Special EDITION

# Compensation or Investment?

## Kenya's Dual Climate Finance Posture is a Necessary Strategic Gamble

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### Abstract

Countries are seeking ways to mitigate and/or adapt to climate change. If this search involves establishing, advocating for, and/or leveraging climate finance so be it. Kenya is no different. This article, which draws on the game theory and media framing, posits that Kenya's dual climate finance posture is a necessary strategic gamble. It examines Kenya's recent global and national rhetoric on climate finance in general, and 'loss and damage' in particular - to establish the country's current climate financing posture. Employing interdisciplinary, mixed methods approaches, it scans literature on climate change, and climate financing. It also utilizes Meltwater (an artificial intelligence-powered, big data, media monitoring application), generating 1,300 English, online print media articles on public discourse on 'loss and damage' in Kenya. It finds, among other key preliminary findings, that Kenya is burning both sides of the climate finance candle to advance her national interests. As the viability and strategic value of this dual climate finance posture in this endeavor is unestablished, only time will tell whether Kenya's current approach will buttress the economy, and deliver and sustain climate resilient dividends for the country. One of the article's recommendations for sustained climate action (mitigation, adaptation, and advocacy) is increased, inclusive, comprehensive citizen-private sector-government partnerships.


**Key words:** *'Loss and damage,' climate change, COP 27, Horn of Africa, Kenya, Africa Climate Summit 2023, COP 28, technology, dual climate finance posture, climate investment, strategic gamble, game theory, national interests.*

### Background

COP 27 established a dedicated 'loss and damage' fund and increased the global spotlight on African states' need and access to it. That was a historic climate adaptation milestone. UN Climate Change Executive Secretary, Simon Stiell, reportedly remarked:

> This outcome moves us forward. We have determined a way forward on a decades-long conversation on funding for loss and damage – deliberating over how we address the impacts on communities whose lives and livelihoods have been ruined by the very worst impacts of climate change (UN Climate Change, 2022).

Since then, Kenya has remained seized on the increasing, negative impact that unmitigated climate change is having on her peace, security, and development, as well as regional stability. Not in the least because of her recent lived experiences with increasing, repeated, and prolonged drought-flooding episodes. Over the past five years, for instance, droughts and flooding, which according to the Kenya Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, and Forestry (Kenya MECCF) are Kenya's foremost climate hazards, have displaced thousands from their homes; predisposed millions of individuals to hunger, malnutrition, and diseases, and/or destroyed thousands of livelihoods in the country. The most recent drought (2022-2023)


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was reportedly one of the worst one in independent Kenya's history; it led to low crop productivity, and the death of tens of wildlife, and thousands of livestock (United Nations Climate Change, 2022; Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2023; UNHCR, 2023; National Drought Management Authority, 2022; Kenya MECCF, 2023).

In addition to increasing climate-related shocks and stresses, Kenya is grappling with high youth unemployment; persistent resource conflicts; increasing internal population displacement; incomplete post-COVID 19 recovery; governance deficits; and high cost of living. This state of affairs suggests that Kenya is constrained to manage multiple socio-economic priorities simultaneously with diminishing revenue. Moreover, Kenya's neighbors such as Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, and eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) are embroiled in and preoccupied with protracted intra-state armed conflicts. Some of them, such as South Sudan, and Somalia, are confronting the negative effects of prolonged flooding and recurring droughts respectively. These extreme climatic conditions have displaced thousands of South Sudanese and Somalia citizens. Some of these 'climate refugees' have sought refuge in Kenya, most recently (in May-June 2023) at Dadaab refugee camp. Kenya's anchor state and regional hub profiles demand that Kenya upholds its international obligations (such hosting refugees) and supports national and regional peace processes. These also buttress the idea that climate change is a stress multiplier in Kenya, and lend credence to Kenya's emerging 'poly crisis' theatre (World Bank, 2023; UNHCR, 2023; *Citizen Digital,* 2023; Morin & Kern, 1999).

The cumulative net effects of unmitigated climate change; the attendant environmental degradation, and displacement; and armed conflicts are political, economic, and social instabilities. Such conditions frustrate sustainable development, which neither the country nor the region desire and/or can afford. Kenya's sustained interest on matters climate change; forced displacement and migration; security; and regional peace is also attributable to her role in the Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change (CAHSGCC). CAHSGCC's mandate is to obtain and maintain an African Common Position on Climate Change. President Dr William Ruto is CAHSGCC's current Chair. In this regard, "Kenya is responsible for Africa's position at COP 28," according to Ruto (*France 24*).

Be that as it may, Ruto contends that 'loss and damage' is the lesser of the two topical conversations on climate financing (monetary resource required to, *inter alia,* sustainably and effectively build vulnerable communities' resilience against the negative impact of climate change on their lives and livelihoods; address climate change-related threats to peace and security; and fast track net-zero efforts such as fossil fuel to green energy transitions).

According to Ruto (reportedly speaking at the Summit for a New Global Financing Pact in Paris, on June 22-23, 2023), "the more important conversation is climate investment to get to net zero [by 2050]" (*France 24,* 2023). The summit discussed the climate change-economic deprivation link. With an estimated USD 150 trillion and USD 100 billion available a year for climate change-related investment, and 'loss and damage' respectively, it is difficult to counter his contention. Mind you, there is an estimated USD 3.5 trillion shortfall in mobilizing the annual funding needed to hit the target 9.2 trillion needed yearly to arrive at net zero by 2050 (World Bank, 2023; UNFCCC, 2023). Whichever way, climate financing for a common, global challenge necessitates a sound global financial system. At the June 2023 Summit, Ruto called on world leaders to "agree in Paris and conclude in Nairobi at the Africa Climate Summit on September 4-6, 2023 that the current global financial architecture is not-fit-for-purpose. We must get a new global architecture around climate financing."

This article examines Kenya's recent global and national rhetoric on 'loss and damage' to establish the country's current climate financing posture. The article advances that Kenya's dual climate finance posture is a necessary strategic gamble. The following sections contain the article's methodology; key findings, and discussion; conclusion; and recommendations.

## Methodology

According to von Neumann and Morgenstern (1947), actors weigh the costs and benefits of engaging in a given activity. This informs their decisions on how, when, and to what extent they will do so. A win-win outcome is the ideal outcome of this rational choice making. However, the actors may consider beneficial win-lose situations too. Sometimes, this decision making is based on mediated public rhetoric on issues that interest the actors. What is prioritized in discourses about issues that interest or concern the masses is a factor of media framing. In general, views of political elite are included in mediated public rhetoric. The likelihood of categorization of different actors in mediated public discourse based on their identities, ideologies, and contexts ('othering') cannot be ruled out (von Neumann and Morgenstern, 1947; Entman, 1993; Lasswell, 1966; Spivak, 1985).

Given the foregoing, this article employs interdisciplinary, mixed methods approaches. It scans tens of academic and grey literature on climate change, and climate financing, and related topics such as peace and security, forced displacement, and migration focusing on the Horn of Africa. The article refers to United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's (UNFCCC's), and UNFCC's Standing Committee on Finance's (UNFCCC SCF's). UNFCCC defines 'climate financing' as the:

> Local, national or trans-national financing that is drawn from public, private and alternative sources of financing which seeks to support mitigation and adaptation actions that will address climate change (UNFCCC, 2023).

In 2014, UNFCC's Standing Committee on Finance (SCF) defined 'climate financing' as financing that:

> … aims at reducing emissions, and enhancing sinks of greenhouse gases and aims at reducing [the] vulnerability of, and maintaining and increasing the resilience of, human and ecological systems to negative climate change impacts (UNFCCC SCF, 2014).

The article also deploys Meltwater (an artificial intelligence-powered, big data, digital application that comprehensively monitors and analyses media on different platforms), generating 1,300 English, online, print media articles on public discourse on 'loss and damage' in Kenya – published by: *Business Daily, Daily Nation, Citizen Digital, The Standard, The East African, PD Online, Kenya News Agency, The Star, Capital News, Kenya Broadcasting Corporation,* and *NTV Kenya*, over a period of 12 months (between February 2022 and March 2023). Further, the article samples and studies, in-depth, the content and discourse of more than 100 of the 1,300 generated articles. It also thematizes, and analyzes its results on the theoretical bases of game theory (von Neumann & Morgenstern, 1947) and media framing (Entman, 1993; Lasswell, 1966; Iyengar, 1991, 1989; Ryan, 1999, Spivak, 1985).

## Discussion

This section highlights and discusses the article's preliminary key findings.

## Overall, Kenya's Experience with Climate Change is Negative

As Figure 1 shows, Kenya exhibits most of the top 10 global risks that the World Economic Forum has outlined in 2023. Five (5) out of these 10 are environmental. In terms of the environment (a foundation and core pillar of the climate change discourse), Kenya is experiencing natural disasters and extreme weather events (risk 2); has not yet succeeded in mitigating or fully adapting to climate change (risks 4, and 7); is experiencing large-scale environmental damage incidents (risk 6); and some natural resource crises (including food insecurity, water scarcity, and natural resource conflicts especially in her arid and semi-arid and coastal areas, risk 9). Societally, the cost of living in Kenya is high

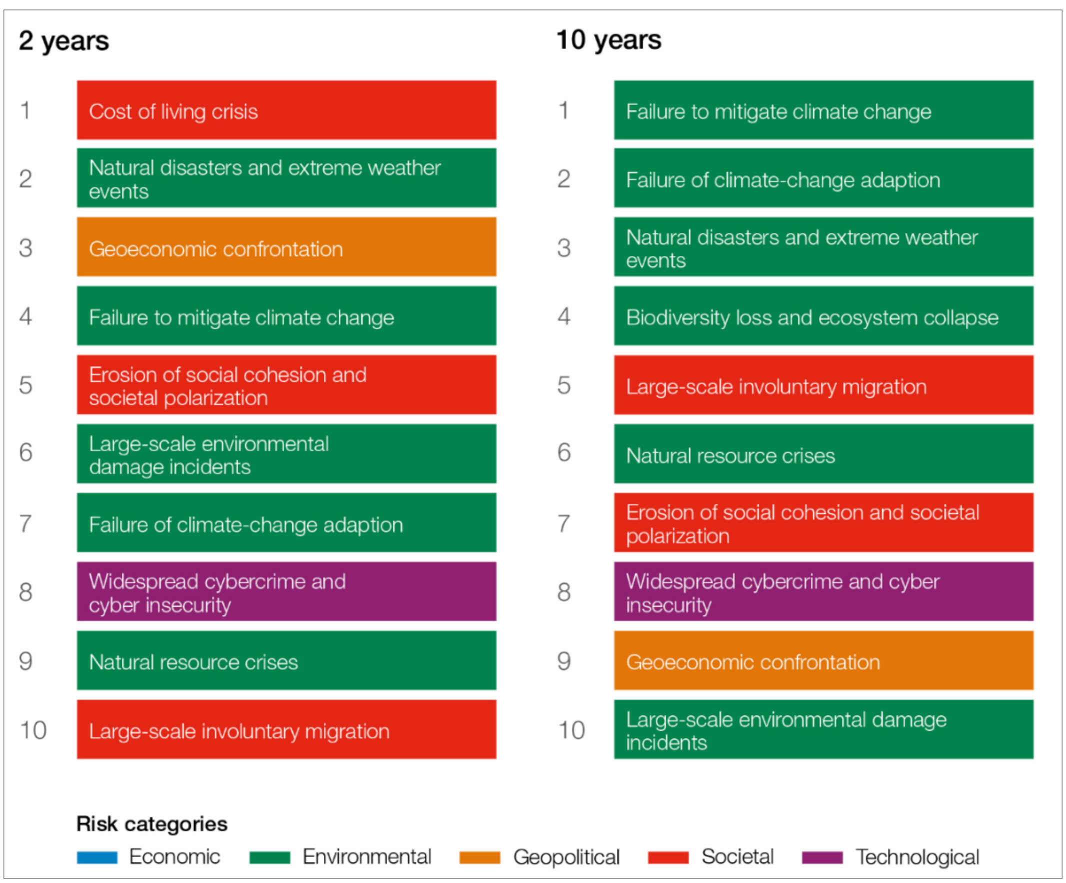


*Figure 1: Projection of Perception of Top 10 Issues that Will Affect Countries between now and 2025, and 2033. Source: World Economic Forum Global Risks Perceptions Survey 2022-2023*

> ... climate change-related risks predispose Kenya to several environmental, societal, and economic risks. Thus, for Kenya, climate change appears to be a 'stress multiplier' and 'existential threat'.

(risk 1). There is also growing evidence of 'social dissolution' and polarization (risk 5). Furthermore, internal displacement on account of climatic extremes is rising (risk 10). Suffice to say, climate change-related risks predispose Kenya to several environmental, societal, and economic risks. Thus, for Kenya, climate change appears to be a 'stress multiplier' and 'existential threat.' Unmitigated, environmental risks will become five (risks 1-4, and risk 6) of the top six risks.

## Climate Financing is Desirable and 'Othering'

Just emerging from one of the most severe droughts in decades, and incomplete post-COVID-19 economic recovery, Kenya is arguably keen to find the most cost-effective, high impact-high returns ways to adapt to climate change, and stabilize and grow her economy. In this regard, financing for climate change adaptation and mitigation is necessary. It is also desirable, to: sustainably and effectively build resilience of vulnerable communities' against and adapt to the negative impact of climate change on their lives and livelihoods; address climate change-related threats to peace and security; and fast track net-zero efforts such as fossil fuel to green energy transitions, deployment of emerging technologies, and tree planting (Kenya plans to plant 15 billion trees by 2032). Climate finance, unsurprisingly, constitutes two of the six priorities (priority 1, and priority 2) outlined at the July 7, 2023 Berlin Climate Security Conference (BCSC-Nairobi) for urgent action to adapt to and mitigate against climate change-induced peace and security challenges in Africa. The six priorities, according to BCSC-Nairobi), are:

1. Mobilizing *climate finance* for peace in Africa (to support demographic segments [women, girls, youth, elderly persons] and communities pastoralists, persons living with disabilities, minorities] most affected by climate- and environment-related risks).
2. Climate security risk-informed resilience and adaptation (engaging multilateral development banks, *climate finance* institutions and development partners to improve financing of resilience and adaptation).
3. Climate-security risk informed peace-building (integrating climate change and environmental degradation in peace building).
4. Ensuring the protection of and durable solutions for persons displaced by the impacts of climate change (partnering to help shape migration policy and adopt human rights-based approaches and integrating these to the climate change-migration nexus).
5. Continued political leadership (to ensure climate change-related risks to peace and stability remain a top priority of governments, at the highest levels).
6. Knowledge and experience sharing (to localize climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts).

Interestingly, just as climate change has exacerbated existing, unfavorable divisions in societies, there have been attempts to, for instance, distance those who are disproportionately affected by the phenomenon from those who are not, or low emitters from high emitters, and those on course for 'loss and damage' funds from those exploring climate investments (Spivak, 1985). In the end, and to the extent that the health of the planet is a global common good, such labels and dichotomies are unhelpful.

## Compensation and Climate Investments Dominate Climate Financing Discourse in Kenya

Kenya's current negative experience with climate change and attendant climate financial needs are reflected in related political rhetoric and mediated public discourses. There are currently two topical conversations on climate financing in and regarding Kenya: *climate compensation* (for the 'losses and damages' incurred by developing, and predominantly global South countries as a result of comparatively larger volume of carbon emissions of economically developed, global north countries) and *climate investments*.

Initially, the two entities were seen as being mutually exclusive, driven by the idea that a poor victim of circumstances cannot also be an investor. The climate finance discourse was 'othering.' In addition to contrasting poor and rich countries, the discourse also differentiated heavy polluters from light polluters, for instance (Spivak, 1985). This invites questions and responses such as whether climate financing a moral matter, for instance. In which case, heavy polluters would be or are called upon and expected to bear greatest responsibility for climate change. According to H.E. Monica Juma, CBS, EGH, MBS, Kenya's National Security Advisor to President Ruto, in decisions to promote peace and security in the country and region, there are no trade-offs between economics and greening:

> It is not a trade-off. It is not an either or. We have to deal with this [negative effects of climate change]. We all know how serious the problem is and the urgency. There are no vulnerable and non-vulnerable regions, or global north emitters and global south non-emitters as we are all affected. We are looking for a framing that is of collective action (July 7, 2023, Berlin Climate and Security Conference - Nairobi).

Increasingly, climate compensation and climate investment are being considered to be complementary and hierarchical. While climate investments are preferred over 'loss and damage' funding as investment will likely deliver peace and stability more sustainably, Kenya is cognizant that both factors will help her to secure funding to adapt to and/or overcome climate change-related challenges such as food insecurity; water insecurity; and increasing internal displacement. In any case, only Denmark has accepted liability for the carbon emissions that have contributed to the current climate 'crisis.' In this regard, it is not smart of countries such as Kenya that are grappling the climate-induced challenges to expect significant 'loss and damage' contributions of other countries that may have other convictions, interests, and priorities. President Ruto has reportedly said at the June 2023 Summit on New Global Financing Pact that:

> It is no longer possible to assume that Africa cannot develop and at the same time have climate-resilient population (*France 24*, 2023).

## Kenya's Media Frames on Climate Financing are Evolving

Media frames on climate financing in Kenya are evolving from predominantly 'loss and damage' to both 'loss and damage' and climate investment. These evolving media frames are mirroring the shift in political rhetoric from mutual exclusivity to complementarity. In addition to the shift from 'loss and damage' to both 'loss and damage' and climate investment, the article also noted media framing shifts, from: victim of unfair threat distribution to solutions provider, as well as national threat to global threat. This comes on the back of the realization of the near-consensus that although the negative impacts of unmitigated climate change are bearing comparatively harder on African states, the ill health of the planet - which is a global common good – is an existential threat. These shifts have likely informed and explains the evolution in Kenya's climate finance discourse from a demobilizing frame to a mobilizing frame, and episodic frame to thematic frame. Whichever the frame, there seems to be an 'othering' undercurrent in Kenya's climate financing discourses (Ryan, 1999; Iyengar, 1991, 1989; Spivak, 1985).

## Kenya is Assuming a Dual Climate Finance Posture

The said evolution notwithstanding, Kenya, considering the aforementioned challenges and World Economic Forum's top-10 projected risks, is hedging her bet and burning both ends of the climate financing candle. In showing interest in both 'loss and damage' and climate investment, Kenya seems to be keen to communicate her awareness of her current precarious climate change and economic outlooks. At the same time, Kenya is eager to demonstrate her interest in becoming a source of solutions in matters climate change in the region, and globally.

This pro-compensation and pro-climate investment climate financing posture is suggestive of Kenya's attempts at balancing local realities and national interests. In a fluid climate change landscape, such a posture is expected. Further, for a country keen not to be defined by the challenges of climate change but rather be inspired by the possibilities that the climate 'crisis' offers countries with minimal carbon emission baggage and immense, unexploited natural resources, this dual climate financing posture is welcome. It is becoming increasingly clear that Kenya - an anchor state, regional hub, and current CAHSGCC chair - is keen to demonstrate that Africa, as Ruto has reportedly said, can be "front and centre of the solutions to the challenge of climate change and not just a victim." Despite the challenges that unmitigated climate change is posing on Kenya's peace and security, and regional stability, Kenya can become a climate investment hub, without losing on '*loss and damage*' funding. This is a necessary strategic gamble.

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The possibility that interest in 'loss and damage' may derail some climate investments efforts cannot be ruled out. However, given the volume and scope limitations of 'loss and damage' funding (about USD 100 billion, compared to an estimated USD 150 trillion available a year for climate investment), Kenya cannot rely solely on 'loss and damage' to mitigate and adapt to climate change. In any case, UN Secretary General, António Guterres, has noted that while 'loss and damage' fund is "an important step toward justice," the fund is still being operationalized. It is also unclear who, for instance, will contribute to the fund, where the contributions will come from, and which countries will be eligible for it. However, the June 2023 New Global Financing Pact Summit discussed easing of debt burden of developing countries and the finalization of loss and damage in 2023. Arguably, relying on loss and damage only would be loss-loss at worst and lose-win at best, and non-sensical.

The climate investment route is not without risk though. This is particularly because the cumbersomeness, bureaucratic nature, complexity of the current global financial architecture is, inadvertently, undermines immediate progress of developing economies in general, and in the context of climate change mitigation and adaptation in particular. Attempting to leverage this architecture as is will likely lead to zero sum outcomes (Morin & Kern, 1999; (von Neumann and Morgenstern, 1947). The extent to which Kenya's active pursuit of pro-compensation and pro-climate investment climate financing will enhance her national interests while building her climate resilience is a wait-and-see situation. In other words, the jury on Kenya's dual climate financing posture is still out.

## Conclusion

Kenya's 'loss and damage' discourse is shifting from helpless victimhood to both an eligible loss and damage contender and potential and capable provider of solutions to climate change-related challenges. This arguably positive shift is evidenced by evolving rhetoric of her political elite at different, recent national, regional, and global fora, and mediated public discourse on climate financing. Amid this shift in media framing and public rhetoric on 'loss and damage', the country is assuming a dual climate finance posture to, ostensibly, allow her to leverage 'loss and damage' funds and attract climate investments. In this regard, the shift is mirroring Kenya's interests and priorities. It is now apparent that for Kenya, it is neither economic compensation or green investment. Rather, it is both. Further, it seems that Kenya's negative experience with climate change is driving this shift. It is also clear that national interests are a key determinant of the country's evolving climate finance rhetoric. Only time will tell whether Kenya's current approach will deliver a climate resilient country in the short, mid, and long-terms while buttressing her economy. In the meantime, Kenya is taking the strategic gamble of being a dual climate finance actor.

## Recommendations

To maintain her dual climate financing posture to surmount challenges to her peace, economy, security, and stability, while "assuming responsibility for Africa's position at COP 28," Kenya could consider:

### Sustaining the 'Push' for the Establishment of a Fitter-for-Purpose Global Financing Architecture

Kenya's leadership in the 'push' for the reforming of multilateral development financing institutions and the current global financial architecture is laudable. Wide bilateral and multilateral as well as national and local-level consultations will be handy in forming strategic alliances for climate action. These should involve a comprehensive set of flood-prone, drought-prone, and flood-and-drought prone countries in the region such as South Sudan, Somalia, and South Africa, respectively, and beyond.

### Prioritizing the Environment

The environment is a critical pillar of the climate change discourse. Overlooking it will certainly result in zero sum outcomes for the planet and its dependents (including humans). Then all the efforts to secure climate financing will become vanity. To this end, Kenya could consider accelerating her tree planting (*Jaza Miti*) campaign to increase tree cover by 30 per cent by 2033 and aspire to plant the 15 billion trees by 2027, for example. This will build on previous efforts such as those of the Green Belt Movement under the now-deceased 'tree woman' and Nobel Peace Laureate, Prof. Wangari Maathai. Planting of trees with economic and greening (environmental) benefits such as avocado, citrus fruit trees, and tea, for example, will shore up the sustainability of this initiatives. A circular approach that also involves regenerative agriculture should be encouraged.

Another good place to enhance Kenya's climate adaptation efforts would be to demonstrate commitment and intentionality to address systemic issues such as marginalization, poverty, and poor policies that increase her environmental risks. By necessity, such initiatives should integrate durable solutions for refugees, and internally displaced persons, as well as climate-afflicted communities such as pastoralists and famers in low-lying areas such as the Kenyan coast, and Tana River, and Baringo Counties. Mass awareness-raising campaigns of pitfalls and opportunities of changing climate will complement these initiatives, and reduce the risks of climate change misinformation and disinformation.

### Increasing Citizen-Private Sector-Government Partnerships for Climate Action

As much as is possible, these partnerships need to be arrived at collaboratively and in an all-inclusive manner. Interested and strategic research and policy stakeholders such as researchers and practitioners in think tanks in Kenya and other research-oriented entities that tend to fall between the cracks of academic institutions and civil society organizations in the country should not be forgotten or ignored. Ditto groups most affected by climate change such as pastoralists, women, and youth. In other words, multi-stakeholder, all-of-government, and all-of-society needs to be the default approach to partnering for climate action in Kenya, the region, and globally. A continental approach could leverage 'Pan Africanism for climate action' through regional economic communities and/or anchor state-led climate-oriented initiatives. These kinds of approaches will spur investment, ownership, and innovation in initiatives such as climate proofing infrastructure (building dykes in flood-prone areas, for example). It will also diminish inequalities and deliver win-win outcomes that benefit nations, and the planet.

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