Africa is experiencing the most horrific effects of climate change, despite its capacity to absorb the crisis.

Deaths, damage to livelihoods, biodiversity loss and emerging diseases are devastating, driven by floods, cyclones, drought, and other extreme events. Even more frightfully, climate models predict that these events will increase in the future. This will compound suffering for Africans.

Climate adaptation and resilience is a matter of urgency for Africa and a priority in the political agenda of the climate discourse.

With only emissions to avoid, Africa’s priority is to build the resilience required to adapt to the impacts of climate change. Adaptation finance is a critical resource.

People-centred adaptation finance will spur trade and create opportunities for economic development, reducing poverty. It will also allow African countries to pursue sustainable and resilient economic development.
A new Africa Carbon Markets Initiative (ACMI) has been launched at COP27 claims to support the growth of carbon credit production and create jobs in Africa.

Its press release claims “Carbon markets offer an incredible opportunity to finance needs of African economies while expanding energy access, creating jobs and driving climate action.

The new initiative is not the first time Africa has been told that carbon markets are promising.

Since the creation of the Kyoto Protocol in 1997, carbon markets have been presented as “climate finance” and supporting “sustainable development”. Africa’s experience has so far failed Africa and are likely to continue to do so for a range of reasons.
Carbon credits are in reality pollution permits.

We cannot continue hallucinating about emission offsets in a world of safe levels of climate pollution.

Africa has no emissions to cut neither do we have cheap pollution permits. An imaginary commodity space where polluting companies can buy unused others to continue polluting beyond their pollution allocation is unacceptable and unsustainable.
Carbon markets misallocate resources and promote mal-development. Carbon markets are sold as a financial mechanism to support sustainable development.

In practice, the financial flows from carbon markets are not widely shared. Project developers, consultancies that support and verify projects, financial companies that trade carbon, and the large industries that continue to produce carbon pollution.

The profit motive of converting carbon into a commodity does not align well with the interests of indigenous and local communities, or the development objectives of developing countries.
Carbon markets are a new form of colonialism.

Academics, civil society, think tanks and various public institutions have exposed the failings of carbon markets for well over two decades, recognising from the outset responsibility as they distract rich countries and companies from reducing and locking in high-emission levels in the Global North.

The ACMI represents a financialising and commodification of the climate, allowing rich countries and companies to dodge their own carbon mitigation, crowds-out more effective solutions that involve regulating industries, new technologies and approaches.

They create an illusion of emissions reduction, while by passing their responsibilities poorest and most vulnerable countries and people at the lowest cost of carbon ‘saved’ over sustainable development outcomes for African people.
Carbon markets undermines land rights, food security and harms local communities. The development of pan-African carbon markets risks further commodifying resources in Africa, in order to enable wealthy elites and polluting corporations to enable North to continue the high levels of climate pollution that is destroying wealth.

Planting new forests for carbon credits requires land. And those already displaced and fear that scaled-up “land-grabs” will put the security of their livelihoods and human rights impacts have plagued ACMI will be no exception.

A myopic focus on carbon creates perverse incentives that undermine and often incentivise maladaptation, with detrimental social and environmental impacts. Ultimately, they bias the projects towards maximisation of tonnes of
Africa needs alternative financial flows to scale up climate action. Africa has urgent demand for grant and concessional climate finance for adaptation and mitigation. It is estimated that for the African continent alone, adaptation costs could reach $1.3 trillion by 2050.

Mitigation costs for a clean energy transition in Africa have been estimated at $2.8 trillion per year between 2026 and 2030.

A redirection of fossil fuel subsidies and investments towards renewable energy and agricultural systems that meet the needs of the people not carbon tonnes.

A demand for a fair share of climate finance and cancellation of unfair and illegitimate debts.

Given its negligible contribution to the climate crisis, Africa should receive grants from the countries and companies that have driven the crisis. Grants are required to avoid increasing indebtedness already arising from an unjust international financial system.
THANK YOU