

Review Article

Ethical Leadership and Sustainable Development: A Path to Addressing Africa's Climate Change Crisis

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Abstract: Africa, despite its minimal contribution to the global greenhouse gases emissions, is disproportionately affected by climate change. This crisis primary driven by human activities, manifest in unpredictable weather patterns, decline in food production and livestock numbers, spread of vector-borne diseases, and melting ice caps. Despite awareness of the causes and impacts, the situation persists. This article argues that ethical leadership and sustainable development are crucial for addressing Africa's climate challenges. Its analysis is based on two philosophical ethical theories: utilitarian ethical theory and deontological ethical theory. Utilitarian ethics, emphasizing the greatest good for the greatest number, guides leaders in making decisions that benefit the majority of their citizens through sustainable practices. Deontological ethics, focusing on moral duty and respect for individuals and future generations, underscores the need for ethical leadership that prioritizes environmental protection. By combining these ethical frameworks, this paper proposes a model for ethical leadership in Africa. This approach, informed by utilitarian ethics, deontological theory, and Plato's concept of philosopher-king, provides a foundation for effective environmental protection and sustainable development, ensuring a more equitable and resilient future for Africa.

Keywords: Climate change, sustainable development, sustainable environment, ethical leadership.

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INTRODUCTION

Climate change presents an unprecedented challenge to global development, with Africa facing disproportionate impacts despite contributing minimally to the crisis. This article explores the intricate relationship between ethical leadership, sustainable development, and climate change mitigation in the African context. It argues that addressing Africa's climate crisis requires a multifaceted approach rooted in ethical leadership and sustainable development principles.

The study begins by conceptualizing key terms: climate change, sustainable development, sustainable environment, ethical leadership. It then examines the current climate change crisis, emphasizing its particular relevance to Africa. The article explores the ethical dimensions of sustainable development, drawing on various philosophical perspectives to underscore its moral imperative.

Central to this discussion is the role of ethical leadership and sustainable development in addressing climate change crisis in Africa. The article contends that ethical leadership and sustainable development are essential for effectively addressing the climate crisis. By synthesizing these elements, this article aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on climate change mitigation in Africa, emphasizing the critical role of ethical leadership and sustainable development in shaping a resilient future for the continent.

Conceptualizing climate change, sustainable development and sustainable environment

Climate Change:

Climate change, as defined by Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) refers to "a long-term shifts in Earth's climate system, encompassing changes in average weather conditions

and variability [1].” This definition is consistent with the previous IPCC reports, but the Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) provide additional rights into the causes, impacts, and future projections into climate change. While the earth has experienced climate shifts throughout history, the current crisis is exceptional due to its rapid pace and clear link to anthropogenic activities [2].

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) defines climate change as “a change of climate attributed to human activity that alters the composition of the atmosphere and that is in addition to natural climate variability [3].” This definition emphasizes the human contribution to climate change and distinguishes it from natural climate fluctuations.

Both definitions by IPCC and UNFCCC agree on the core concept of climate change as anthropogenic caused long-term shift in in Earth’s climate. However, their definition differ in terms of focus, specificity, and purpose.

1. **Focus:** The IPCC primarily focuses on the scientific aspects of climate change, providing evidence and projections. The UNFCCC, on the other hand, is a political agreement that sets international goals and frameworks for addressing climate change.
2. **Specificity:** The IPCC's definition is more specific, detailing that climate change includes changes in average weather conditions and variability. The UNFCCC's definition is more general, focusing on the human-caused nature of climate change.
3. **Purpose:** The IPCC's definition is used to inform policymakers and scientists. The UNFCCC's definition is used to guide international cooperation and negotiations on climate change.

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is a concept that emerged in response to growing concerns about the long-term viability of our current economic use and resource consumption. The most widely accepted definition of

sustainable development comes from the Brundtland Report, published in 1987 by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development. It defines sustainable development as "Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs [4]."

This definition summarizes the core principles of intergenerational equity-the idea that we the current generation have a moral obligation to preserve the earth’s resources, ecosystems and overall well-being. This involves making choices that minimize environmental harm, protect biodiversity and ensure equitable access to resources for all.

Sustainable development is often conceptualized as resting on three interconnected pillars: environment, economic and social. The environmental dimension of the sustainable development emphasizes safeguarding and conservation of our environment, the economic dimension of sustainable development is concerned with the creation of material and the social dimension of sustainable development aspires at improving the quality of human lives and guaranteeing equity between human beings, human communities and nations [5]. These three components are deeply interlinked, much like the legs of a traditional African three-legged stool. If one component is weakened or neglected, the entire system becomes unstable.

The concept of sustainable development gained global prominence at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil where world leaders adopted *Agenda 21*, a comprehensive plan of action for sustainable development. Since then, it has become a central principle in international development efforts, most notably in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted in 2015.

Sustainable Environment

Sustainable environment is one that can supports current needs without endangering its capacity to meet future needs. It involves the responsible use and management of natural resources in a way that maintains

¹ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). *Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021-2023).

² United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2011, 2 *Fact sheet: Climate change science - the status of climate change science today*. [online]: https://unfccc.int/files/press/backgrounders/application/pdf/press_factsh_science.pdf United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change will from on be abbreviated as UNFCCC.

³ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). *Paris Agreement*. Adopted by the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Paris, 12 December 2015.

⁴ World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), The Brundtland Commission. *Our Common Future*. (Oxford: Oxford University, 1987). The World Commission on Environmental and Development will now be abbreviated as WCED.

⁵ Rosalyn. Mckeown *Environment Society Economy Education for Sustainable Development Toolkit Version 2*. <http://www.esdtoolkit.org> Accessed July. 11th October, 2022.

ecological balance and preserves biodiversity [6]. The natural environment usually provides us with many resources to use to cater for our human needs and wants. From the environment we are able to plant and harvest plants, obtain water, minerals, and fuel *et cetera*, but extreme use and abuse of these resources and the environment is harmful to the current and future generations. This is the reason why sustainable environment refers to the best environmental actions, practices and habits that take into consideration the wellbeing of our environment.

Ethical Leadership

Leadership is the ability to influence and inspire others to achieve a common goal. It involves setting a vision, motivating individuals, and guiding group towards a desired outcome. While there are many concepts of leadership such as trait theory, transactional theory and servant-leadership, our main focus is ethical leadership.

Ethical leadership is leadership that is grounded in strong moral principles. Ethical leaders influence and inspire others, but they do so guided by their moral compass [7]. They are committed to and follow ethical standards, act with integrity, and consider the well-being of others. Thus, ethics is not only the basis of leadership, it is also the starting point of leadership and influences all leadership intentions, choices and decisions.

The Climate Change Crisis

Climate change is one of the most pressing global challenges of our time. As a global crisis, climate change impacts continents differently according to their respective levels of development and resilient abilities. Unfortunately, Africa despite its minimal contribution to the global greenhouse gases emissions is climate change hotspot. This injustice of contributing only 4% of global greenhouse gases emissions, but suffering the most has seen many Africans suffer the harshest consequences of climate change.

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) assessment report of 2007, Africa is reportedly warming faster than the global

average, and this phenomenon is likely to continue [8]. The IPCC assessment report, 2007 has been justified since, it has been reported that the last two decades have had six years with warmest temperatures and rainfall viabilities in the Sub-Saharan Africa. The Sahel region and Southern Africa regions have been significantly drying up [9]. The consequences of climate change in the region are evidenced in prolonged droughts, decline in food production and livestock numbers [10], melting of ice caps (for example, Mount Ruwenzori, Mount Kilimanjaro and Mount Kenya), spreading of pest borne diseases like malaria and dengue fever to colder regions that never had these kind of diseases, unpredictable weather seasons, increased seasons of droughts and floods, poor harvest, prolonged severe heat waves (that kill people) [11], shrinking lakes (for example, Lake Chad), rising sea levels, crop loss, rising temperatures, ocean acidification, decline in bio diversity [12], *et cetera*.

Recognizing the severity of the climate crisis, the international community has made several coordinated efforts to address it. The establishment IPCC by the United Nations Environmental Program and World Meteorological Organization (WMO) [13], and the *Earth Summit* in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992 marked significant milestones in this endeavor. The *Earth Summit* was the first ever International Conference on environment which discussed the threats posed by climate change. The participants of this conference produced and committed to themselves to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)[14] which came-up with protocols geared towards mitigating the impact of climate change and adapting to climate change. Later, UNFCCC led to the *Kyoto Protocol* whose aim was to reduce carbon dioxide emissions along with presence of greenhouse gases (GHG) [15] in the atmosphere. The developed countries that have contributed the most to the problem are obliged to contribute funds for mitigation and adaption, as well as reduce the amount of their carbon dioxide emissions [16].

⁶ <https://study.com/academy/lesson/environmental-sustainability-definition-and-application.html> Accessed November 10, 2022

⁷ Michael E. Brown, Linda K. Trevino and Daniel A. Harrison. Ethical leadership: A Social Learning Perspective for contract development and testing, *Organisational Behaviour & Human Decision Processes*, 97 (2005), 117-134.

⁸ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) assessment report of 2007. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change assessment report will now be abbreviated as IPPC.

⁹ IPPC, 2007.

¹⁰ George V. Khisa, Samuel B. Oteng'I, and Stanislav M. Mikalitsa, "Coping Strategies against Climate Change and Agricultural Production in Kitui District," *Journal of Agriculture and Natural Resources* 2 (2014a): 71-86.

¹¹ Shem Wandiga, Climate Change Today *New People* 156 (May-June 2015), 10-13.

¹² IPPC, 2007.

¹³ The United Nations Environmental Program and World Meteorological Organization (WMO) established IPCC in order to address the problem of climate change

¹⁴ The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change will now be abbreviated as UNFCCC.

¹⁵ Greenhouse gases will now be abbreviated as GHG

¹⁶ Article 9(1), *Paris Agreement*.

The Kyoto protocol [¹⁷] after the end of its commitment period was replaced by *the Doha Amendment*, which affirmed *the Kyoto protocol* by stressing the importance of mitigating the impact of climate change and adaptation to its impact. *The Doha Amendment* was replaced by *The Paris Climate Agreement* which is still in place. Like both *the Kyoto* and *the Doha Amendment*, *the Paris Climate Agreement* has the same objective, to mitigate on the impact of climate change and try to ensure developed nations reduce their pollution, and oblige to their commitment to do so. *The Paris Agreement* places a significant responsibility on developed countries to provide financial resources to developing countries. This financial support is crucial for tackling climate change through both mitigation and adaptation efforts [¹⁸]. However, the commitment of developing countries to *the Paris Agreement* remains largely symbolic. While they have made pledges, the actual implementation of these commitments has been slow and insufficient.

African leaders have been actively involved in climate change crisis and talks. This can be seen in their commitments to *African Union Climate Change and Resilience Development Strategy and Action Plan* (2022-2032), which outlines Africa's strategic priorities for addressing climate change; the *Regional Economic Communities (REC) Climate Action Plans*, where several RECs, such as the East African Community (EAC), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have developed their own climate action plans to address specific challenges faced by member states in their regions. They have also come up with initiative such as *Africa Renewable Energy Initiative (AREI)* which aims to support renewable energy projects in Africa, and *National Renewable Energy Plans*: aimed at increasing reliance on clean energy sources and reduction on carbon emissions. *African Green Revolution Alliance (AGRA)* is working to promote climate-smart agricultural practices in Africa, such as drought-resistant crops, improved irrigation systems, and soil conservation techniques.

Recently, African leaders drafted *the Nairobi Declaration on Climate Change* [¹⁹] which called for developed countries to reduce carbon emissions, provide

financial support to Africa, and proposed a global carbon taxation regime.

Furthermore, the global seriousness of climate change is to be seen in the just concluded United Nations organized *the 28th Conference of the Parties of United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* in Doha, Qatar. The conference took place from 30th November to 13th December, 2023, and was attended by heads of state and governments. An indication, that more-still needs to be done in order to alleviate this problem.

All the concerted efforts and attempts that have been put across to address the problem of climate change have always indicated that human beings are the problem. For instance, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) assessment reports have consistently affirmed the anthropogenic actions as the leading cause of climate change since mid-20th century. So far, the IPCC has submitted 6 comprehensive assessment reports in 1990, 1995, 2001, 2007, 2013/14 and 2022 [²⁰].

The other part of the problem that has been mentioned is what can be termed as 'lack of leadership-will' in the context of governance, lack of acceptance by developed countries as the cause of climate change and lack of significant reduction in GHG emissions [²¹] as indicated by United Nations Human Development Programme Report (UNDP):

The world lacks neither the financial resources nor the technological capabilities to act. What is missing is a sense of urgency, human solidarity and collective interest within the Global Governance. Climate change poses challenges at many levels. In a divided but ecologically interdependent world, it challenges all people to reflect upon how we manage our environment of the one thing that we share in common: planet Earth. It challenges us to reflect on social justice and human rights across countries and generations. It challenges political leaders and people in rich nations to acknowledge their historic responsibility for the problem, and to initiate deep and early cuts in greenhouse gas emissions. Above all, it challenges the entire human

¹⁷ Kyoto Protocol was adopted on 11th December 1997 in Kyoto, Japan and entered into force on 16th February 2005, its purpose is to operationalize the UNFCCC by setting specific emission reduction targets for developed countries.

¹⁸ Article 9(1), *Paris Agreement*.

¹⁹ From 4-6 September, 2023, African leaders met in Nairobi, Kenya for the inaugural African Climate Summit, where the attendees at the summit drafted the *Nairobi Declaration*, Africa unified voice ahead of COP28.

²⁰The IPCC issues assessments reports on the state of climate change, these reports are used to analyse the current state of climate change, and to indicate the nature of progress in combating climate change. They also offer pieces of advice on what needs to be done.

²¹ United Nations Development Programme. *Human Development Report 2007/2008: Fighting Climate Change: Human Solidarity in a Divided World*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

community to undertake prompt and strong collective action based on shared values and a shared vision...[²²].

Hence, as it can be deduced, despite the efforts being made, progress in combating climate change has been slow, and the crisis continues to worsen. This underscores the need for more radical approaches, including the need for ethical leadership and sustainable development in addressing climate crisis.

The Climate Change and Development

The human quest for development has been a major contributor to climate change. Historically, this quest which has immensely contributed to the problem of climate change, is said to have begun with Industrial Revolution in the 18th century in Britain before spreading to other European countries. As nations pursued economic growth and technological advancement, the unintended consequences was a significant increase in GHG emissions, leading to the beginning of the climate crisis we face today.

In the 19th century, the scientific community identified climate change as a pressing environmental issue, sparking debate. Subsequently, climate change transitioned from a scientific concern to a public agenda with a developmental orientation [²³]. This has led the United Nations Developmental Program (UNDP) to identify climate change as one of the most pressing global development challenges.

Research indicates that the impacts of climate change are already being felt across the globe, with significant consequences for social, economic and human development. Addressing climate change has therefore become a central focus of development efforts worldwide [²⁴].

The recognition of climate change as both environmental and developmental challenges has led to several initiatives the publication of Brundtland Commission Report in 1987, the formation of IPPC in 1989, the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (*The Earth Summit*) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and the Establishment of United

Nations Framework for Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

To combat climate change, which is a negative of human development, sustainable development has been proposed as one of the best solutions. The concept of *sustainable development* was first popularized by United Nations' World Commission of Environment and Development under the leadership of Gro Harlem Brundtland in 1987 [²⁵].

The Brundtland Commission Report, entitled, *Our Common Future*, aimed at alleviating poverty, protecting the environment and feeding the world [²⁶]. The Brundtland Report was reacting to "the crisis of development," which had been occasioned by the failure of the developmental initiatives intended to improve the living conditions of poor people around the world [²⁷]. This condition has further been complicated by the problem of climate change due to anthropogenic induced 'environmental crises.

To address these issues, the Brundtland Report emphasizes two key points:

1. All basic human needs must be met, and poverty must be eliminated by all means. Nature has the ability to meet these needs.
2. Sustainable development must be embraced.

The importance of sustainable development as a strategy for combating climate change was further emphasized by the 1992 United Nations organized *Earth Summit* in Rio de Janeiro. This conference stressed the importance of sustainable development as the best solution to climate change [²⁸].

In line with this the World Meteorological Organization in its latest report entitled: *Climate Indicators and Sustainable Development: Demonstrating the Interconnections* (WMO-No. 1271) [²⁹], observes that sustainable development can be one of solutions to climate change since it can either mitigate

²² United Nations Development Programme. *Human Development Report 2007/2008: Fighting Climate Change: Human Solidarity in a Divided World*, 2007.

²³ Githogori Hellen Wambui, Manifestation of Climate Change on the Livelihoods of Women in Kwale County, Kenya. Masters of Science in Developmental Studies Thesis, (Moi University, 2020), 14.

²⁴ United Nations Development Programme. *Climate Change and Human Development: Harnessing Emerging Opportunities*. (New York: UNDP), 2013.

²⁵ Augustine D. Basiago. Economic, social and environmental sustainability in development theory and urban planning practice in *The Environmentalist* 19, (1999), 115-161.

²⁶ WCED, *The Brundtland Report*, 1987.

²⁷ Charles J. Kilbert, Leslie Thiele, Anna Peterson and Martha Monroe, *The Ethics of Sustainability*, <http://rio20.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Ethics-of-Sustainability-Textbook.pdf> 13.

²⁸ United Nations. *Agenda 21* (United Nations: New York, 1993).

²⁹ World Meteorological Organization (WMO), *Climate Indicators and Sustainable Development: Demonstrating the Interconnections*. WMO, 2021, (Geneva: WMO, 2021). World Meteorological Organization will now be abbreviated as WMO.

the risks that are posed by anthropogenic climate change or help to stop climate change altogether [³⁰].

Sustainable development is seen as an effective solution because it is embedded with ethics that reminds us that the present generation has an ethical responsibility to take care of our environment, in a manner that guarantees the incoming generations' needs and quality of life are not jeopardized.

While it is clear that climate change poses a significant challenge to global long-term developmental objectives, particularly poverty reduction [³¹], development has been cited as the key determinant on how countries respond to climate change. Developed countries are generally better equipped to cope with climate change due to their greater adaptive capacity, while undeveloped countries are the more vulnerable due to their limited resources and mechanism and mitigation capabilities.

In Africa, climate change is one of the biggest threats to Africa's development as a continent. The impact of climate change has already been disastrous in Africa, and its future impacts are likely to be potentially catastrophic. It is reported that climate change has already slowed down developmental efforts and have made the achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDG) more difficult [³²].

Africa's vulnerability to climate change have forced resources that could have fueled its development to be diverted to address climate change's socio-economic impacts, such as food insecurity, water scarcity, migration, and conflicts.

The relationship between climate change and development is complex and multifaceted. While human development has contributed significantly to climate change, sustainable development offers a pathway to mitigate its impacts and create a more resilient future. As the global community especially, Africa continues to grapple with this challenge, it is clear that addressing climate change is not just an environmental imperative but a crucial factor in ensuring equitable and sustainable development for all nations.

³⁰ WMO. *Climate Indicators and Sustainable Development: Demonstrating the Interconnections*, 2021.

³¹ World Bank Group, *Climate and Development: An Agenda for Action. Emerging Insights from World Bank Group 2021-22 Country Climate and Development Reports*. Washington DC: World Bank Publications, 2022, 6.

³² Africa Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), *Addressing Climate Change Challenges in Africa; A Practical Guide Towards Sustainable Development*, (2011), 36.

1.4 The nexus between the environment, sustainable development and ethical leadership

The interconnectedness between the environment, sustainable development and ethical leadership is a critical subject in the context of global climate change. This nexus requires a clear understanding to address the complex challenges we face today and in the future.

The environment is one of the three pillars of sustainable development. However, it is arguable the most fundamental among these pillars, serving as the basis for sustainable development. The causes and effects of climate change are rooted in the environment, emphasizing the need for environmental sustainability as a prerequisite for any sustainable development.

Environmental sustainability focuses on behaviors, attitudes and practices that enable us to meet our needs and live quality lives in a way that ensures the same for the future generations. It involves striking a balance between the use of natural resources and their preservation. This balance is crucial in addressing the current problem of climate change.

Sustainable development, as defined by the Brundtland Commission, is "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs [³³]." At its core, sustainable development refers to our capacity as rational beings to thrive through the optimal use of natural resources without destroying the environment that provides them.

The essence of sustainable development can then be said to be deeply embedded with an ethical imperative. It demands that the current generations use resources wisely and adopt climate-friendly practices in pursuit of developmental goals. This ethical obligation extends to protecting the environment from anthropogenic activities that may cause harm or degradation.

Ethical leadership plays a critical role in this nexus. Leaders in various spheres of influence have the responsibility to promote and implement sustainable practices [³⁴], advocate for environmental protection [³⁵],

³³ World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 43.

³⁴ Metcalf, Louise, and Sue Benn. Leadership for Sustainability: An Evolution of Leadership Ability. *Journal of Business Ethics* 112, no. 3 (2013), 369-384.

³⁵ Olivier Boiral, Baron Charles, and Grunslaugson Olen. Environmental Leadership and Consciousness Development: A Case Study among Canadian SMEs. *Journal of Business Ethics* 123, no. 3 (2014), 363-383

balance developmental need with environmental conservation [³⁶] and influence others to adopt environmentally friendly behaviors [³⁷].

Ethical leadership plays a crucial role in connecting the environment, sustainable development, and ethical leadership. First, ethical leaders promote responsible natural resource management, ensuring development does not harm the environment [³⁸]. Second, they implement policies that support sustainable practices such as farming, reforestation, and the use of renewable energies [³⁹]. Third, ethical leaders educate communities about the importance of environmental protection and sustainable practices [⁴⁰]. Fourth, they encourage and support innovations that support innovations that contribute to sustainable development while minimizing environmental impact [⁴¹]. Lastly, ethical leaders consider the long-term consequences of development decisions on the environment and future generations [⁴²].

A safe and healthy environment is the cornerstone sustainable development. The protection of our environment to ensure sustainable development is not just a practical necessity but an ethical imperative. This ethical need cannot be ignored if we are to meet our needs and those of the future generations.

The nexus between the environment, sustainable development, and ethical leadership underscores the collective responsibility. As current inhabitants of this planet, we owe future generations a world that is better than the one we inherited. This responsibility requires ethical leadership at all levels of society, from individual actions to global policy-making, to ensure that our pursuit of development does not

compromise the environmental foundation upon which all life depends.

The ethics of sustainable development and climate change

Sustainable development has been proposed as the best solutions to climate change. At the essence of this concept [⁴³] is an ethical approach to addressing the problem of climate change.

Sustainable development is an ethical solution to climate change because it aligns with our ontological ethical nature. This ontological argument posits that ethics is inherent to human existence and rationality [⁴⁴]. As rational beings, we have an inherent capacity and duty to make ethical choices. Sustainable development, therefore, appeals to our fundamental nature as moral agents, challenging us to abandon harmful habits and adopt beneficial ones that align with our ethical essence.

This perspective suggests that our very being as humans implies an ethical responsibility towards the environment and future generations. It's not merely an external obligation but an expression of our authentic selves as ethical beings [⁴⁵]. Thus, sustainable development isn't just a policy choice; it's a manifestation of our true nature as ethically conscious entities.

From a Utilitarian standpoint, embracing ethics of sustainable development is the best thing to do because of the vast number of beneficiaries. As an ethical theory, utilitarian operate on the principle that right actions are ones that promotes the greatest good or happiness of the greatest number of people [⁴⁶].

³⁶ Tobias Hahn, Pinkse Jonatan, Preuss Lutz, and Figge Frank. Tensions in Corporate Sustainability: Towards an Integrative Framework. *Journal of Business Ethics* 127, no. 2 (2015), 297-316.

³⁷ Jennifer L Robertson., and Barling Julian. Greening Organizations through Leaders' Influence on Employees' Pro-environmental Behaviors. *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 34, no. 2 (2013), 176-194.

³⁸ Bonnie F. Daily, Bonnie and Huang Su-chun. Achieving Sustainability through Attention to Human Resource Factors in Environmental Management. *International Journal of Operations & Production Management* 21, no. 12 (2001), 1539-1552.

³⁹ Karin Bäckstrand, and Löfbrand Eva. Planting Trees to Mitigate Climate Change: Contested Discourses of Ecological Modernization, Green Governmentality and Civic Environmentalism. *Global Environmental Politics* 6, no. 1 (2006), 50-75.

⁴⁰ Jana Dlouhá, Barton Andrew, Janoušková Svatava, and Dlouhý Jan. Social Learning Indicators in Sustainability-Oriented Regional Learning Networks. *Journal of Cleaner Production* 49 (2013), 64-73.

⁴¹ Ram Nidumolu, C. K. Prahalad and M. R. Rangaswami. Why Sustainability Is Now the Key Driver of Innovation. *Harvard Business Review* 87, no. 9 (2009), 56-64.

⁴² Natalie Slawinski, and Bansal Pratimal. A Matter of Time: The Temporal Perspectives of Organizational Responses to Climate Change. *Organization Studies* 33, no. 11 (2012): 1537-1563.

⁴³ WCED, 1987.

⁴⁴ Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 25-52.

⁴⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 312-348.

⁴⁶ John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (London: Parker, Son & Bourn, 1863), 9-17. Also see Luciano Mattei and Patrick Wambua, *A Guide to Christian Ethics and Formation in Moral Maturity: An Introduction to Ethics*. Nairobi: CUEA Publications, 2000, 88.

Sustainable development aligns perfectly with ethical framework because:

1. It ensures a better future for both present and future generations to meet their needs and live quality lives.
2. It maximizes overall well-being by preserving environmental resources and mitigating the harmful effects of climate change.
3. It promotes long-term happiness and prosperity for humanity as a whole, outweighing the short-term benefits of unsustainable practices.

The utilitarian calculus clearly favors sustainable development, as the benefits of environmental preservation and climate change mitigation far outweigh the temporary conveniences of unsustainable practices [⁴⁷]. Kant's categorical imperative [⁴⁸], which he formulated in several ways, offers strong justification for sustainable practices:

1. Universal Law Formulation: "Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law [⁴⁹]."
 - If everyone adopted unsustainable practices, it would lead to environmental catastrophe. Therefore, sustainable development is a moral imperative.
2. Humanity as an End Formulation: "Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of another, always at the same time as an end and never simply as a means [⁵⁰]."
 - Unsustainable practices treat future generations merely as means to our current ends, violating their dignity. Sustainable development respects the inherent worth of all humanity, present and future.
3. Kingdom of Ends Formulation: "Act according to the maxims of a universally legislative member for a merely possible kingdom of ends [⁵¹]."
 - Sustainable development aligns with the idea of a harmonious world where all rational beings coexist under mutually agreeable principles.

Kant's ethics remind us that our duty to practice sustainable development is not contingent on consequences but is an absolute moral obligation. It's a universal principle that respects the dignity of all humanity and creates a world of shared ethical maxims [⁵²].

The ethics of sustainable development forms the bedrock for environmental protection amidst the climate change crisis. It is not only the most effective solution to climate change but also aligns with our ontological ethical nature, maximizes overall well-being from a utilitarian perspective, and fulfills our categorical moral duties from a Kantian standpoint.

As we face the challenges of climate change, embracing the ethics of sustainable development is not just a choice, but a moral imperative. It allows us to meet our needs without compromising those of future generations and fulfills our ethical duty to protect our shared environment. In doing so, we not only address the practical challenges of climate change but also express our highest nature as ethical beings.

The ethical foundations of sustainable development, grounded in both utilitarian and deontological principles, necessitate prioritizing the well-being of both current and future generations by safeguarding our environment. This imperative calls for ethical leadership, a cornerstone of sustainable development. Ethical leadership can be viewed from two perspectives: first, as a responsibility inherent to all members of the human family, and second, as a specific role held by certain individuals within society. The ethical mandate embedded in the essence of sustainable development is a duty for all human beings in their individual capacities, aimed at benefiting the majority of humanity. This is the course of action every human being should strive to follow. Moreover, it is an imperative for all leaders within society.

Ethical Leadership and Sustainable Development: Path to Addressing Africa's Climate Change Crisis

Ethical leadership among African political leaders plays a crucial role in addressing the continent's climate change crisis, particularly when considering the intrinsic connection between ethics and sustainable development. Sustainable development, as conceptualized by the Brundtland Commission underscores meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs [⁵³]. This concept inherently encompasses ethical considerations, as it requires leaders to balance current economic and social needs with sustainable environmental preservation and intergenerational equity.

Plato's *Republic* offers valuable insights into ethical leadership. It advocates for the rule of philosopher-kings, emphasizing their ethical character

⁴⁷ Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 284-301.

⁴⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 31-32.

⁴⁹ Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 31.

⁵⁰ Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 38.

⁵¹ Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 44.

⁵² Christine M. Korsgaard, *Creating the Kingdom of Ends* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 188-221.

⁵³ WCED, 43.

and wisdom [⁵⁴]. He warns us that when non-philosophers assume positions of leadership then the result will be poor leadership. Plato indicates: "Unless philosophers become rulers or rulers become true and thorough students of philosophy, there shall be no end to troubles of states and of humanity [⁵⁵]. On the other hand, the United Nations Human Developmental Programme (UNHDP) identifies leadership at the global level as a setback in the fight against climate change [⁵⁶]. In line with this, Chinua Achebe, in *The Trouble with Nigeria*, attributes the primary problem of Nigeria, and arguably the world, is a profound failure of leadership, not lack of resources [⁵⁷]. These views by Plato, UNHDP and Chinua Achebe highlight the critical role of leadership in shaping the trajectory of nations and addressing global crises, including the climate change crisis.

In the context of Africa's climate change challenges, ethical leadership becomes paramount. Political leaders who embody ethical principles are more likely to prioritize policies, laws, legal frameworks, legal instruments and initiatives that address climate change while simultaneously promoting sustainable development. These kind of leaders recognize the moral imperative to protect their citizens from the adverse effects of climate change, such as increased droughts, floods, and food insecurity, which disproportionately affect vulnerable populations [⁵⁸].

Ethical leadership in this context involves making difficult decisions that may not yield immediate political gains but are very necessary for sustainability. For example, the late Nobel Laureate Professor Wangari Maathai faced significant opposition for her groundbreaking efforts to promote climate-friendly practices, particularly through her Green Belt Movement, despite facing challenges and resistance, her unwavering dedication and perseverance ultimately bore fruit. Her Noel Peace Prize, awarded in 2004, was a well-deserved recognition of her invaluable contributions to environmental conservation and sustainable development. Maathai's work has inspired countless of individuals and organizations worldwide, leaving a lasting legacy that continues to shape global efforts to combat climate change. In line with this, we may argue

that ethical leaders understand the importance of actions and measure in mitigating climate change and ensuring a sustainable future for future citizens of their respective nations [⁵⁹].

Furthermore, ethical leadership fosters transparency and accountability [⁶⁰] in climate-related decision-making processes. African political leaders who prioritize ethics are more likely to engage in inclusive dialogue with various stakeholders, including indigenous people, local communities, scholars, youths and environmental organizations. This participatory approach ensures that climate policies and laws are effective in responding to climate change. It must be underscored that inclusive governance is important as underscored in Principle 10 of the *Rio Declaration* and reflected in international instruments [⁶¹]. This collaboration can draw on the strengths of each party and contribute to a synergistic and comprehensive approach to climate crisis and sustainable development.

Ethical leadership also plays a critical role in securing and managing international climate finance. In line with the *Paris Agreement*, the developed nations are supposed to provide climate finance to developing countries [⁶²]. Once they receive these monies African political leaders are supposed to ensure these funds are used to meet their purpose of climate change and sustainable development initiatives.

Ethical leadership is important in influencing the best practices, policies and laws. Ethical African Political leaders can serve as strong role models for their citizens. As Albert Bandura's social learning theory suggests, modeling plays a crucial role in influencing behavior [⁶³]. Thus, African leaders use their influence in several ways such as leading by example, championing climate policies, partnering with stakeholders, investing in sustainable agricultural practices, prioritize climate change mitigations and adaptation programs and projects in their respective national budgets.

African leaders have a crucial responsibility to protect their citizens from the adverse effects of climate change. This aligns with Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*

⁵⁴ Plato, *The Republic*. A Bloom (Ed). A Division of Harper Collins Publishers, 1991, VI, 487e-489a.

⁵⁵ Plato, *Republic*, BK, V, 473.

⁵⁶ United Nations Development Programme. *Climate Change and Human Development: Harnessing Emerging Opportunities*. (New York: UNDP), 2013.

⁵⁷ Chinua Achebe. *The Trouble with Nigeria* (London: Fourth Estate, 2009), 1.

⁵⁸ Isabelle Niang, Olivier C. Rupe, Mohamed A. Abdrabo and Essel Ama. "Africa," in *Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Part B: Regional Aspects*, ed. Barros, V.R., C.B. Field, D.J. Dokken, M.D. Mastrandrea, K.J. Mach, T.E. Bilir, M. Chatterjee, K.L. Ebi, Y.O. Estrada, R.C. Genova, B.

Girma, E.S. Kissel, A.N. Levy, S. MacCracken, P.R. Mastrandrea, and L.L. White Vicente (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 1199-1265.

⁵⁹ John C. Dernbach and Federico Cheever, "Sustainable Development and Its Discontents," *Transnational Environmental Law* 4, no. 2 (2015): 247-287.

⁶⁰ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. *The Paris Agreement*. 2015.

⁶¹ Rio Declaration, Principle 10.

⁶² United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. *The Paris Agreement*. 2015, Article, 9.

⁶³ Albert Bandura *Social Learning Theory*. (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1977).

where the liberated prisoner is tasked with returning to free the prisoners in the cave from shackles of shadows. Similarly, African political leaders must strive to liberate their people from the impacts of climate change.

Ethical leadership is indispensable in addressing our continent's climate change crisis while at the same time promoting sustainable development. By embodying ethical principles, these leaders can make difficult but necessary decisions, foster inclusive and transparent governance, advocate for climate justice, and promote regional cooperation. As Africa continues to face the harsh realities of climate change, ethical foundation of ethical leadership is crucial in charting a path towards a sustainable and resilient future.

CONCLUSION

The climate change crisis presents a formidable challenge for Africa but offers an opportunity to rethink the continent's development path. Ethical leadership and a commitment to sustainable development are crucial for addressing this crisis. Ethical leaders can foster climate-friendly practices and create a conducive environment for innovation. Sustainable development, focusing on meeting present needs without compromising those of the future generations, is essential for addressing climate change crisis ethically. By prioritizing ethical considerations, African countries can ensure that their climate change strategies are effective, equitable and just. Africa can build a more resilient and prosperous future by embracing ethical leadership and sustainable development, positioning itself as a global leader in providing sustainable solutions to the crisis of climate change.

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