

LETTERS

Information integrity is Africa's first line of defence in the climate crisis

At a decisive moment in Africa's history, the climate crisis has moved from the margins to the very centre of our development, peace and security agenda. What was once framed as a distant environmental concern is now a lived reality across the continent, reshaping livelihoods, disrupting agriculture, intensifying water stress and deepening existing inequalities.

Droughts, floods and unpredictable rainfall patterns are no longer isolated environmental events. They carry profound social and political consequences. They influence stability, drive displacement, fuel competition over scarce resources and erode trust in public institutions.

This is why the African Union has rightly elevated the nexus between climate, peace and security as a continental priority. Climate stress does not operate in isolation; it acts as a multiplier of existing risks. In fragile contexts where governance is weak and communities already grapple with poverty and marginalisation, it can intensify tensions and deepen instability.

Climate action, therefore, cannot be separated from peace-building and development. And crucially, peace-building itself cannot succeed without informed and engaged citizens. This is where journalism becomes indispensable. Public interest journalism plays a critical role in moments of uncertainty. This is the essence of African journalism: protecting truth while advancing responsibility.

Over the past two years, the Federation of African Journalists has taken this responsibility seriously. In 2024, during the African Ministerial Meeting on Environment in Abidjan, we brought together journalists from across the continent and adopted a declaration calling for transparency, accountability and meaningful media engagement in climate governance.

That moment marked a turning point and a commitment to place journalism at the centre of the climate conversation. In 2025, during the Second Africa Climate Summit, we built on that momentum through a dedicated engagement on media, climate, peace and security. These platforms have demonstrated that journalism is not a passive observer of events, but an active driver of solutions, climate justice, resilience and peace. Yet, at the heart of this work lies a fundamental question: how do we preserve information integrity in an era increasingly defined by misinformation and disinformation?

Accurate and trusted information is essential in addressing climate-induced crises. When falsehoods spread, they distort public understanding, erode trust and can inflame tensions within communities. Equally dangerous is the absence of reliable information. When facts are concealed or manipulated by political or business interests seeking to profit from the climate crisis, rumours quickly fill the gap. Fear replaces reason. Manipulation becomes easier.

In such conditions, even well-intentioned climate adaptation efforts lose legitimacy, and peace itself becomes more fragile. This is why information integrity is not a secondary concern. It is central to governance, stability and sustainable development.

However, across Africa, journalists who strive to uphold this truth often face intimidation, harassment and, in some cases, violence. Their safety is compromised, their freedoms restricted, and their work undermined by those who fear accountability. For information integrity to be meaningful, three pillars must stand firm: professional capacity, editorial independence and the safety of journalists. Without these, the foundation of credible journalism cannot hold.

Encouragingly, there have been important steps in recognising this reality. The African Union Peace and Security Council, in its recent deliberations, has underscored the importance of protecting journalists and safeguarding information integrity.

Africa remains disproportionately affected by climate change, yet its voice is often underrepresented in global narratives. Ensuring that Africa's climate story is told accurately, responsibly and from African perspectives is not just about representation. It is about dignity and sovereignty.

It is also about shifting the narrative. African communities must not be seen solely as victims of climate change, but as agents of resilience, innovation and solutions. The Federation of African Journalists remains committed to working with partners across the African Union, civil society and international institutions to strengthen climate journalism, promote solution-oriented reporting, protect journalists and safeguard trusted information systems.

Journalism, at its core, is a public good. It serves the interests of the people. And in the face of a climate crisis that is reshaping our continent, the role of journalism has never been more critical.

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