

Poorest nations push for compensation at UN climate talks

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A morning market in Munda, Solomon Islands. Photo by: Kirsten Abernethy / WorldFish / CC BY-NC-ND

Dakar, September 17 (RHC)-- Ministers from the 46-nation bloc of Least Developed Countries (LDC) are pushing proposals for funds to compensate vulnerable states for climate-inflicted damage.

In a statement issued ahead of the November conference of the LDC, ministers and experts from the bloc, meeting in the Senegalese capital Dakar, said their countries were most exposed to climate impact but least to blame for the carbon emissions that cause it.

They said setting up a funding mechanism for loss and damage was of "crucial importance." They reiterated a call for rich economies to honor past pledges on climate aid. The LDC bloc, gathering countries mainly from Africa and Asia, is campaigning in particular for compensation for vulnerable nations which suffer from climate-related damage such as floods and rising seas.

The meeting in Senegal was followed by talks among African environment ministers. Senegalese Environment Minister Abdou Karim Sall said: "Countries are being left to fend for themselves" in the face of climate damage. "It is imperative for a fund to be set up which takes care of loss and damage, especially for least developed countries."

Wealthy countries have previously promised billions of dollars to help poorer nations avert carbon emissions and build resilience against climate change. Rich countries have fallen short of their pledges.

Earlier this week, African leaders strongly criticized absence of Western counterparts at a climate summit meeting in the Dutch port city of Rotterdam. Senegalese President and African Union chief Macky Sall, and Congolese President Felix Tshisekedi said wealthy countries responsible for most CO2 emissions should have been present.

"I cannot fail to note with a touch of bitterness the absence of the leaders of the industrialized world. Because these are the main polluters of our planet and it is they who should finance adaptation," Sall said at the opening of the event.

The Senegalese leader said it was "not just the fate of Africa that is at stake but the fate of humanity and the future of the planet." Tshisekedi of the Democratic Republic of Congo said: "I deplore the absence of the leaders of the industrialized nations and the private sector who are, as we know, the greatest polluters." "The African continent has the smallest impact on climate change, but paradoxically suffers the majority of its consequences."

Meanwhile, latest data on Thursday showed Pakistan's unprecedented floods have killed nearly 1,500 people. The National Disaster Management Authority said the tally of the dead stands at 1,486, about 530 children among them. The floods brought by record monsoon rains and glacial melt in northern mountains have hit 33 million of a population of 220 million.

The government and the United Nations have blamed climate change for the surging waters. The floods have swept away homes, transport, crops and livestock in damage estimated at \$30 billion. The disaster has also driven thousands from their homes to live in tents or along highways in the open.

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