'm only saying it from my little perspective, I don't see what they are seeing. And so, my role as a mentor is to be

supportive, is to look at options and not to be limiting in any manner. So, that is how I approach it.

So, over and above what we do with Molaya Kgosi, which last year we adopted approximately a hundred young girls—last year, no, during COVID—a hundred young girls whose parents really couldn't afford to take them to school due to the COVID economic impacts and had a promising academic future. And we chose those ones that teachers would say “a promising academic future”—not the bright ones, because everybody knows you are bright, you can survive. And we chose those ones that had C grades. And I'm happy to say that by the beginning of this year their results for Form 5, which is equivalent to A-levels, O-levels, all of them had done about 40 points, which is about an A grade from them going into high school at C grade. So, I'm very proud of the work that we do with the young women in Botswana and the work that we do with _____ young women across Africa.

ORDU: I must congratulate you, Bogolo, for the work you do in mentoring the women, because clearly the future of our continent lies so much in making sure that we don't leave our young women and girls behind.

Let's now turn to Botswana's role on the continent in terms of natural beauty and tourism destination. Clearly, yours is one of the best environments for holidaymakers on the continent. You have so many opportunities like the Okavango Delta, Chobe Lodge, other lodges, the Kalahari Desert, et cetera. These are some of the most beautiful nature reserves in the world. Could you share with us, our listeners, how climate change is impacting your country and what is being done to address the problem so that we preserve these wonderful, wonderful nature reserves?

KENEWENDO: You know, first, I must ask you if you have been to the Okavango Delta?

ORDU: Absolutely. All the places I've mentioned, I've been to all of them.

KENEWENDO: Fantastic. Then we can talk about it. But I was going to challenge you first, like, come visit to me and then we can talk about it in a little bit.

ORDU: Yeah, in fact, on that, I must admit, when you're in that small plane and looking down on the Okavango Delta, the first thought that came to my mind was basically that somehow a whistle was blown on the planet and all the animals in the world responded to that whistle and assembled there. That was what I saw in my mind looking down. Right? That was the first thought that came to me. Tell me I'm wrong.

KENEWENDO: Brilliant depiction. I usually argue that the Okavango Delta is the real Garden of Eden because of just how the diversity, the biodiversity there is quite incredible. You find wildlife that you don't find anywhere else and the fauna is also quite—flora and fauna—is quite special. It is my most favorite place on earth and it is quite painful to see the impacts of climate change on the Okavango, on Kasane, and also the Makgadikgadi _____ area because we keep seeing this fluctuation of water levels and sometimes the water takes too long to come in and there are a lot of wildfires that happen which really impacts and deteriorates the biodiversity in the space and threatens some of the species that we have that are quite rare around the world.

But over and above, just thinking about the impacts of climate change on some of these beautiful spaces that we all appreciate, the impact of climate change in Botswana is evidently seen in our agricultural sector, which has always been quite small, but now it is really under threat of the ever changing climate, of the droughts, the consistent and persistent droughts that we see. And sometimes out of nowhere, the floods that have been quite destructive in the country.

So, it's really mainly the agricultural sector that I would say to me should have a stronger focus. Solutions should be seen. I had a very interesting conversation last month with some players in the agricultural sector in Botswana about climate-smart agriculture because it's very imperative—right now there's a global, ensuing global food crisis and we should find ways of really being able to provide for our own food, our own grains in Botswana. So, we have to think about innovation around agriculture and climate-smart agriculture in order to really secure people's livelihoods.

My main concern with this is when we fail to deal with adaptation and resilience in places like Botswana, particularly areas that are closer to the desert, is those areas already have very high unemployment, very high poverty rates, very high malnutrition rates. So, a further impact on their access to food and agricultural sector will really deteriorate livelihoods in those spaces and we do not want to see any further loss of progress that has been made in the last decades of uplifting people's lives due to climate change when we know that the impacts will only worsen. So, it's best that we start to act now.

ORDU: Let's not turn, Bogolo, to your brilliant essay in *Foresight Africa 2023*, which was titled “The charge due to custodians of the world's lungs.” You open that essay with the statement that “it is time to rebalance the scales in Africa's favor when it comes to climate finance.” What did you mean by that?

KENEWENDO: So, at the moment we are seeing a growth of climate finance. Everybody is signing up to race to zero and coming up with their net zero plans. And financial sector in particular is shifting the way that they finance projects to more green and climate friendly projects. And yet, with the rise of climate finance, the continent does not see that exponential growth of the climate finance flowing in.

So, really the rebalancing is to say, well, if there is growth and exponential growth of climate finance, we should too see a good share of that climate finance in the continent. And I particularly want to quote what I wrote in this article that the continent is home to 16% of the world's population and 25% of the world's remaining rainforests, and yet it only attracts 3% of climate finance. And of that 3%, only about six countries truly benefit from the flows of climate finance into the continent. So, this is truly a mismatch.

And then in addition to that, if you are a custodian of over 25% of the world's remaining forests, we really should be seeing an attempt to pay for the custodians of the world's lungs, as I put it, because it is the forests that are providing the carbon sinks that we need. And it is globally known that for us to attain our long-term climate goals, we need, yes, a strong decarbonization agenda, but we need nature to really work on the carbon sinks. About 30% of the carbon reduction of carbon emissions will be done through nature. So, we really need to start seeing heavy investment in

the protection, conservation, and real commercial investment into our forests and other nature assets, and we really start to see the benefits from those finances.

ORDU: You mentioned the need to de-risk investment projects to make them bankable for private sector entities to provide financing for project execution in your piece. As we have learned from the Africa Union's Program for Infrastructure Development in Africa—PIDA—de-risking projects entails securing grant funding to lower the overall cost of projects. What advice would you give policymakers on how best to secure grant funding on the scale that will enable them to do the bankable, climate resilient infrastructure projects on the continent that you talked about?

KENEWENDO: So, I think there are two things here. You mentioned bankable projects, and then there are those that under traditional commercial ways are not seen as bankable, and those are usually adaptation and resilience projects. So, for the bankable projects, I think most countries know what they need to do to work on an investment case and work on an investment deck and approach the various financiers.

However, the real challenge is our adaptation and resilience projects. And under this it falls some water projects, conservation, forests spending, forest projects, mangroves, and so forth. And these are the ones that we really need to be pushing for more access of grant funding in particular.

So, one of the challenges that we saw last year and we continue to see actually is that NDCs—nationally determined contributions—by various countries, particularly in the continent, do not effectively capture the adaptation projects that need funding, adaptation projects that they want to implement in their countries. And as a result, there is this mismatch in what we talk about that the continent needs more adaptation finance to what is actually in the NDCs.

So, first I want my advice and what we have been talking to different policymakers about is that they need to rebalance the NDCs and make sure that adaptation and resilience projects are as much listed in the NDCs as the mitigation projects. There has been this bias on the climate action projects to focus on energy, energy projects. And it's okay. We know that energy poverty in the continent is very high and we need energy in order for us to grow our economies. But we need way more than energy—in particular reference to climate action projects we need water, we need biodiversity, and we need good built environment that will be resistant to climate shocks and so forth.

So, it is being able to adequately package NDCs and make an investment case that is attached to the NDC. And when it comes to working on the transparency framework of UNFCCC, we make sure that we are reporting adequately in that space.

Some countries have done all of this, but one of the challenges that we still see is this this risk perception that investing in the continent is risky, there's high corruption, projects won't be delivered, and so forth. But there's so many studies that we point to now that show that actually the risk of project failure in the continent is much lower than the risk of project failure in Latin America. And yet rarely do you hear that the risk perception of investing in Latin America is as high as that in Africa.

So, we need to challenge those stereotypes and we need to have rating agencies and other financing companies come to the table and really focus on how best can you invest in the continent, learn from those that are already doing business in the continent, and partner with AfDB, which has an impeccable credit rating, amongst others, partner with those that have done business here in order for us to really flow climate finance into the continent.

ORDU: I'm glad you mentioned the issue of risk perception, which is really, really impacting the continent negatively. On the sideline of the IMF-World Bank spring meetings here in Washington earlier this year, we hosted a forum jointly with the UNDP Africa Bureau and Africa Catalyst, which is based in Dakar, Senegal, on the issue of the impact of credit rating on development financing in Africa. And I must tell you, we had many African ministers on the platform and in attendance, and it's quite clear the ministers who spoke and the subsequent reactions to that particular event, that this issue of risk perception and the way rating agencies rate our countries is really uppermost on many people's minds. It's very much an area we want to do more work going forward.

KENEWENDO: And just tapping into that, I believe that you also, as part of that event at the World Bank, there was this discussion around sustainable debt coalitions which were hoping that it would help to mobilize more African members and African leaders to really make a strong case around how climate finance, both from MDBs and private sector, could help to catalyze more development, finance and development in the continent.

So, I'm hoping that with the Sustainable Debt Coalition that was launched at COP27 and some momentum that is being gained at the Paris Summit—we've all been calling it's the Macron Summit—but the Paris Innovative Financing Summit. And then later in the at the Africa Climate Action Summit that we will continue to harp on this particular point. We will bring the right parties to the table and really find out what is it that we can do in order to help them and what should they do to help us so that we deal with this issue of risk perception and not just that of unlocking more financing to the continent and dealing with the issue of sustainable debt.

I know we feel that this sustainable debt thing is an oxymoron, but we are where we are—there is debt, we need to stabilize the debt, and make sure that we are also stabilizing African economies. It is a shame that this year in so many African economies, 20 plus, are at a threat of defaulting on their loans, are at a threat of having negative growth rates, and unemployment is increasing. All of these things are things that should matter, whether in a finance-IMF-World Bank space, or when we're talking about green funds, because all of these things are interrelated. And we are at a point where we cannot talk about financing development and then financing climate separately.

For us, these are very jointly connected and we can use one to support the other and vice versa. They are all issues of sustainable development after all.

ORDU: Still on your essay, you noted that the climate crisis is not gender neutral. What can be done to ensure that our women and girls are not disproportionately impacted by climate change in Africa?

KENEWENDO: So, I don't think there's one solution to gendering climate action. I think there are various layers. So, if we look, for example, to adaptation and resilience, or financing in itself, there's already a challenge across the continent of women having access to finance. And I think one of the gender responsive solutions here in order to push adaptation and resilience is to make gendered finance and gender-lens finance and gender-lens investing. And we have seen cases of this happen across the world. It's happening in Europe—there's the 2XCollaborative that is championing this among the G7 members, G7 country members. And we believe that one of the ways that we can make sure that there is a gender-lens investing, particularly for agriculture projects, for infrastructure, and so forth to enable women to be effective participants in the economy is to create a subsection of the Global Adaptation Fund that has been raised by AfDB, the Africa Adaptation Fund, and they said that they want \$20 billion towards the Adaptation Fund. And in their own report they said about 10% of that needs to meet the needs of women.

And therefore, I believe which is right in as a response for that is that there be a determination that \$2 billion go towards gender-lens investing and be really deliberate about identifying communities that are under threat, those that need resilience to be built, those that are in small island states, those that are in areas that are quickly desertifying, in areas that are in shorelines that are currently being flooded in order for us to build resilience. Because if we lose any of the economic mainstays that we currently have, we really do stand to lose out on all of the gains that we have made in progress around socio-economic and livelihoods in Africa generally.

ORDU: So, as we wrap up, Bogolo, let's turn now to COP27, which was billed as "Africa's COP." As the U.N. High-Level Climate Champion. What were your expectations going to Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, in November 2022 and where these expectations met?

KENEWENDO: To clarify, Dr. Mahmoud Mohieldin is the high-level champion, I'm his special adviser. So, we went to COP27 thinking about what does the Africa COP look like? What does it mean and who should be involved. So, the way we thought about it is we want to see more Africans participating at the so-called Africa COP. We want to see COP responding to African and development issues. And we want to see Africa showing up for itself at the COP. And by African, this third pillar, we could be talking about governments and politicians, really, our focus was on non-state actors. So, how could the private sector show up? How can civil society show up for itself and general community? So, these were some of our top three thoughts as we tailored our strategy towards COP27.

And I would say that we would argue that we had one of the largest numbers of Africans participating in a COP. At this COP, we were very deliberate about mobilizing as many Africans as we could and seeking further support for some Africans to participate. And it's not necessarily our remit to lobby people for sponsorship, for people to participate at COP. But we felt it was very important that when people see or feel what the negotiations feel like and see the opportunities that exist in the blue zone and in the green zones, that they will also start to think a little differently about how they approach their challenges. So that was one, and I would say that was a success. There's still more to be done. We hope to do more for COP28.

And then on the second space of African issues being profiled, you might remember that COP27 was really big on adaptation and resilience, and the presidency managed to get to the issue of loss and damage on the agenda for the first time. It's not the first time that people discussed loss and damage. We've always wanted less and damage to be on the agenda, but this is the first time it actually made it into the agenda and really having a strong push around developmental issues on adaptation and resilience.

So, I would say when it comes to some of these fundamental issues that matter for developing countries and for the continent in particular, having been showing up in the negotiations was a big win.

Another focus of us here was thinking about MDB reform and MDBs responding to climate action and the interlinkage to development. And we managed to get texts showing up on that. We were very happy. And subsequently we're seeing all these conversations that are ensuing around what MDB reform looks like.

And the third one on Africa showing up for itself. For the longest time, the main narrative has been that we are victims of climate change. Which is true. Indeed, Africa has contributed 3% to 4% of the emissions that are currently causing this problem, and yet Africans are bearing the brunt of climate change. True.

But in all of that, we thought there are so many solutions that we are custodians to as Africans based on our indigenous knowledge, or we can also champion to show exactly how we can be more responsive to the issues that we are facing and challenge the world to partner with us and to actually do what they said they will do.

So, here is one challenging indeed people to come to the table with the pledges that were made, COP15 and COP25 and so forth, meet us with those pledges. But secondly, we too can do something. So, I'm happy to say we saw the Africa Business Leaders Coalition coming together, which are some of Africa's biggest businesses, coming together and making a declaration on how they are going to finance resilience issues, reskilling, human capacity building, and greening some of their industries, working on a decarbonization agenda, and really taking the lead.

And I think, without necessarily challenging anybody, but I think it was a position for African businesses to say, We heard what _____ members said they can do. We heard that they said they manage \$1.3 trillion and yet they didn't make a strong determination of that 1% of what we make towards climate finance, we will deploy it to Africa or developing countries. But what we will do as African businesses is make that declaration quite strongly. So, I think it was very good to see Africans come out really strongly on how they are going to work on their own solutions, and then calling on the world to partner with them.

Similarly, what was happening with the Nairobi Declaration for Sustainable Insurance members—it's that African insurance companies say this is our solution, you can partner with us on the solution. And I think those things, as some of the many things that were done at COP27, were well received. Of course, AfDB, IFC, amongst others, UNECA, they also had many other initiatives that were showing that the continent is putting its best foot forward.

ORDU: So, as we approach the next COP, COP28 in Dubai later this year, how differently would your advice be to our African negotiators and policymakers on how best to prepare to achieve a better outcome for the continent this time?

KENEWENDO: I feel like there is so much momentum for climate action this year, not to take away from the many other years and the hard work that people have put to put for us to be at this moment. But I feel like the Africa Climate Action Summit that will be hosted in Kenya by President Ruto, the AU, and others, that it's a strong signal that the continent, or the AU at the very least, is going to come up with a strong position for the continent.

These are some of the things that have been challenging, of course. We are not a homogeneous population. We do have disagreements when it comes to what climate action means and what the African position should be. But I think we are gearing towards a common position at least. And there's a lot of interest on exactly what a green development pathway looks like for the continent.

And I really liked the statements the speech that President Ruto made at the opening of the Pan-African Summit in May, which was really stating what net zero means for the continent and the words that that makes sense for a developing country and what a green development pathway looks like and how we can take a green development pathway as an impetus of sustainable development goals. I liked that, and I think that is the sort of thought leadership that we need to see in the continent.

There have been many times where we've been asked, Okay, so of all the African leaders, who would you say is the climate leader? And we are happy to say President Ruto is coming out strong, swinging as a climate leader for the continent. And, you know, President Geingob is doing a lot of work as well on green hydrogen and has been a very strong advocate of the green hydrogen and the transition of energy in that space. So, it's so good to see all the leaders—President Macky Sall as well—speaking out on what climate action means for the continent and how we can reduce the vulnerabilities of the African countries to climate shock.

So, that is really how I would say we're expecting for the continent to show up at COP28. It will be a little different. I know people want there to be a strong focus on oil and gas. We obviously have member states that are based on the oil and gas. So, that will be an interesting discussion on do we start to really accept oil and gas companies and countries into this strong discussion of their decarbonization agenda? And then over and above that, there's a strong focus on nature, the protection of nature and land restoration. Similarly with food security and agriculture. And these are all the issues that matter for the continent still. So, I'm hoping that we will still have a strong development aspect that continues.

ORDU: Honorable sister Bogolo, thank you very, very much for joining us this morning. I really, really appreciate chatting with you. Thank you.

[music]

KENEWENDO: Thank you so much once again for having me. And I look forward to continuing working and our collaboration together.

ORDU: I'm Aloysius Uche Ordu, and this has been Foresight Africa. To learn more about what you just heard today, you can find this episode online at Brookings dot edu slash Foresight Africa podcast.

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