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# African Nations Push Back on Fossil Fuel Phase-Out at Santa Marta Summit

Saga deep read · 30 April 2026 · Score 50

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More than fifty countries gathered at the Santa Marta conference to advance the global conversation on phasing out fossil fuels, producing a joint report outlining proposed solutions and transition measures. However, the summit exposed a sharp fault line between developed economies pressing for accelerated decarbonisation and developing nations — particularly across Sub-Saharan Africa — that remain heavily dependent on oil and gas revenues for their fiscal stability and economic development ambitions.

African delegations made clear that the equation is far from straightforward. Many Sub-Saharan economies are still in the early or mid-stages of monetising hydrocarbon resources that were discovered relatively recently, and for which significant upstream capital has already been committed. For these governments, a premature phase-out of fossil fuels would not only strand productive assets but would also deprive national budgets of the revenues needed to fund schools, hospitals, and infrastructure. The African position is grounded in a principle of equity: that countries which contributed least to historical emissions should not bear a disproportionate share of the transition burden.

The tension at Santa Marta reflects a broader geopolitical dynamic that is increasingly shaping how African producer states engage with international energy forums. Nations such as Nigeria, Angola, Mozambique, Senegal, and Uganda — all at various stages of upstream development — have signalled that they intend to

continue developing their hydrocarbon reserves, framing this as a sovereign right to the same development pathway that industrialised nations followed. Some delegations went further, arguing that curtailing African gas development in particular undermines regional energy security and affordable electrification goals, given that hundreds of millions of Africans still lack reliable grid access.

The conference report acknowledged these concerns to a degree, including language around just transition financing and technology transfer, but African participants indicated that commitments remain vague and underfunded. The gap between pledged climate finance and actual disbursements continues to erode trust, making it harder for African governments to align domestic energy policy with international climate targets. Several delegations noted that without concrete financial mechanisms, the phase-out agenda risks being perceived as an external constraint imposed on African economic sovereignty rather than a shared global project.

For the international energy services industry operating in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Santa Marta outcome is a meaningful signal. African producer governments are not retreating from upstream development — they are doubling down on it, backed by a coherent political narrative. Projects in Namibia, Tanzania, Uganda, Mozambique, Senegal, and the Gulf of Guinea remain on track within their domestic policy frameworks, even as international climate pressure intensifies. The investment environment in these countries may face reputational headwinds from multilateral lenders, but host government commitment to project delivery remains firm in the near to medium term.

## **Why this matters to partners and clients of Saga**

Norwegian service companies should interpret Santa Marta as confirmation that African producer governments will continue advancing upstream and LNG projects regardless of phase-out rhetoric, making project pipelines in Namibia, Mozambique, Senegal, and Uganda credible commercial targets. Companies should monitor how shifting climate finance conditions affect final investment decisions, particularly for gas monetisation schemes where development bank support may tighten. Active engagement with in-country partners and national oil companies now positions Norwegian firms ahead of upcoming tender cycles that host governments are unlikely to delay.

## PARTNER ANGLES

- **Subsea/FPSO:** Continued host government commitment to offshore developments in Namibia and Senegal keeps FPSO and subsea infrastructure demand intact despite phase-out pressure from multilateral lenders.
- **Drilling:** African governments defending development rights signals sustained exploration and appraisal drilling activity, supporting rig demand and well-services opportunities across the Gulf of Guinea and East Africa.
- **LNG:** African delegations framing gas as a development and electrification tool reinforces the political backing for LNG projects in Mozambique and Tanzania, where Norwegian LNG technology and engineering services are competitive.
- **Pipeline:** Onshore and offshore pipeline infrastructure tied to gas monetisation projects in Uganda, Nigeria, and Mozambique remains a viable contract target as producer states accelerate delivery timelines to pre-empt future financing constraints.
- **Service:** Norwegian well-services and oilfield technology companies should prioritise direct relationships with national oil companies, as African governments increasingly favour partners who engage without attaching phase-out conditionalities.

[Original source: Le Monde Afrique →](#)

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