



Environmental Law and Climate Governance as Catalysts for Sustainable Development in Nigeria: Bridging Global Norms and Local Realities

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Received: 25.06.2025 | Accepted: 24.07.2025 | Published: 04.08.2025

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DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.16735974](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.16735974)

Abstract

Nigeria is experiencing significant environmental and climate related issues that are threatening to derail its development path toward sustainable development in particular given its reliance on fossil fuels and climate change vulnerabilities. This article interrogates the vital role of environmental law and climate governance as drivers of sustainable development in Nigeria by connecting global environmental norms to local realities. Specifically, it will examine the constitutional and statutory frameworks in Nigeria, the institutional arrangements, and Nigeria's commitments to environmental agreements, such as the Paris Agreement and Convention on Biological Diversity as well as the persistent challenges to effective implementation of environmental law. While there are many steps that Nigeria must take to mitigate the implementation challenges, this article also proposes a number of specific actions that can occur in Nigeria and whether that success can create and/or expand opportunities for legal, policy and institutional reform in Nigeria. Such steps relate to legal and/or policy reform; institutional capacity development; public participation; funding mechanisms that are sustainable; full domestication of treaties; harmonization of laws at the federal and subnational governments; and capacity-building for environmental authorities and in the judiciary; and devolution to local governments; recognition and respect for indigeneous knowledge (IK); and introducing green bonds and environmental taxes. Through promoting these integrated approaches, Nigeria can further align its environmental governance with international obligations while taking into account local socio-economic and cultural specifics. The article concludes that building robust links between environmental law and climate governance is vital for enhancing resilience, environmental protection, and equitable economic development in Nigeria. The study adds to ongoing discussions about sustainable development by offering practical insights into the changes and coordination efforts required to reshape the context of climate governance in Nigeria for long-term sustainability.

Keywords: Environmental Law, Climate Governance, Sustainable Development, Global Norms.

Original Research Articles

Citation: Agom, U. C. (2025). Environmental law and climate governance as catalysts for sustainable development in Nigeria: Bridging global norms and local realities. *ISA Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2(4), [47-53].

1. INTRODUCTION

The growing challenges associated with climate change and environmental degradation have intensified calls for effective governance systems to facilitate sustainable development. Nigeria, as Africa's most populous country and a major oil producer, plays a significant role in global climate matters. With economic development mainly driven by fossil fuel

revenues and international obligations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and conserve biodiversity, Nigeria faces enormous challenges in managing its development. Environmental law and climate governance can serve as essential mechanisms for sustainable development in a manner that creates enabling legal and institutional frameworks to properly regulate and manage natural resources, reduce pollution, and increase resilience to climate impacts.¹

¹ Olawuyi, D. S. (2025). *The Role of Environmental Policy in*

Nigeria's Climate Resilience: Evaluating the Impact of Political



Environmental law involves a broad array of statutes, regulations, and policies that are designed to protect natural ecosystems and regulate how resources are used into the future. Climate governance is structured, collaborative practices and institutions through which climate-related decisions are made, enacted and monitored. Both environmental law and climate governance can complement each other and establish a further framework of support for aligning national development goals with global, or, normative environmental policy including the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In Nigeria, however, where institutional capacity is weak, fragmented policy initiatives and socio-economic conditions make it increasingly difficult to translate the international norms to local actionable realities.²

This article explores how environmental law and climate governance can enable sustainable development in Nigeria by aligning global norms with local realities. The study examines Nigeria's constitutional and legislative environments, institutional arrangements, and the country's commitment to related international environmental treaties. The opportunities and challenges represented by Nigeria's approach to climate governance are identified, with recommendations on improving legal, institutional, and participatory dimensions. This paper is intended to contribute to wider discussions on improving climate resilience and sustainable development in Nigeria with a view to creating pathways to reconcile international obligations with Nigeria's social, economic, and environmental contexts.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Environmental Law

Environmental law in Nigeria is foundational to regulatory mechanisms designed to protect ecological systems and promote sustainable development. They are formalized through a collection of environmental laws and regulations, such as the National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency Act, which grants NESREA the authority to enforce compliance with environmental standards across all sectors.³ The agency, through its regulatory measures and tools, which address pollution prevention, biodiversity protection, and environmental impact assessments, support the institutionalization of sustainable practices. The new National Policy on the Environment (2016), similarly, formalizes sustainability principles through the development of a

framework for environmental protection in combination with commercial growth. Together, environmental laws and regulations operationalize sustainability principles of environmental governance and facilitate accountability for environmental degradation.⁴

2.2 Climate Governance

Climate governance is defined as the various institutional and procedural arrangements that enable both state and non-state actors to coordinate efforts to manage climate change. Climate governance in Nigeria is somewhat unique compared to other countries because of its mixed methods of governance through national strategies and various international commitments. Climate governance in Nigeria is often subject to issues regarding enforcement, other issues related to inter-agency coordination and capacity issues that slow progress. In reference to the Climate Action Tracker, Nigeria has climate policies and has developed its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to climate adaptation and mitigation, but implementation of both the NDCs and the climate policies are weak because climate governance in Nigeria is fragmented and there is weak political will.⁵ Although Nigeria's climate governance is fragmented and lacking political will, it has adopted policy-based instruments that include the National Climate Change Policy and Response Strategy and Climate Change Act 2021, that could support coordinated climate action. Transferring these frameworks into localized contexts will require strengthening institutional capacity, developing subnational climate action, and promoting more inclusive stakeholder engagement.⁶

2.3 Sustainable Development

Sustainable development means according to the Brundtland Commission form, an integrative form of development that takes into consideration economic, social and environmental aspects. Nigeria regulations and policy on sustainable development align partially with this perspective. There has been an integration of sustainability principles into environmental governance. The National Policy on the Environment provides objectives that align with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) identified in the policy with particular reference to the goals set out in industry and innovation, sustainable consumption and production and climate action.⁷ The actual practice has been hindered by

Will and Policy Implementation. International Policy Brief. Retrieved from <https://internationalpolicybrief.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/ARTICLE-10.pdf> accessed 26 May, 2025. See also; Udo, U. & Bello O. The Climate Change Act 2021: Key Points for Consideration. <https://uubo.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/THE-CLIMATE-CHANGE-ACT-2021-KEY-POINTS-FOR-CONSIDERATION.pdf> accessed 26 May, 2025.

² Ibid.

³ National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA); *Home*. Retrieved from <https://nesrea.gov.ng/> accessed 20 May, 2025

⁴ Climate Action Tracker; 'Climate Governance in Nigeria'; *ClimateActionTracker.org*. Retrieved from <https://climateactiontracker.org/publications/climate-governance-in-nigeria/> accessed 20 May, 2025.

⁵ Ogbowuokara, Onwusameka; Leton, Tambari Gladson; Ugbebor, John Nweneazizi; Orikpete, Ochuko Felix; 'Developing Climate Governance Strategies in Nigeria: An Emphasis on Methane Emissions Mitigation'; *The Journal of Engineering and Exact Sciences*, 9(9), 2023.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ogunkan, David Victor; 'Achieving Sustainable Environmental Governance in Nigeria: A Review for Policy

complex issues relating to governance, institutional capacity, socio-economic challenges, and inequity. Ogunkan highlights that moving from the global norms to the reality on the ground relates to a coherent legal framework that is enforceable, equitable and participatory at the community/city level. Therefore, for environmental law and climate governance to be an effective lever of sustainable development in Nigeria it requires a shift from declaratory in nature to requiring sustainability to be integrated with every level of governance but also every aspect of socio-economic planning.⁸

3. NIGERIA'S ENVIRONMENTAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Constitutional and Legislative Provisions

Nigeria's environmental governance is embedded in its Constitution and a tapestry of federal legislation and regulations. Section 20 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) indicates the duty of the state to "protect and improve the environment and safeguard the water, air currently living on land, forest and wildlife of Nigeria." Although the promise is enshrined in the fundamental objectives and directive principles of state policy, so is any constitutional element or initiative to enact legislation regarding environmental governance that sets up a normative baseline for environmental public law.⁹ At the heart of the framework outlining the duty of environmental governance is the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Act, Cap E12, LFN 2004, requiring that stakeholders demonstrate the environmental impacts of development meant to be authorized. EIA stands in relation to sustainable development and is a prominent device in the suite of instruments that constitute sustainable development by mainstreaming environmental concerns into the development decisions made by proponents of development and avoiding negative impacts, such as doing nothing.¹⁰

The National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA) Act, 2007 enhances Nigeria's legal framework by establishing a federal agency to enforce environmental laws and regulations across the breadth of the country's sectors. NESREA, has developed more than thirty sector-specific regulations aimed at controlling hazardous waste, air quality, noise pollution, and the protection of biodiversity. These regulations are tools to direct broad statutory mandates into defined standards and compliance actions. Also, concurrent the NESREA framework is the

Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Act that supports sustainable land-use planning by providing a framework for managing urban growth that is cognizant of environmental protection. In all, these laws provide a platform for addressing Nigeria's environmental challenges; all is not well within the enforcement mechanisms, overlap of agency mandates and poor institutional collaboration persist.¹¹

In addition, the Petroleum Act of 1969 and its accompanying laws, regulations, and guidelines, are an important part of Nigeria's overall environmental legal regime with respect to the oil and gas industry, which is particularly economically relevant and ecologically sensitive. The Petroleum Act regulates the exploration and production of petroleum resources and has provisions for environmental protection, although there has been significant criticism regarding how lenient it is toward environmental polluters and the lack of responsible enforcement.¹² The regulatory regime is also coupled with waste management guidelines, chemical guidelines, and effluent guidelines. While these legal instruments indicated a robust environmental legal regime, with underfunded institutions, slow judicial systems, and a lack of general awareness in Nigerian society, have impeded the level of compliance. In bridging these gap's agencies need to improve compliance in Nigeria's environmental regime, which will take deliberate effort to address the challenges of harmonizing laws and within regulatory agencies and addressing environmental justice through better civic engagement and transparency issues.¹³

3.2 Institutional Arrangements

In Nigeria, environmental governance emanates from a set of federal and state institutions charged with enforcing and executing legal mandates, developing policies and carrying out an increasingly coordinated set of actions on climate and the environment. The Federal Minister of Environment is the main body for the overall environment and is responsible for the development and implementation of national policies, including areas of public interest such as environmental remediation, waste management and forestry protection. The Minister oversees, departments, divisions and parastatal authorities that report to it, and the Federal Ministry of Environment must ensure that policies and programs align with the country development goals and remain consistent with our international environmental commitments.¹⁴

NESREA, a statutory agency established by the NESREA Act

Consideration'; *Urban Governance*, 2(1), 2022, pp. 212–220. DOI: 10.1016/j.ugj.2022.04.004.

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Section 20 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended)

¹⁰ Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Act, Cap E12, LFN 2004

¹¹ British Journal of Mass Communication and Media Research; 'NESREA and the Challenges of Environmental Regulation in Nigeria'; *British Journal of Mass Communication and Media Research*, 4(1), 2024, pp. 1–11. DOI: 10.52589/BJMCMR-

FLJQLR8S

¹² British Journal of Mass Communication and Media Research; 'NESREA and the Challenges of Environmental Regulation in Nigeria'; *British Journal of Mass Communication and Media Research*, 4(1), 2024, pp. 1–11. DOI: 10.52589/BJMCMR-FLJQLR8S

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Echefu and Akpofure, E.; Environmental impact assessment in Nigeria: regulatory background and procedural framework <https://www.iaia.org/pdf/case-studies/EIANigeria.pdf> accessed 20 May, 2025.



of 2007, performs the function of an environmental regulatory body on behalf of the federation. NESREA has developed and is responsible for enforcing quality standards for the environment, and has issued regulations on air quality, effluent discharge, e-waste and others. The other institutional player is the Department of Climate Change (DCC), which coordinates the country's response to climate change by implementing the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) of Nigeria, liaising with international climate bodies such as UNFCCC and coordinating climate adaptation and mitigation strategies at various levels within Nigeria.¹⁵ Another platform for policy decisions on the environment in Nigeria is the National Council on Environment, which is made up of stakeholders from a wide spectrum of federal and state government agencies. The council deliberates on environmental issues and major environmental strategies, and seeks to provide coordination for the various levels of government.¹⁶

In Nigeria, sub-national authorities (State Environmental Protection Agencies (SEPAs)) are decentralized entities that seek to enforce various environmental regulations and policies. However, SEPAs exhibit differences in capacity, adequacy of staff, technical proficiency, and political backyard. While states like Lagos have well-established institutions, political will, and resources such as the Lagos State Environmental Protection Agency (LASEPA), other states suffer from poor funding, lack of technical capacity, and poor autonomy, creating great disparity in the effective enforcement of environmental laws across the federation.¹⁷ Although significant advancements have been made to improve institutional collaboration among federal and state agencies, adequate funding for SEPAs, and capacity building to support government institutions, there is still a lot of work to be done to ensure effective and coherent environmental governance in Nigeria.¹⁸

4. NIGERIA'S ENGAGEMENT WITH GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE NORMS

4.1 International Treaties and Agreements

Nigeria has demonstrated its commitment to global environmental governance by ratifying several key multilateral environmental agreements. As a party to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) since 1994, Nigeria is obligated to report its greenhouse gas emissions, formulate climate change strategies, and engage in

global climate dialogues.¹⁹ This foundational treaty laid the groundwork for more ambitious climate action, culminating in Nigeria's ratification of the Paris Agreement in 2017. Under this agreement, Nigeria submitted its *Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)*, pledging to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 20% unconditionally and up to 45% with international support by 2030. These international commitments signal Nigeria's acknowledgment of its role in the global climate system and its intention to integrate climate action into national planning.²⁰

Nigeria is also a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which obligates parties to conserve biological diversity, ensure the sustainable use of its components, and share the benefits arising from genetic resources equitably. In response, Nigeria has adopted a National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), although implementation has been hindered by inadequate funding and institutional coordination.²¹ The CBD's provisions are particularly relevant for Nigeria, given its status as one of the most biodiverse countries in Africa. The protection of Nigeria's diverse ecosystems—including forests, wetlands, and coastal areas—aligns not only with the CBD but also supports national priorities such as food security, rural livelihoods, and disaster resilience.²²

Nigeria is further committed to several multilateral treaties on hazardous waste management, including the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade, and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. These treaties are instrumental in regulating the importation, use, and disposal of hazardous substances. Despite these legal commitments, enforcement has been weak. For instance, Nigeria continues to face challenges such as the illegal importation of e-waste and improper chemical handling practices due to institutional gaps and porous borders. This points to the need for stronger regulatory enforcement, improved border control, and heightened awareness of international environmental standards among stakeholders.²³

Overall, while Nigeria has ratified and domesticated many international environmental agreements, the full realization of these norms at the national and sub-national levels remains a work in progress. A key limitation is the disconnection between

¹⁵ Ladan, Muhammed Tawfiq; 'Review of NESREA Act 2007 and Regulations 2009–2011: A New Dawn in Environmental Compliance and Enforcement in Nigeria'; *Law, Environment and Development Journal*, 8(1), 2012, pp. 116–129

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Oruonye, Emeka Daniel; Ukechi, Wilson-Osigwe Menwo; Bashir, Babanyaya Mohammed; 'Challenges of State Institutions in Environmental Protection: A Case of Taraba State, Nigeria'; *Journal of Physical Science and Environmental Studies*, 7(3), 2021, pp. 22–27. DOI: 10.36630/jpses_21007.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Noah, Izoukumor Afedolor; 'Nigeria's Climate Change Act,

Conditional and Unconditional Nationally Determined Contributions, and the Paris Agreement: Legal Implications and Implementation Challenges'; *Environmental Law Review*, 26(1), 2024, pp. 1–19.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Anwadike, B.C.; 'Biodiversity Conservation in Nigeria: Perception, Challenges and Possible Remedies'; *Current Investigations in Agriculture and Current Research*, 8(4), 2020. DOI: 10.32474/CIACR.2020.08.000293.

²³ Brundtland Commission; *Our Common Future*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1987, p. 43.

international obligations and domestic capacity, particularly in terms of institutional funding, technical expertise, and political will. According to Birnie, bridging this gap requires a deliberate policy effort to internalize treaty provisions into enforceable local laws and regulations, supported by capacity building and international cooperation. Therefore, Nigeria's future success in environmental and climate governance lies not merely in accession to treaties but in the sustained integration of global norms into its legal and institutional frameworks.²⁴

4.2 Implementation Challenges

While Nigeria has ratified numerous international environmental treaties, the translation of these commitments into effective national action has proven to be a persistent challenge. One of the foremost obstacles is the delay in domesticating international treaties, which is required by Section 12 of the Nigerian Constitution before such treaties can be enforceable in local courts.²⁵ This legislative bottleneck means that many global agreements remain aspirational, lacking the legal force necessary for local implementation. For example, although Nigeria ratified the Paris Agreement, efforts to fully integrate its provisions into binding national laws have been slow, hampering regulatory enforcement and sector-wide coordination.²⁶

A second major hurdle is weak institutional coordination among the various federal and state agencies responsible for environmental and climate-related mandates. Fragmentation and overlapping responsibilities often lead to policy inconsistencies, duplication of efforts, and competition for limited resources. According to Ifeanyi, the absence of a centralized framework for managing climate actions across sectors undermines the coherence of Nigeria's environmental governance. Additionally, inadequate funding severely limits the capacity of institutions like NESREA and state environmental protection agencies to conduct environmental monitoring, enforce regulations, and implement sustainability programs. Nigeria's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement, which include ambitious targets for renewable energy expansion, afforestation, and energy efficiency, remain significantly underfunded and largely unimplemented.²⁷

Another barrier is the lack of technical expertise in both government and civil society sectors, which impedes effective policy design, data-driven decision-making, and the deployment of adaptive technologies. This skills deficit affects the quality of national climate reports, inventory tracking, and

the implementation of monitoring, reporting, and verification (MRV) frameworks. Moreover, poor enforcement mechanisms weaken the deterrent effect of environmental laws. Even when violations are identified, the penalties imposed are often negligible or unenforced, emboldening non-compliance among corporations and individuals. As highlighted in a UNEP (2021) country profile, enforcement gaps are especially pronounced in waste management and air quality regulation, despite the presence of robust policy documents.²⁸

In light of these constraints, Nigeria's climate governance trajectory calls for a strategic recalibration. Policy reforms should prioritize the domestication of key treaties, streamline institutional mandates, and expand budgetary allocations for climate initiatives. Moreover, international partnerships can be leveraged to provide capacity-building support and technology transfer. Without addressing these systemic shortcomings, the gap between Nigeria's global environmental commitments and its local realities will continue to widen—undermining the nation's progress toward sustainable development and climate resilience.

5. CLIMATE GOVERNANCE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT NEXUS IN NIGERIA

Nigeria's journey toward sustainable development is intricately linked to its approach to climate governance, yet contradictions persist between its environmental aspirations and economic structure. The country's heavy reliance on fossil fuel revenues—constituting over 70% of export earnings—undermines its climate mitigation goals as outlined in its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement. Despite the enactment of the Climate Change Act 2021, which aims to provide a legal framework for national climate actions and establish the National Council on Climate Change, governance remains fragmented across federal and state agencies. This disjointed institutional landscape limits the coherence and effectiveness of climate policies, impeding their alignment with sustainable development objectives such as poverty reduction, environmental integrity, and economic diversification.²⁹

Nevertheless, numerous opportunities exist to strengthen this nexus. One key avenue is the expansion of renewable energy infrastructure, particularly solar mini-grids, which can support decentralized energy access in underserved rural areas and reduce reliance on fossil fuels. Nigeria's Energy Transition Plan

²⁴ Birnie, P., Boyle, A. & Redgwell, C.; *International Law and the Environment*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 241.

²⁵ Section 12 of the Nigerian Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended)

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Akinlabi Akinwale 2 John, & Ikwuoma Sunday U.; 'The Role of Environmental Policy in Nigeria's Climate Resilience: Evaluating the Impact of Political Will and Policy Implementation'; *International Journal of April*, 2025

Innovative Research in Social Sciences and Strategic Management Techniques p11(1), 2025, pp. 112–130.

²⁸ United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). *Environmental Assessment of Ogoniland*,

²⁹ Olujobi, Olusola Joshua; Odogbo, Ikiyouleimo Success; 'Strategic Evaluation of the 2021 Nigeria Climate Change Act: Surmounting Challenges, Paving the Way for Success, and Envisioning Future Trajectories'; *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 10, 2024, Article 100928. DOI: 10.1016/j.ssaho.2024.100928.

also envisions green job creation in sectors like afforestation, waste recycling, and climate-smart agriculture—initiatives that simultaneously address environmental and socio-economic goals.³⁰ Additionally, international climate financing mechanisms, such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF), offer potential to bridge the funding gap for climate resilience projects. Nigeria has already accessed grants and technical support through such platforms, although further institutional strengthening is necessary to absorb and utilize these funds effectively.³¹

Despite these prospects, numerous challenges hinder progress. A key issue is the lack of community participation in environmental decision-making, especially in rural and Indigenous areas where local livelihoods are directly impacted by climate policies. Top-down governance often sidelines traditional ecological knowledge, which could provide valuable insights into land and water resource management. According to UNEP (2021), incorporating indigenous practices into formal climate strategies enhances cultural legitimacy and local ownership. Furthermore, corruption and policy inconsistency have long plagued Nigeria's public institutions, weakening transparency and trust in environmental governance. Regulatory capture and vested interests in the oil sector often dilute or delay the implementation of green reforms.³²

To effectively harness the climate governance–sustainable development nexus, Nigeria must pursue an inclusive, transparent, and coherent policy environment. This includes integrating community voices, reinforcing institutions with adequate funding and expertise, and harmonizing climate objectives with development priorities. Strong leadership, political will, and multi-level coordination are essential to ensure that climate governance not only fulfills international obligations but also catalyzes transformative and sustainable growth for future generations.

6. BRIDGING GLOBAL NORMS AND LOCAL REALITIES

To effectively harness environmental law and climate governance as drivers of sustainable development, Nigeria must bridge the gap between its global commitments and domestic realities through integrated legal, institutional, and participatory strategies. First and foremost, legal and policy reforms are necessary to translate international environmental norms into enforceable domestic laws. Although Nigeria is a party to several major multilateral environmental agreements, full

domestication of these treaties remains incomplete due to constitutional limitations and legislative delays. Harmonizing federal and state environmental laws will help resolve jurisdictional conflicts, particularly in areas like land use, resource extraction, and pollution control. A periodic review of existing legislation, such as the Environmental Impact Assessment Act and NESREA Act, is also vital to reflect new scientific knowledge and align with international best practices.³³

Institutional strengthening is equally critical to bridge the implementation gap. Nigeria's climate governance architecture must be underpinned by well-resourced, capable, and accountable institutions at both federal and sub-national levels. This entails capacity building for regulatory agencies and the judiciary, particularly in technical and legal aspects of environmental management and dispute resolution. Local government authorities should also be empowered and decentralized, as they play a frontline role in monitoring compliance and coordinating community-based interventions. Additionally, fostering multi-stakeholder partnerships involving the private sector, civil society organizations, and international development agencies can enhance institutional reach and innovation. For example, collaborative programs on sustainable agriculture, waste recycling, or renewable energy can pool resources, share knowledge, and scale up climate solutions.³⁴

Enhancing public participation is another crucial pillar in aligning global climate norms with local implementation. Effective governance demands that local communities, especially those directly affected by climate change and environmental degradation, are involved in planning and decision-making processes. Models of community-based environmental management have proven successful in areas like forest conservation and watershed protection. Moreover, integrating indigenous knowledge systems into formal planning can improve the contextual relevance and sustainability of interventions. Comprehensive environmental education and awareness campaigns, starting at the grassroots and extending to formal institutions, are necessary to build a climate-conscious citizenry that understands its rights and responsibilities.³⁵

Lastly, sustainable financing mechanisms will need to be scaled up to support long-term climate governance. Nigeria should be engaging with international climate financing platforms, including the Green Climate Fund and the Adaptation Fund, to

³⁰ Brundtland Commission; *Our Common Future*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1987, p. 43.

³¹ Green Climate Fund (GCF). *GCF Projects in Nigeria*. Retrieved from <https://www.greenclimate.fund/countries/nigeria>

³² United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). *Nigeria Country Profile*, 2021. Retrieved from <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/nigeria-country-profile>

³³ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). *Guide to Developing National Legislation to Align*

with Multilateral Environmental Agreements, 2021.

³⁴ Enechi, C. U.; Pattberg, P.; 'Stakeholder Motivations for Participation in Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships for the SDGs: A Case Study of Nigeria'; *Sustainable Development*, 33(3), 2025, pp. 456–469. DOI: 10.1002/sd.2625.

³⁵ Uzoaru, O. C.; Ijah, C. N.; 'Community-Based Environmental Education: A Strategy for Mitigating Impacts of Climate Change on Livelihood of Riverine Communities in Rivers State, Nigeria'; *International Journal of Weather, Climate Change and Conservation Research*, 6(1), 2020, pp. 1–10

help secure funding for resilience-building projects. Domestically, Nigeria could use new or novel financing tools such as green bonds, environmental taxes, and eco-levies to create revenue streams that would alleviate some of the financial burden, while causing businesses and consumers to think sustainably. Likewise, Nigeria can establish fiscal incentives for firms that conduct their work in an environmentally responsible way, like tax credits or grants, to promote green entrepreneurship and investment. Only with these interlinked reforms can Nigeria meet its international environmental obligations along with its development realities and build a more resilient Nigeria.

7. CONCLUSION

In summary, Nigeria's sustainable development will depend on developing plans of action for its climate governance and environmental law that recognize international standards and local realities. While Nigeria has made progress by ratifying international environmental treaties and developing national legislation such as the Climate Change Act 2021, Nigeria still faces many significant challenges, such as institutional barriers, policy fragmentation, lack of public engagement, and lack of funds for especially for implementing climate commitments and attaining sustainable development. To progress further, Nigeria needs a coherent approach that links more effectively its international commitments with its

own domestic legal and institutional structures, making environmental protection and climate action a central aspect in its national development strategies.

In order to close the existing gaps, it is important to consider several recommendations. First of all, Nigeria should consider the complete domestication and harmonization of international environmental treaties into its legal framework, and commit to ongoing review in order to keep pace with the shifting nature of transboundary environmental issues. Beyond the improvement of institutional capacity through training, adequate resource allocations and capacity building to empower local government actors as important stakeholders in the governance of climate change. Additionally, creating a more inclusive model for public inclusion in decision-making processes through including local and indigenous knowledge and local community management of environmental issues will increase the relevance of the policy and social acceptance of decisions. Finally, enhancing sustainable financing options through ways to access international climate funds, expanding the availability of green bonds, and providing financial incentives to businesses that transition from traditional environmental practice to environmental practice will enhance resilience and green economic growth over the long term. Together, Nigeria could bring all of these efforts together as a means to change the operationalisation of environmental law and climate governance into meaningful levers of support for a sustainable and equitable future.