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SUSTAINABILITY NEWSLETTER

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NATIONAL

COP29: A HARSH OUTCOME FOR SOUTH AFRICA AND OTHER DEVELOPING COUNTRIES- On 11 November 2024, the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP29) commenced in Baku, Azerbaijan. After two weeks of negotiations, the outcome was significantly unfavourable for South Africa and other developing countries. Before COP29 commenced, the Minister responsible for environmental affairs, Dion George, expressed the country's intention to push for at least \$1.3 trillion in climate finance to assist developing countries achieve their climate goals.

As the conference ended, wealthy nations pledged at least \$300 billion annually by 2035 to assist developing countries with climate adaptation and mitigation. Although this represents a notable increase from the previous \$100 billion target, it falls significantly short of the estimated \$1.3 trillion target that South Africa requires each year to effectively combat climate change and its impacts. The agreement raises concerns as it does not mandate that the \$300 billion be disbursed as grants, leaving open the possibility of loans. This is a significant worry for developing nations keen on avoiding further debt burdens. The stance taken at COP29 echoes a long history of unmet financial promises from developed countries, including a prior commitment made in 2009 to provide \$100 billion annually by 2020—a target only met in 2022. The Independent High-Level Expert Group on Climate Finance maintain that achieving these targets is feasible, but it will demand enhanced direct bilateral financing from developed countries. Fred Njehu, a Pan-African Political

Strategist at Greenpeace Africa, articulated his dissatisfaction with the outcome of COP29, emphasizing that the amount offered in climate finance is inadequate and fails to address the climate crises faced by developing nations.

Source: <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2024-11-24-developing-nations-slam-300bn-cop29-pledge/>

AFRICAN PENGUIN FACES EXTREME POPULATION DECLINE DUE TO CLIMATE CHANGE - The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has confirmed that South Africa's only penguin species, the African penguin, has been placed on the critically endangered list. There are eighteen (18) penguin species worldwide, and the African penguin is the first species to be included on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Initially listed as endangered in 2010, the African penguin has suffered severe habitat loss and food shortages due to climate change. These penguins rely mainly on sardines and anchovies, which have become scarce in South African waters. As a result, the penguin population dropped to a troubling low of 19,800 in 2023, a stark decline from a peak of 282,000 in the 1950s. This represents a 93% decrease over the past 70 years.

To address this alarming decline, immediate conservation actions are necessary. One significant factor in the decline is the removal of guano by humans. Guano, a thick layer of bird excrement accumulated over centuries, is vital for penguins, who use it to dig burrows and lay their eggs. Unfortunately, humans harvest guano for export as fertilizer, forcing African penguins to nest in the open. Additional threats include predation by Cape fur seals, oil pollution, increased maritime traffic, and associated activities such as offshore bunkering. Two conservation NGOs, BirdLife South Africa and the Southern African Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds (SANCCOB), have taken legal action against the Minister of Environmental Affairs for failing to protect the African penguin and for not designating fishing free zones around penguin breeding sites, where the birds compete with the pelagic fishing industry for their food.

The African penguin is also essential to South Africa's tourism sector, contributing between R2 billion and R4.5 billion to the economy in 2023. It is evident that the African penguin is not only an environmental priority but also an economic and social imperative for South Africa. Strengthening conservation measures is crucial for ensuring the protection of this species and safeguarding the country's economic and environmental interests.

Source: [African Penguin on the Brink of Extinction - BirdLife International](#)

RECOMMENDATIONS TO COMBAT THE ILLEGAL TRADE OF SOUTH AFRICA'S BIG CATS - The five big cat species in the Panthera genus—jaguar, leopard, lion, snow leopard, and tiger—are found across Africa, Asia, and Latin America. These magnificent creatures are increasingly threatened by the pressures of both local and international trade, leading to illegal trafficking of live big cats, their parts, and derivatives, which poses a significant threat to their survival. In South Africa, the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act (NEMBA) serves as the main legislative framework regulating these species. Its relevant regulations include the Threatened or Protected Species Regulations (TOPS), the publication of lists designating Critically Endangered, Endangered, Vulnerable, and Protected Species, as well as alien and invasive species lists and CITES regulations. However, a significant gap exists in the legislation concerning non-native big cats, such as tigers, which are not adequately regulated. This oversight has led to a troubling increase in the farming of these species. Consequently, South Africa's big cat industry has become a hotspot for illegal trade, facilitating the farming, killing, and trading of tigers & lions with alarming ease.

To address the illegal trade of South Africa's big cats, FOUR PAWS, a global animal welfare organisation, has put forward critical recommendations, including a complete prohibition on all commercial trade of big cats and their derivatives within the country. They suggest the termination of captive big cat keeping for commercial purposes, closure of such facilities, and an end to intensive breeding of these animals in controlled environments.

Additionally, FOUR PAWS advocates for a phase-out approach to the big cat industry, targeting a full closure by 2030. They also encourage South Africa to fully implement all pertinent CITES decisions and resolutions related to big cats and to take a lead role in pursuing enhanced protection measures for these species globally.

By championing these initiatives, South Africa can set a powerful example in wildlife protection, ensuring that big cats are preserved for future generations.

Source: <https://www.four-paws.org.za/campaigns-topics/campaigns/breaktheviciouscycle/south-africas-out-of-control-big-cat-industry-and-how-to-tackle-it>

INTERNATIONAL

CLIMATE FUNDING AT RISK WITH TRUMP PRESIDENCY - On 6 November 2024, Donald Trump won the US 2024 presidential election. This news comes at an important time for global climate discussions, particularly ahead of COP29. It is widely expected that Trump's return to the White House will have a severely negative effect on climate change action in the short term. His victory is seen as a significant roadblock to progress in both cutting emissions and raising funds for developing countries. The US President-elect is a known climate sceptic who has referred to efforts to boost green energy as a "scam." Despite this, renewable energy has gained strong support in the US, with an increasing portion of the population backing wind and solar initiatives. Consequently, Trump's plans to ramp up oil and gas production may be less effective than anticipated. In 2017, Trump announced the U.S. withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement; however, due to the treaty's rules, the U.S. could only officially withdraw in November of 2020, at which point Trump had already left office. If he chooses to withdraw the U.S.A from the treaty again, he will have to wait a year before doing so, raising concerns among climate change activists. This timeline would grant Trump three (3) years to make his own decisions without obligations to report back to the UN or adhere to their regulations.

While President Joe Biden's negotiators did attend COP29 talks in Azerbaijan, any agreements reached will not bind the Trump administration. While the U.S. might leave the Paris Agreement relatively quickly, Trump would still be subject to other global efforts combating climate change, although there have been reports of some of his supporters advocating a complete withdrawal from all UN climate initiatives, including the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. The new Trump administration is expected to prioritize a significant increase in oil and gas exploration within the U.S., roll back environmental protections, and impose heavy tariffs on imported electric vehicles and solar panels from China. However, in the longer term, it remains uncertain whether the new President will revert to promoting coal, oil, and gas or hinder the growth of sustainable energy sources.

Source: [Trump victory a blow to climate action, experts say](#)

AUSTRALIA REPURPOSES MINES FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECT- The mining industry in Australia is responsible for about one-third of the country's carbon dioxide emissions, which contribute to climate change. In an effort to reduce this impact, a company called Green Gravity is using old mining shafts in North-West Queensland to store renewable energy. Green Gravity's technology works by lifting heavy objects up a mineshaft using renewable energy. When energy is needed, the company lowers the objects back down, and this motion generates power, which is sent back to the electricity grid. This system is similar to how pumped hydro works, but instead of using water, it uses the weight of objects.

Green Gravity believes it can store enough energy in these mineshafts to power about 120,000 homes. If industrial energy needs are added, this system could power the entire region around Mount Isa. They've already signed agreements with mining company Glencore and the Mount Isa City Council to move forward with the project, which has begun its planning stage. This project will also help repurpose old mining infrastructure and could create 350 jobs, with the potential to bring in \$1 billion in private investment over the next ten years.

Source: [Renewable energy companies eyeing off abandoned mines in Queensland - ABC News](#)

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For more information contact admin@imbewu.co.za or visit <https://imbewu.co.za/she-electronic-legal-registers/>



4 December 2024- Wildlife Conservation Day <https://www.daysoftheyear.com/days/world-wildlife-conservation-day/>

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