Africa moves to capture trillions in carbon finance, trains diplomats for global climate market negotiations

The African Union, AU, and the African Capacity Building Foundation, ACBF, have begun preparing African diplomats for what could become one of the continent's biggest climate financing opportunities, training more than 80 ambassadors, senior diplomats and policy experts to negotiate a stronger African position in the rapidly expanding global carbon market. The high-level training, held at the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, marks a major step in implementing the Africa Action Plan on Carbon Markets, adopted by the AU Assembly in 2025 to ensure African countries derive greater economic and environmental benefits from international carbon trading.—Seizing opportunities under Article 6— The initiative comes as decisions reached under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement at COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan, are expected to significantly expand global carbon markets. Experts say this could potentially unlock billions of dollars in climate finance for developing countries, including those in Africa. According to a statement signed by Fatou Diouf, Head of Communications and Influencing at ACBF, the seminar aimed to strengthen the technical and negotiating capacity of African diplomats ahead of increasingly complex international climate negotiations. Speaking during the programme, AU Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue economy and Sustainable Environment, Moses Vilakati, stressed that Africa must pursue a unified approach. "Our collective approach must continue to be guided by our continental frameworks," Vilakati said. He emphasized that strong governance, transparency, free, prior and informed consent, and legally enforceable benefit-sharing mechanisms are critical to ensuring carbon markets generate tangible benefits for African countries and local communities, rather than external investors alone. Participants explored: – African-led carbon credit projects – Differences between compliance and voluntary carbon markets – International regulatory models, including the EU Emissions Trading System, to identify best practices adaptable across the continent – Safeguarding community rights, ensuring environmental integrity, and directing carbon revenues towards climate adaptation, sustainable development and local economic growth. Ambassador Laho Bangoura, Special Adviser to the ACBF Executive Secretary and Head of the Foundation's AU Liaison Office, said capacity must remain central. "As climate finance becomes increasingly central to Africa's development agenda, capacity development must remain at the heart of our response," Bangoura said. Organisers noted that a better-equipped diplomatic corps would enable African countries to negotiate more effectively, speak with one voice and secure fairer outcomes* as global demand for high-quality carbon credits continues to rise. The training received support from the Government of Azerbaijan through the Azerbaijan International Development Agency, AIDA, reflecting growing international collaboration on climate action. Carbon markets allow countries and companies to buy and sell carbon credits generated from activities that reduce or remove greenhouse gas emissions, such as forest conservation, renewable energy projects and sustainable land management. Africa possesses vast carbon sequestration potential through its forests, wetlands and renewable energy resources but currently accounts for only a small fraction of the global carbon market. Experts believe that with stronger regulatory frameworks, improved governance and enhanced negotiating capacity, African countries could attract billions of dollars annually in climate finance while advancing environmental protection, job creation and sustainable development. The AU's Action Plan seeks to ensure that Africa is not merely a supplier of carbon credits but a key beneficiary of the growing global carbon economy.

Tinubu unveils new ECOWAS headquarters, calls for greater regional integration and industrialization

President Bola Tinubu has described the inauguration of the new headquarters of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Abuja as a significant milestone that reinforces the region's commitment to integration, peace, industrialization, and shared prosperity. Represented by Vice President Kashim Shettima at the commissioning ceremony in Abuja, Tinubu said the iconic facility, popularly known as the "Eye of Africa," symbolizes the collective resolve of ECOWAS member states to strengthen regional unity and pursue the vision upon which the bloc was founded more than 50 years ago. "Today marks not only the inauguration of an impressive landmark but the renewal of a covenant—our covenant with the ideals of regional integration, solidarity, and shared prosperity," the President said. Tinubu noted that ECOWAS has grown into one of the world's most respected regional economic communities, citing its achievements in promoting peace, democratic governance, economic cooperation, and the free movement of people, goods, and services across West Africa. However, he acknowledged that the region continues to grapple with major challenges, including terrorism, violent extremism, economic instability, food insecurity, climate change, public health concerns, and rising expectations from its youthful population. The President stressed that the next phase of regional integration must prioritize economic transformation through industrialization and increased regional production. "The hour has come to transform our regional market into a regional production base. Our integration must increasingly be driven by what we produce rather than by what we consume. A community that consumes what it does not make will forever live at the mercy of the goodwill of others," he said.

Tinubu called on ECOWAS member states to deepen regional value chains, expand intra-African trade, encourage innovation and manufacturing, and attract investments capable of driving sustainable economic growth across the sub-region. Speaking on recent developments within the bloc, including the withdrawal of three member states and emerging security challenges, the President said regional integration must now extend beyond economic cooperation to encompass collective security, political stability, sustainable development, and the welfare of citizens. He also urged ECOWAS to maintain dialogue with countries that have exited the bloc, emphasizing the importance of keeping diplomatic channels open. Tinubu commended Sierra Leone's President, Julius Maada Bio, Chairman of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government, for his leadership during what he described as a critical period for the regional body. He further praised the ECOWAS Commission for successfully delivering the new headquarters and expressed gratitude to the Government of the People's Republic of China for financing the project, as well as the contractors, consultants, and stakeholders who contributed to its completion. “May every decision taken within these walls advance the peace, unity, prosperity, and dignity of the peoples of West Africa,” he said. In his remarks, President Julius Maada Bio described the new headquarters as more than just an architectural landmark, saying it represents a renewed commitment to improving the lives of over 450 million people across the region. He thanked Nigeria for its unwavering financial and leadership support to ECOWAS, describing the country as “a great anchor” of the regional bloc. Bio also expressed appreciation to the Chinese government for donating the building. President of the ECOWAS Commission, Dr. Omar Touray, said the headquarters would serve as a lasting symbol of regional partnership and integration while enhancing the Commission's capacity to coordinate the bloc's growing responsibilities. Touray also acknowledged China's continued support in areas such as regional security, technology, and economic development, describing the Asian nation as one of ECOWAS' most strategic partners. Also speaking at the ceremony, China's Ambassador to Nigeria and ECOWAS, Ambassador Yu Dunhai, reaffirmed China's commitment to supporting Africa's integration and development. He said the inauguration of the new headquarters reflects the strong partnership between China and ECOWAS and pledged continued cooperation based on mutual trust and shared aspirations for the continent's long-term development.

US House Votes to Suspend 100% of Aid to Nigeria Over Alleged Christian Persecution

WASHINGTON: The United States House of Representatives has voted to approve an amendment that would withhold 100 per cent of US financial assistance to Nigeria until the Nigerian government meets specific conditions aimed at tackling violence and ensuring accountability for attacks, particularly against Christians. The amendment, sponsored by Republican Congressman Gregory Steube of Florida, was adopted through a voice vote as part of the Fiscal Year 2027 State Department Appropriations Bill, which was later passed by the House in a narrow 217-209 vote. Although the measure has cleared the House, it has not yet become law. It must still receive approval from the US Senate before being signed by President Donald Trump. Reacting to the House's decision, Steube announced on his X (formerly Twitter) account that the amendment was intended to ensure American taxpayers do not fund governments accused of failing to protect religious minorities. He wrote: My amendment to withhold 100% of U.S. aid to Nigeria until its government stops the slaughter of Christians has passed. American taxpayers should never bankroll governments that turn a blind eye while Christians are abducted, tortured, and murdered. No more wasteful foreign aid. The original version of the spending bill proposed withholding 50 per cent of US assistance to Nigeria until the US Secretary of State certifies that the Nigerian government has taken effective steps to prevent violence and prosecute those responsible. Steube's amendment increases the proposed restriction to 100 per cent, while leaving the certification requirements unchanged. Addressing fellow lawmakers on the House floor, the congressman argued that Nigeria has experienced a prolonged wave of violence which, according to him, the government has failed to adequately address. He insisted that providing foreign assistance without measurable progress sends the wrong message. Foreign aid should never be a reward for failure, Steube declared, adding that with America's national debt approaching $40 trillion, US taxpayers deserve greater accountability over how foreign aid is distributed. Despite the House vote, the proposed aid restriction is not yet in effect. Under the US legislative process, the measure must be reconciled with the Senate's version of the appropriations bill, approved by both chambers, and signed into law by President Trump before any changes to US funding for Nigeria can take effect. The House action comes amid growing scrutiny of Nigeria's security situation and religious freedom record. President Donald Trump re-designated Nigeria as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) in 2025 over allegations relating to religious persecution, particularly affecting Christian communities. Relations between both countries also experienced diplomatic strain following a controversial US missile strike on Nigerian territory during Christmas Day operations in 2025. However, despite those tensions, Nigeria and the United States have continued security cooperation, particularly in intelligence sharing and counter terrorism operations targeting extremist groups operating in northern Nigeria. The latest House vote is expected to spark renewed debate over Nigeria's security challenges, religious freedom, and the future of US-Nigeria diplomatic and development relations.

45% Of Dementia Risk Could Be Prevented – WHO

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has released updated guidelines aimed at reducing the risk of cognitive decline and dementia through evidence-based interventions across the life course. The world body made this known in a statement recently. The guidelines stated that up to 45 per cent of dementia risk was linked to modifiable factors, meaning many cases could be prevented or delayed through healthier lifestyles and better management of medical conditions. WHO said the recommendations provide countries with practical measures to protect brain health by integrating dementia prevention into non communicable disease, mental health and primary healthcare services. According to the organization, more than 57 million people are living with dementia worldwide, while nearly 10 million new cases are diagnosed each year. WHO noted that Alzheimer's disease remained the most common form of dementia, accounting for an estimated 60 to 70 per cent of all cases globally.

WHO Director-General, Dr Tedros Ghebreyesus, said the updated guidelines translated growing scientific knowledge into practical actions that countries can immediately implement to safeguard cognitive health. Ghebreyesus said the recommendations reflected the latest evidence and innovations in dementia prevention, offering proven interventions that can significantly reduce future disease burden. He said that the guidelines advised adults with normal cognition or mild cognitive impairment to engage in cognitive training, mental stimulation and regular social activities to help maintain brain function. Ghebreyesus recommended increasing physical activity, quitting tobacco use, reducing alcohol consumption, following a healthy diet and limiting exposure to air pollution to lower dementia risk. He stressed that effective management of hypertension, diabetes and high cholesterol can also reduce the likelihood of developing dementia later in life. According to him, hearing aids may be offered as part of dementia risk-reduction strategies for people with hearing loss. He advised against the routine use of vitamin B, vitamin E, omega-3 fatty acids or multivitamin supplements solely for dementia prevention where no deficiency has been diagnosed. The boss explained that current evidence does not show sufficient benefits from these supplements and potential harms cannot be ruled out. He said that dementia affected memory, thinking, daily functioning and independence, while placing significant emotional, social and financial burdens on families and caregivers. According to him, globally, dementia costs an estimated 1.3 trillion dollars annually, with about half of the economic burden resulting from unpaid care provided by relatives and friends. He said this underscores the need for stronger prevention efforts.

WFP: Northern Nigeria hunger crisis hits nine-year high as 17m face acute food insecurity

Conflict, funding cuts, and worsening access have pushed northern Nigeria into its worst hunger crisis in nearly a decade, with over 17 million people now facing acute food insecurity, the UN World Food Programme (WFP) has warned. —17 million in Crisis, Borno Worst Hit– The latest Cadre Harmonisé analysis shows more than 17 million people across nine conflict-affected northern states are at crisis, emergency, or catastrophic levels of hunger. That is an increase of nearly 2 million people from the previous assessment. Borno State is the most affected. Renewed insurgent attacks and suspended food aid have left over 3 million people acutely food insecure. Of them, 750,000 face severe hunger and 10,000+ are in catastrophic hunger — the highest level, often linked to famine-like conditions. "What concerns us most is how this crisis is expanding," said WFP's Kinday Samba. "For years, insurgent attacks were largely concentrated in the Northeast. Today, they are spreading across a much wider area and forcing people from farmland, driving displacement and restricting humanitarian access, meaning hunger is quick to follow." Access Collapsing, Supply Lines Under Attack— WFP said the number of locations partially inaccessible to aid workers has doubled in recent months. An additional 15 areas are now difficult to reach due to insecurity. Attacks and illegal checkpoints are disrupting relief convoys. In several locations, air transport is now the only option. —Funding Gap Leaves 5.5 Million Without Aid—Funding shortages are compounding the crisis. Across the three insurgency-ravaged Northeast states, 6.2 million people are food insecure. But WFP currently has resources for only 740,000 people. That leaves about 5.5 million people, many of them women and children, without food and nutrition support. This is down sharply from the 1.3 million WFP assisted during the peak of the 2025 lean season. The agency said aid suspensions in displacement camps are pushing families toward dangerous coping strategies, including joining armed groups for food or income. It also flagged rising exploitation and gender-based violence against women and children. "When people lose access to food, the risks of displacement, exploitation and instability increase. Yet resources are at their lowest at the time they are needed most," Samba said. —Crisis Now National: 36.2 Million Food Insecure— The report said Nigeria's food crisis extends beyond the North. 36.2 million people nationwide are now food insecure, driven by insecurity, inflation, climate shocks, and economic pressure. WFP warned that without urgent action, hunger, displacement, and instability could worsen in northern Nigeria and spill into neighboring countries. To sustain emergency food, nutrition, and logistics for the next six months, WFP says it urgently needs $89 million in additional funding.