

Beyond Resource Extractivism and Comparative Advantages: The Case for Energy Transitions in Africa

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Abstract

Africa's abundant renewable and non-renewable resources provide the continent with significant comparative advantages to become a major player in the rapidly changing global energy transition landscape. This is underpinned by its stock of about 30% of the world's mineral reserves including critical energy transition minerals, high solar irradiance and significant wind speed, huge carbon sequestration potential, favorable carbon emission profile, and trade frameworks such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). However, this abundance is marked by deepening levels of extractivism in the form of policies, range of natural resources, and political culture and practice, which have led to increasingly exploitative and destructive activities on the continent. In our commentary, we discuss the problematic of resource extractivism and the dependence and vulnerabilities it creates in resource-rich developing countries in Africa, and articulate how the path to net zero offers a new opportunity for the continent to be a global powerhouse for resource-driven climate action and investment.