ACCOF-21 FINAL REPORT

Preparing Africa for El Nino 2026/2027 and Strengthening Continental Climate Services

Lusaka, Zambia | 15-19 June 2026

Meeting	Twenty-first African Continental Climate Outlook Forum (ACCOF-21)
Theme	El Nino preparedness, continental outlook harmonization and climate-sector coordination
Location	Pamodzi Hotel, Lusaka, Zambia
Dates	15-19 June 2026
Lead institutions	African Union Commission, ACMAD, WMO, Regional Climate Centres, RECs, NMHSs and partners
Main outputs	Continental outlook statement, sector working group ToR, roadmap, sectoral bulletins framework, policy brief framework and ACCOF-21 recommendations

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1. Executive Summary

The Twenty-first African Continental Climate Outlook Forum (ACCOF-21), held in Lusaka, Zambia from 15 to 19 June 2026, brought together continental, regional, national and sectoral actors to assess the emerging El Nino 2026/2027 situation and strengthen Africa's preparedness for climate shocks. The forum focused on the transition from climate information to early action, with emphasis on harmonized continental outlooks, regional climate drivers, user engagement, sector-based interpretation and institutional coordination.

The meeting was organized around a progressive five-day process. Day 1 established the scientific and institutional basis for El Nino preparedness. Day 2 focused on regional outlooks and forecast harmonization. Day 3 addressed governance and the institutionalization of Climate Sector Working Groups. Day 4 brought users from climate-sensitive sectors into the process, including Agriculture, disaster risk reduction, humanitarian action, water resources, energy and media. Day 5 consolidated the technical, sectoral and policy outputs, including the Continental Climate Outlook Statement, Terms of Reference and roadmap for the Working Groups, the African Climate Outlook Bulletin framework, the annual policy briefing framework, the El Nino event statement and the ACCOF-21 policy brief.

A central message throughout the week was that Africa must move beyond the production of forecasts towards a coordinated system in which climate information is co-produced, interpreted, communicated and used for decisions. Participants emphasized that El Nino is a continental concern but its impacts are regional, seasonal and sector-specific. ENSO should therefore be interpreted alongside other regional climate drivers such as the Indian Ocean Dipole, Atlantic sea surface temperature patterns, Mediterranean warming, the South-West Indian Ocean, the Madden-Julian Oscillation and land-atmosphere feedbacks.

The forum also reinforced the strategic role of ACMAD as a continental climate institution supporting the harmonization of Regional Climate Centre inputs, the production of continental climate products and the translation of scientific information into actionable guidance for policymakers and users. The discussions highlighted the need for ACMAD, AUC, WMO, RCCs, RECs, NMHSs and sectoral institutions to work through complementary mandates and sustainable governance mechanisms.

ACCOF-21 concluded with a clear preparedness agenda: harmonize continental outlooks, institutionalize sector working groups, strengthen early warning and anticipatory action, improve user-oriented communication, produce regular sectoral bulletins and policy briefs, and ensure that climate services support national planning, investment decisions, disaster risk management and Africa's common position in international climate negotiations.

2. Background and Objectives

ACCOF-21 was convened at a time when forecasts indicated the likely development and intensification of El Nino conditions toward the end of 2026. Past El Nino episodes have produced significant impacts across Africa, including drought in Southern Africa and the Sahel, flooding in Eastern Africa and coastal West Africa, food insecurity, water stress, energy disruption, health risks, infrastructure damage and humanitarian needs. The forum was therefore designed to build a common understanding of the expected climate signal and to promote early preparedness.

The main objectives of the forum were to:

- Review the emerging El Nino 2026/2027 conditions and their potential implications for Africa.
- Assess regional climate drivers and expected impacts across African subregions.
- Harmonize Regional Climate Centre outlooks into a coherent continental message.
- Translate forecast information into sector-specific implications and recommended actions.
- Strengthen links between climate information providers, policymakers and users.

- Institutionalize Climate Sector Working Groups as a permanent mechanism for climate services coordination.
- Develop continental climate products, including quarterly sectoral bulletins, an annual policy brief and a consolidated climate outlook statement.

3. Participation and Institutional Context

The forum brought together the African Union Commission, the World Meteorological Organization, ACMAD, Regional Climate Centres, Regional Economic Communities, National Meteorological and Hydrological Services, sectoral ministries and institutions, disaster risk management actors, humanitarian organizations, media representatives and technical partners. The Government of Zambia hosted the meeting and emphasized that climate risks are already affecting food security, water, energy, infrastructure, public health and livelihoods.

The institutional discussions were anchored in the need to strengthen continental climate governance. AUC provided policy and continental coordination leadership; ACMAD supported continental technical coordination and synthesis; WMO supported scientific standards, climate services and early warning systems; RCCs provided regional outlooks and technical inputs; NMHSs were recognized as the national interface for translating products into warnings and advisories; and users helped ensure that climate information is linked to operational decisions.

4. Day-by-Day Synthesis

Day 1 - ENSO status, climate drivers and preparedness

The first day built a shared understanding of the emerging El Nino conditions and their relevance for Africa. Opening statements from Zambia, AUC, WMO and ACMAD emphasized that Africa must prepare early because past El Nino events have severely affected food security, water resources, energy, health, infrastructure and livelihoods. Scientific presentations reviewed ENSO dynamics, the likely strengthening of El Nino toward the end of 2026 and the regional climate drivers that influence impacts across Africa. The day concluded that ENSO alone is not sufficient to explain African climate impacts and that preparedness must begin before impacts are fully certain.

Day 2 - Regional outlooks and forecast harmonization

The second day focused on regional outlooks, El Nino preparedness and harmonization of forecast information across RCCs. UMA recalled recent high-impact events in North Africa, including the 2023 Libya floods associated with Storm Daniel and recent events in Morocco. IGAD presented food insecurity trends and links with climate variability. ECCAS emphasized the need for continuous monitoring in Central Africa due to diverse rainfall regimes. ECOWAS highlighted El Nino sensitivity in West Africa and the Sahel. WMO recommended that RCCs support Member States directly in El Nino preparedness. A major outcome was the need to consolidate RCC inputs into a coherent continental outlook, including harmonized colors, terminology, categories and rainfall onset information.

Day 3 - Climate Sector Working Groups and governance

The third day focused on the institutionalization of climate services through Climate Sector Working Groups, governance arrangements and continental coordination. The discussions stressed that climate information must move beyond forecasting to become a coordinated system for policy, planning and sectoral decision-making. Permanent Working Groups were proposed to connect RCCs, Member States, RECs, AUC, WMO, ACMAD and users into a sustainable governance framework. Planned products included quarterly sectoral climate bulletins, annual sector policy

briefs, seasonal outlook products, the Africa State of Climate Report and sector-specific risk assessments.

Day 4 - User engagement and sectoral interpretation

The fourth day brought users from climate-sensitive sectors into the process. The day included a presentation by the Director General of ACMAD on El Nino, La Nina and ENSO, the launch of the State of the Climate in Africa 2025 report by WMO, regional interpretation of El Nino impacts and the presentation of ACMAD consensus forecast maps for July to October. Sectoral group work allowed participants to reflect on past El Nino experiences, lessons learned, challenges and preparedness actions. Users emphasized that climate information must be contextualized, downscaled and translated into practical guidance for agriculture, livestock, water, energy, health, DRR, humanitarian action and media.

Day 5 - Consolidation, adoption and closing

The fifth day consolidated the technical, sectoral and policy outcomes of the week. Sectoral working groups presented forecast implications and proposed mitigation and adaptation measures. The forum reviewed seasonal forecasts for JAS and ASO 2026, the draft Terms of Reference and roadmap for Continental Climate Sector-Based Working Groups, the framework for the African Climate Outlook Bulletin, the annual policy briefing, the El Nino event statement, the ACCOF-21 policy brief and closing remarks. Key outputs were adopted subject to incorporation of comments, marking a transition from discussion to implementation.

Summary of Daily Focus and Outputs

Day	Main Focus	Key Messages	Main Outputs / Follow-up
Day 1	ENSO status and preparedness	El Nino is likely to strengthen; impacts are regional and sector-specific; preparedness should begin early.	Common scientific understanding; regional climate drivers reviewed.
Day 2	Regional outlooks and harmonization	RCC products need to be integrated into one coherent continental outlook.	Forecast harmonization priorities; onset and graphical consistency recommended.
Day 3	Governance and Working Groups	Climate services require permanent sector working groups and linked continental-regional-national structures.	Working Group architecture and planned products identified.
Day 4	Users and sectoral interpretation	Forecasts must be translated into clear sectoral implications and actions.	Sectoral lessons, user priorities and ACMAD consensus forecast discussion.
Day 5	Consolidation and adoption	The week moved from analysis to implementation through adopted frameworks and products.	ToR, roadmap, bulletin framework, policy brief framework, outlook statement and ACCOF-21 policy brief.

5. Continental Climate Outlook and Main Scientific Messages

The scientific discussions confirmed that the expected El Nino should be treated as an important climate signal for Africa, but not as the only determinant of regional impacts. The timing, strength and interaction of El Nino with regional ocean-atmosphere drivers will shape the magnitude and spatial distribution of rainfall, temperature and extreme events.

The main scientific messages were:

- El Nino conditions were expected to strengthen toward the end of 2026, requiring continued monitoring and regular updates.
- The Sahel and parts of West Africa may face increased drought risk depending on the timing and strength of the signal, while coastal Gulf of Guinea areas may also face flood risks.
- Eastern Africa may experience suppressed rainfall during JJAS in some areas but enhanced rainfall during OND, particularly if El Nino interacts with a positive Indian Ocean Dipole.
- Southern Africa remains sensitive to El Nino during its main rainfall season, with increased risk of dry conditions, although local outcomes depend on regional sea surface temperatures and other drivers.
- Central Africa requires year-round monitoring because rainfall regimes differ across subregions and climate risks can occur throughout the year.
- North Africa's summer climate is shaped mainly by regional circulation, Mediterranean warming and land-atmosphere feedbacks, while ENSO influence is generally weaker and indirect.
- The South-West Indian Ocean region requires close monitoring of rainfall, circulation and tropical cyclone activity.

The forum emphasized that the continental outlook should be both scientifically robust and user-friendly. This requires harmonized forecast categories, common graphical conventions, clear uncertainty language and the inclusion of rainfall onset information where possible.

6. Sectoral Implications and User Priorities

A major achievement of ACCOF-21 was the integration of users into the climate outlook process. Users helped translate forecast information into implications for specific sectors and identify realistic preparedness actions. The sectoral discussions also showed that recommendations should be targeted according to forecast confidence, exposure, vulnerability and local conditions rather than presented as blanket actions for all regions.

Disaster Risk Reduction and Humanitarian Action

- Scale up anticipatory action, contingency planning, risk mapping and prepositioning in high-risk areas.
- Use severity levels and clear hazard language to guide preparedness and avoid overgeneralized recommendations.
- Strengthen last-mile communication, cross-border coordination and support for displaced and mobile populations.
- Ensure early warning leads to early action through clear triggers, financing and institutional responsibilities.

Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Forestry

- Align crop calendars, planting guidance, seed choices and livestock management with regional and national forecasts.
- Promote drought-tolerant varieties and livestock feed only where forecast confidence and vulnerability analysis justify early action.
- Strengthen food security monitoring, pest and disease preparedness, pasture management and advisory services.

- Use local leaders, extension services and community platforms to translate climate information into local languages.

Water Resources and Energy

- Manage water reserves carefully where rainfall deficits are expected and prepare for flood risks where above-normal rainfall is forecast.
- Rehabilitate boreholes, improve irrigation systems, strengthen urban water management and support transboundary water coordination.
- Protect hydropower infrastructure, transmission lines and energy systems in areas exposed to floods or drought stress.
- Use forecasts to support reservoir management, hydropower planning and energy diversification.

Health

- Operationalize climate and health services linking meteorological information with health surveillance and early warning.
- Strengthen surveillance for malaria, dengue, cholera, respiratory diseases, meningitis and other climate-sensitive diseases.
- Develop heat-health advisories, mobile health support where needed and public awareness campaigns.
- Use evidence-based language for mental health, psychosocial stress and trauma related to climate shocks.

Media and Communication

- Implement a Seasonal Media Action Plan to translate forecasts into sector-specific stories and public messages.
- Use radio, television, social media, messaging platforms, community leaders, youth and religious networks to reach last-mile audiences.
- Counter misinformation and avoid climate anxiety while communicating risks clearly and responsibly.
- Create feedback loops by documenting community experiences and sharing observations with climate institutions.

7. Governance, Working Groups and Operational Products

ACCOF-21 confirmed that sustainable climate services require clear governance. The proposed Climate Sector-Based Continental Working Groups are intended to provide a permanent mechanism for connecting climate information providers and users, supporting co-production and ensuring that climate information informs policy, planning and sectoral action.

7.1 Proposed Governance Architecture

Governance Level / Actor	Expected Role
AUC and RECs	Provide policy leadership, continental and regional coordination, institutional anchoring and political uptake.
ACMAD	Serve as continental technical coordinator, synthesize RCC inputs, support continental outlooks and strengthen climate products for decision-making.
WMO	Support standards, quality assurance, capacity development, climate services and early warning systems.

Regional Climate Centres	Generate regional outlooks, technical inputs, sectoral expertise and region-specific interpretation.
NMHSs	Translate continental and regional guidance into national forecasts, advisories, warnings and user engagement.
Sector Working Groups and Users	Co-produce sectoral guidance, identify implications and support operational uptake across sectors.
Media and communication actors	Translate climate information into accessible public messages and facilitate feedback from communities.

7.2 Key Operational Products

- Quarterly Continental Sectoral Climate Bulletins presenting forecasts, sector-specific implications, recommended actions and key messages.
- Annual Continental Climate Policy Brief to guide policymakers on priority risks, actions, responsible institutions, timelines, resource implications and expected outcomes.
- Continental Climate Outlook Statement consolidating RCC inputs into harmonized, user-oriented messages.
- State of the Climate in Africa Report as an annual evidence base for planning, investment decisions, disaster risk management and climate negotiations.
- Sector-specific risk assessments translating forecast information into implications for agriculture, health, water, energy, DRR, humanitarian action and media.
- Roadmap and Terms of Reference for the Continental Climate Sector-Based Working Groups.

8. Key Outputs Adopted or Advanced

The forum advanced or adopted, subject to incorporation of comments, the following outputs:

1. Terms of Reference for the Continental Climate Sector-Based Working Groups.
2. Roadmap for operationalizing the Working Groups over approximately one year.
3. Framework for the quarterly African sectoral climate bulletins.
4. Framework for the annual Continental Climate Policy Brief.
5. Continental Climate Outlook Statement for JAS and ASO 2026.
6. El Nino event statement and ACCOF-21 Policy Brief for decision-makers.
7. Recommendations for forecast harmonization, user engagement, anticipatory action and climate services governance.

9. Recommendations

The following recommendations consolidate the major outcomes of ACCOF-21 and provide strategic guidance for strengthening continental climate services, early warning, anticipatory action, governance, sectoral engagement and policy coordination across Africa.

A. Forecasting, Monitoring and the Continental Outlook

- Expand the continental monitoring framework to incorporate under-prioritized hazards, particularly sand and dust storms and climate-sensitive disease outbreaks (including meningitis, respiratory, and vector-borne diseases), to improve multi-hazard early warning systems.

B. Continental Outlook Statement and Policy Brief

- Develop and regularly disseminate Continental Quarterly Sectoral Climate Bulletins that present seasonal forecasts, sector-specific impacts, and recommended mitigation and adaptation actions for stakeholders.
- Develop a Continental Climate Policy Brief that clearly identifies priority actions, responsible institutions, implementation timelines, and expected outcomes to guide policymakers.
- Strengthen the documentation of extreme weather and climate events to generate robust evidence supporting loss-and-damage assessments, climate adaptation planning, and resource mobilization.
- Promote the use of the 2025 State of the Climate in Africa Report as a strategic reference for national development planning, investment decisions, disaster risk management, and Africa's common position in international climate negotiations.

C. Early Warning, Anticipatory Action and Risk Financing

- Enhance the operational use of climate services by transforming forecasts into impact-based guidance, strengthening the transition from early warning to early action, and promoting climate-informed decision-making across sectors.
- Strengthen continental anticipatory action mechanisms by undertaking a continental status assessment, developing a roadmap and operational guidelines, establishing a Continental Anticipatory Action Working Group, and supporting Member States in strengthening legal, institutional, and financing frameworks.
- Improve coordination of early warning systems by strengthening horizontal collaboration across institutions and vertical linkages from continental to regional and national levels to ensure timely and effective dissemination and use of climate information.

D. Continental Working Groups, Governance and Coordination

- Establish and strengthen Climate Sector-Based Continental Working Groups, in accordance with the decision of the 6th Specialized Technical Committee (STC), to improve coordination between climate information providers and users.
- Anchor the Continental Working Groups within existing African Union governance structures and the African Regional Climate Outlook Forum (ARCOF) process, building on existing initiatives to ensure sustainability and avoid duplication.
- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of Regional Climate Centres (RCCs) by leveraging their comparative advantages, ensuring meaningful participation of users in governance, integrating existing User Interface Platforms, and strengthening collaboration with national early warning committees and regional anticipatory action networks.
- Adopt clear governance arrangements for the Continental Working Groups, including a two-year non-renewable chairmanship with vice-chair succession, supported by a secretary and rapporteur, and membership drawn from relevant technical institutions.
- Finalize the Continental White Paper on Climate Information for Decision-Making by simplifying its title, consolidating overlapping chapters on User Interface Platforms and Working Groups, and completing the outstanding chapters within four months.

E. Sector Mainstreaming, User Co-production and Communication

- Promote the co-production of climate services by strengthening collaboration between climate information providers and end-users to ensure climate information responds to sectoral needs and supports evidence-based decision-making.
- Adopt a standardized reporting template and implement a Seasonal Media Action Plan to improve communication, sustain stakeholder engagement between forums, strengthen accountability, and encourage participatory multi-sectoral dialogue.

F. Policy and Global Engagement

- Support the production of country-specific State of the Climate Reports, led by National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs) in collaboration with national ministries and stakeholders, to complement the continental report.
- Strengthen Africa's unified voice in global climate negotiations, including at United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP31), through coordinated continental positions and evidence-based advocacy.
- Utilize the Continental Working Groups as technical advisory platforms to develop common African positions and provide coordinated technical support to the African Group of Negotiators in international climate negotiations.

10. Conclusion

ACCOF-21 demonstrated Africa's growing capacity to coordinate continental climate services, interpret emerging climate risks and translate forecasts into preparedness actions. The forum successfully connected scientific analysis, regional outlooks, governance discussions, user engagement and policy guidance into one coherent process.

The meeting confirmed that the expected El Nino 2026/2027 event requires continued monitoring, harmonized communication and early preparedness. However, it also showed that the larger agenda extends beyond a single event. Africa needs permanent systems for co-producing climate information, linking forecasts to decisions, strengthening early warning and anticipatory action, and supporting climate-resilient development.

The Lusaka meeting produced a practical roadmap for the next phase: institutionalize the Climate Sector-Based Continental Working Groups, deliver regular sectoral bulletins and policy briefs, strengthen the State of the Climate in Africa process, improve forecast harmonization and mobilize sustainable financing. With coordinated leadership from AUC, ACMAD, WMO, RCCs, RECs, NMHSs and users, ACCOF-21 can serve as a foundation for stronger climate services and early action across Africa.