

South Africa U20 submission by the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative.

*This submission directly relates to the U20 themes of*

- *Climate Action and Urban Resilience*
- *Economic Opportunities and Financing*

### **Urban Africa, locked out of electricity access**

We are becoming an urban world. [More than 4.4 billion people call cities home](#), and [by 2050, seven in ten people will live in cities](#). The hotspot of this urban change will be Africa. [UN estimates indicate that the world's 15 fastest-growing cities are all in Africa](#).

But for dignified urban life, electricity is essential. And the reality is that fossil fuel extraction has kept Africa in the dark. For decades, our continent has been carved up for coal mines, gas flares and oil pipelines. The result is a landscape of energy poverty, violence and contamination. [Africa is home to over 80% of the world's unelectrified population. 600 million Africans lack electricity access, and nearly one billion inhale toxic fumes every day from a lack of clean cooking](#), while suffering from unhealthy air and the [highest rate of road traffic fatalities](#) due to rapid motorisation rates and widespread use of dirty fuels. [Africa is the only continent on Earth where the population without electricity has risen since the new millennium](#).

Militarisation of fossil fuel extraction sites, contaminated waterways fuelling disease, polluted air, rising debt costs, human rights violations and climate breakdown are widespread, as [fossil fuels sabotage every single sustainable development goal](#). The powerhouses of fossil fuel extraction on our continent – Nigeria and Angola – remain locked into energy poverty. [Nigeria faces one of the largest energy access deficits globally, with around 85 million people living without electricity](#), and [in Angola, over half the population lacks electricity access](#).

Besides locking our continent out of electricity access, [the fossil fuel industry is the architect of climate collapse – responsible for nearly 90% of all carbon emissions in the last decade](#). Coal, oil and gas extraction fuels the cyclones, floods and droughts that we battle year by year.

## **Africa's renewable powerhouse potential**

The twin injustices of energy poverty and climate breakdown are not inevitable. A global just transition is underway, and Africa holds the potential to take centre stage. Africa is home to the largest renewable energy potential on Earth, with [39% of the world's renewable energy potential and 60% of the world's best solar resources](#). The [continent's wind power potential could satisfy Africa's electricity needs 250 times over](#).

## **Financing for a just energy transition**

The gap in harnessing this potential is one of both political courage and financing. Despite holding the lion's share of the world's renewable energy potential, [Africa has only received 2% of global renewable energy investments in the last two decades](#). At the same time, [our continent is saddled with unjust debt entrapments, as public debt grows twice as fast in developing nations compared to wealthy nations. Across Africa, we face the highest borrowing costs globally and we are the only continent where our public debt is rising faster than our GDP](#). As a result, funding for essential public services like climate action, health and education are displaced by odious debt payments, stalling our energy transitions.

New justice-based mechanisms, such as the proposed [Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty](#), an international cooperation framework that would facilitate a fair and financed transition from fossil fuels to an equitable renewable future, are essential for the global just transition. The Fossil Fuel Treaty Initiative is [building momentum](#), now backed by 16 Global South nation-states, [1,000+ parliamentarians from 96 countries](#), [3,000+ scientists and academics](#), [101 Nobel laureates](#), the [World Health Organisation](#), [thousands of faith institutions](#), the [European Parliament](#), [11 Indigenous nations](#), [thousands of youth activists](#), and [hundreds of trade unions representing over 30 million workers](#) in more than 150 countries.

The Fossil Fuel Treaty Initiative has developed a Global South-led Independent Expert Group on [Just Transition Finance](#), addressing the key themes of [debt and alleviating fiscal constraints](#); new forms of finance and investment; and replacing fossil fuel revenues at scale and speed, to deliver green industrialisation, renewable energy deployment and economic diversification. The Fossil Fuel Treaty Initiative also proposes a Debt Resolution Facility for participating countries to renegotiate and broker their debts and a Just Transition Investment Fund for participating nations to submit their energy transition and renewable energy portfolios for financing.

## **Cities building collective power for a renewable-powered future**

Over 135 cities and subnational governments worldwide, including African capitals such as [Freetown](#) and Lilongwe, have backed the call for a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty.

As the home to the majority of humanity, cities will either make or break the global energy transition. On the frontline of the climate crisis, “cities dominate global energy use, making up [“two-thirds of global energy consumption and more than 70% of annual global carbon emissions.”](#) A just transition is vital for African cities, to break free from the shackles of fossil fuel-induced energy poverty, electrify our populations with dignity, build climate resilience and ensure energy sovereignty. African cities can [deliver inspiring and impactful action to end their reliance on fossil fuels, while demonstrating leadership](#) on the global stage to demand a fair and financed transition towards clean energy for all.