

VOICES

COMMENT

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Kenya needs an effective NCCC like yesterday if we are to scale up fight against climate change

CONVENE COUNCIL TO LEAD CLIMATE ACTION

President William Ruto's nomination of members of the National Climate Change Council was an important step towards activating a critical institution charged with coordinating Kenya's response to the worsening climate crisis.

Nearly seven years after the Climate Change Act (2016) created NCCC, the body hasn't convened or had any sittings to advance climate action in the country. This is despite Kenya facing heightening impacts of climate change.

A fully operational NCCC will add momentum to the ongoing efforts to combat the climate emergency by other government institutions, civil society, businesses and communities. It will fill a key missing piece in the country's institutional set-up for addressing climate change. Once in place, NCCC needs to hit the ground running to catch up on lost time. Climate change can't wait for us.

NCCC has a vital mandate, including approving and overseeing the implementation of the National Climate Change Action Plan and ensuring the mainstreaming of climate action into government functions.

It is responsible for administering the climate change fund, overseeing public education, research and training on climate change, and setting targets for limiting carbon emissions that drive climate heating.

Chaired by the President and assisted by his deputy, NCCC's membership includes the Cabinet secretaries in charge of Environment and Climate Change, National Treasury, Energy and Economic Planning. It also has representatives from the Council of Governors, civil society, private sector, academia and marginalised communities.

The composition of the council gives it the required political and technical clout to put climate action front and centre in the country's aspirations to realise sustainable and resilient socioeconomic development. We need to seize the opportunities that climate action offers, including job creation, public health improvement and reduction in social inequalities.

However, it's concerning that a court petition dated February 16 challenging Ruto's nominations to the council may stymie efforts to get NCCC off the ground and into full operation.

The petitioners claimed the nominations lacked public participation, transparency and merit, prompting the court to issue an order barring the nominees from assuming office till it determines the case. The court will give further directions on the matter in mid-April. This court challenge has the potential to further delay NCCC's work.

Hopefully, the contending parties will resolve the issue amicably and avoid long and bitter court battles.

With President Ruto chairing the Committee of African Heads of State and government on climate change and Kenya planning to host the Africa Climate Summit this September, undue delays in convening NCCC will send a wrong signal about Kenya's commitment to tackling climate change.

It will also undermine efforts to mobilise the much-needed climate finance via the climate change fund and channel it to appropriate initiatives that strengthen adaptation to climate change and building a climate-friendly economy.

Kenya needs an effective NCCC like yesterday if we are to scale up the country's fight against climate change that threatens our existence and well-being.



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