

STRUCTURED SUMMARY

HOW CAN AFRICA MANAGE THE TRANSBOUNDARY CLIMATE RISKS IT FACES?

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Motivation

In our interconnected world, the impacts of climate change, as well as the mitigation and adaptation actions taken in one or more countries, can generate risks to neighbouring countries, or cascade across regions and globally. These are ‘transboundary climate risks’ (TCARs) and they have the potential to set back economic development gains, jeopardise trade and food security, and impact infrastructure investment.

Purpose

This policy brief, produced for the 19th ordinary session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) in August 2023, highlights five significant TCARs in Africa – trade and food security, financial, biophysical, people-centred and geopolitical – that urgently need consideration for management.

Approach

The authors draw on case studies from across Africa to show how TCARs, and the ways in which they are handled, create significant impacts for other countries. The brief provides some practical recommendations for how African regional economic communities and their Member States can work together to manage these risks, in keeping with existing climate policy frameworks and objectives.

Findings

- Growing populations and shifting diets are creating new dependence on food imports in Africa, which generates new TCARs for food security.
- Foreign direct investment in infrastructure is a critical part of Africa's green, sustainable development agenda, but infrastructure not resilient to climate change extremes is at risk of damage, poor performance or destruction. Sovereign debt and cascading regional economic losses are TCARs that could arise.
- Hydropower accounts for the majority of Africa's electricity generation, but prolonged droughts reduce generation and can trigger multi-country power shortages and cascading economic impacts.

Policy implications

New policies are not necessarily needed, as the African Union *Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy and Action Plan (2022–2032)* already calls for enhancing coordination to address and manage transboundary and cascading climate risks. What is now needed are concrete actions towards implementing this objective. This brief recommends six concrete actions that could be taken in the next three years to support the African Union Climate Plan and link with a wider, forthcoming, roadmap of action for managing TCARs in Africa.

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