

AFTER Carbon Progress Report

Formed by UNU-INRA under the leadership of Dr Fatima Denton, *AFTER Carbon* - the Policy to Research Hub bringing together scientists, entrepreneurs, and policy makers to tackle the barriers facing Africa's transition to a post-carbon economy – was launched on 21st September 2022.

Since conception, Dr Denton and the UNU-INRA team have made great progress in developing the transdisciplinary programme's long-term vision, alongside detailing the next steps required for its implementation.

Stress testing the concept

To gauge the need and potential effectiveness of the programme, UNU-INRA hosted two in-depth roundtable discussions, on 12th August and 19th October 2022. These brought together climate experts, policymakers, development partners, academia, CSOs and private sector stakeholders.

Representatives in attendance included a range of experts from: the University of Ghana, University of Warwick, Cambridge University, the UNECA, EPA, UNDP, IDRC, IIED, British High Commission, Southern Africa Resource Watch, Third World Network Africa, and the Climate Crisis Advisory Group. And discussion considered the ways in which AFTER Carbon could be implemented to facilitate inclusive just transitions for the continent. Conversations covered three main areas.

1. The need for AFTER Carbon and how the programme will help Africa achieve a post-carbon economy:
 - Considering what a post-Carbon economy for Africa would look like, including creating sustainable economies
 - Ensuring AFTER Carbon is relevant for African policymakers, helping them to meet their existing targets with best-in-class, data and research supported solutions
 - Showcasing the interlink between research and policy – what makes AFTER Carbon unique – and the inability to form effective solutions without scientific research
 - Highlighting the need for local solutions in the transition and why AFTER Carbon is best placed to help produce them
 - Discussing the opportunities that Africa has at its disposal to become a global energy powerhouse, and one that leads in the transition
 - Debating how to balance the short-term needs of the continent, including economic development, alongside the long-term transition
2. How AFTER Carbon will help Africa tackle the global climate crisis:
 - Considering how AFTER Carbon can support policymakers in meeting existing commitments, such as the SDGs

- Highlighting the global benefits of Africa's transition. Communicating how a green future will generate returns on investment – emphasising credible analysis of the transition opportunity
 - Showing how AFTER Carbon can both support the transition and help to build climate resilience for the continent, including regional strategies to act against the impacts of climate change
 - Demonstrating how AFTER Carbon's research and solutions may be used across the world
3. Considerations and potential barriers facing the transition:
- Reframing key concepts and transition markers including 'net zero' and 'just transition' from an African perspective to allow for greater buy-in and ownership
 - Identifying trade-offs and making blind spots and opportunities evident
 - Debating what the cost for the transition will be, and who should bear that cost – whether that be public, private, local or external
 - Discussing the role of different players in post-carbon development for Africa, including government, private sector, and civil society
 - Considering the standards and education required to prompt a shift in mindset and behaviour in favour of green solutions
 - Discussing how to build the right skills for an AFTER Carbon transition

Creating a brand identity

For a project of this stature and ambition a clear and engaging brand identity is critical. After taking careful consideration of the AFTER Carbon messaging this fresh, bold branding is based on a ripple wheel that reflects a wheel of change – leading Africa's transition into the post-carbon era. The ripple effect mirrors the project's ambitions to create a ripple effect amongst stakeholders across Africa and beyond.

It was agreed that this initial stage would focus on the visual identity and key assets. Further assets and extensions will be developed as the project matures.

Promotion at COP27

With a clear narrative, vision, and brand identity established, Dr Denton began on the ground promotion of the AFTER Carbon programme at COP27.

For a COP termed the "first African COP", the event offered a real moment to discuss the opportunities for the continent, including projects that would really move the needle.

Conversations with the New York Times and Reuters allowed Dr Denton to communicate how Africa has several advantages that can help accelerate its transition and how its opportunity to forge ahead is reliant on foresight and means to seize the opportunity.

These meetings grew critical awareness around UNU-INRA's initiative and how projects like AFTER Carbon are helping to plot a new trajectory for Africa by providing a critical bridge between science and policy to effect real and meaningful change.

Dr Denton's initial thought leadership piece on the vision for AFTER Carbon [was published](#) by Reuters in November 2022.

AFTER Carbon Implementation Workshop

Following awareness building on the ground in Sharm El-Sheikh, Dr Denton and the UNU-INRA team coordinated a follow up workshop to outline crucial next steps and a roadmap towards actualising the facility over the next five years.

A more practical, implementation-based workshop, participants gathered in Accra, Ghana to:

- Identify a roadmap for AFTER-Carbon and critical next steps for a 2023-2028 implementation period
- Develop overarching messaging and story lines to support the communications for AFTER Carbon
- Identify coordinating institutions and their specific niche contributions to the programme
- Determine the most relevant knowledge products to accompany the public launch of AFTER Carbon
- Identify any missing gaps including key resources and research required to get AFTER Carbon up and running and secure buy-in across the board

Looking ahead

With great progress made over the last six months, the team now has clear short, medium, and long-term steps to get AFTER Carbon running and Africa moving ahead on the road to a post-Carbon economy.

As a first step, work will be undertaken to prompt widespread education. Getting young people adjusted to new climate ambitions, showing companies how sustainable business can lead to profit, and shifting the mindset of government officials to help them see how African countries can become leaders on a global scale.

Alongside this activity, further iterations within the core team and partners have resulted in the following defined roles and actions:

- Use UNU-INRA's operations as important extension levers to enable the implementation of AFTER Carbon
- Feed the priorities of African countries into the AFTER Carbon operational plan

- Organise a series of 1-day outreach workshops in Namibia and Zambia as a starting point – this will provide AFTER Carbon with an important feed to keep it well synched between aspiration and reality
- Engage AFTER Carbon through a set of induction thought leadership pieces to enable the extension levers to work in parallel with other operations
- Reframe key concepts related to 'net zero' and what constitutes 'unjust transitions'
- Rethink productive partnerships within regional groups, such as the EU/Africa, and Africa/China

In the long-term, it is AFTER Carbon's ambition that by becoming the 'go to' policy to research hub for the continent, it can ease the burden on individual governments and ensure the continent's policy environment is primed for a thriving, green economy – capable of producing world leading solutions for a post-carbon economy.

From being a catalyst for African countries to become leaders on the global stage; to supercharging economic development and the creation of green jobs; and driving profit through sustainable technology – this is just the beginning for AFTER Carbon. And our aspirations don't stop at the regional borders.

By connecting the dots and becoming a knowledge hub we are able to paint a whole picture, our ambition is to see AFTER Carbon build an encyclopedia of expertise that can be drawn upon to solve challenges not just across the continent, but where applicable, worldwide. Creating global solutions for nations to draw upon on the road to net zero and a safe and manageable future for humanity.