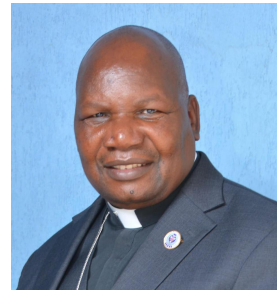


KENYA'S CLIMATE AND DEBT CRISES THREATEN MILLIONS, FAITH LEADERS WARN IN ACCRA - GHANA - May 19-21,2026

- Rev Dr Elias Otieno Agola -

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Kenya is facing an escalating national crisis driven by climate shocks, soaring public debt, rising taxation and deepening inequality, according to a major presentation delivered by Rev Dr Elias Otieno Agola at the Continental Round Table on Ecological and Economic Justice Policy Advocacy in Accra.

Addressing African church leaders, policymakers and development advocates in Accra Ghana, Rev Dr Agola warned that Kenya's ecological and economic pressures are rapidly converging into a humanitarian and governance emergency that threatens livelihoods, social stability and sustainable development. "This is no longer simply an environmental issue," Rev Dr Agola said in his presentation. "Climate change has become a justice, governance and human dignity crisis."

The high-level continental meeting is being hosted by the Christian Council of Ghana in partnership with the All Africa Conference of Churches under the theme: *Aligning Faith-Based Advocacy with the Changing Ecological and Economic Development Landscape*.

A. FLOODS, DROUGHTS AND HUNGER DEEPENING ACROSS KENYA

Rev Dr Agola's presentation painted a troubling picture of worsening climate extremes across Kenya, where communities are increasingly being battered by destructive floods, prolonged droughts, food insecurity and displacement.

According to figures presented at the forum:

- More than 100,000 households were displaced by floods in 2024;
- Over 380,000 people were affected nationwide;
- Nearly 2,000 schools were closed due to flood damage;
- Food insecurity surged from about one million people in mid-2024 to more than 2.15 million by February 2025.

B: PUBLIC DEBT BURDEN RAISING ALARM

The presentation also highlighted mounting concern over Kenya's growing debt burden, which has reached approximately KES 12.32 trillion (USD 91.7 billion).

According to the analysis, Kenya's debt-to-GDP ratio has climbed to 65.7 percent, significantly above recommended sustainability thresholds.

The situation remains especially severe in Kenya's Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs), which account for almost 80 percent of the country's landmass and continue to suffer prolonged droughts, livestock deaths and resource-based conflicts.

Kenya's economy remains highly vulnerable because of its dependence on climate-sensitive sectors such as agriculture, tourism, livestock and fisheries. Agriculture alone contributes approximately one-third of the country's GDP and supports the majority of rural livelihoods.

Rev Dr Agola warned that recurring climate disasters are worsening poverty, forcing migration into urban centres, disrupting education and increasing pressure on already fragile public services.

Debt servicing for the 2024/2025 financial year alone was estimated at KES 1.72 trillion - a figure Rev Dr Agola said is severely constraining public investment in essential services.

"Interest payments are increasingly consuming resources needed for healthcare, education, climate adaptation and youth employment," he noted.

The presentation further raised concerns over:

- Weak transparency in public borrowing;
- Procurement irregularities;
- Corruption and misuse of borrowed funds;
- Limited public participation in debt oversight.

The growing fiscal pressure has also triggered widespread public dissatisfaction as the government continues to increase taxes amid a rising cost of living.

C: TAXATION AND INEQUALITY FUELING PUBLIC FRUSTRATION

Rev Dr Agola's presentation criticized Kenya's growing reliance on indirect taxation measures, including VAT, fuel levies, excise duties, digital service taxes and the housing levy.

The presentation argued that such measures disproportionately affect ordinary citizens, particularly low-income households and small businesses already struggling with inflation and unemployment.

Recent tax data cited during the forum showed that more than 392,000 tax defaulters owe an estimated KES 759.7 billion in unpaid taxes.

At the same time, concerns remain over illicit financial flows, weak taxation of multinational corporations, and corruption-related revenue leakages that continue to deprive the country of critical development resources.

Despite moderate economic growth, Rev Dr Agola noted that inequality continues to widen, especially among unemployed youth and residents of informal settlements.

D: FAITH LEADERS PUSH FOR ECOLOGICAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

A major focus of the presentation was the growing role of faith-based organizations in responding to both climate and economic injustice.

Churches and religious institutions across Kenya are increasingly involved in:

- Climate resilience projects;
- Tree planting campaigns;
- Water harvesting initiatives;
- Sustainable agriculture programmes;
- Anti-corruption advocacy;

- Budget accountability campaigns;
- Tax justice movements.

Rev Dr Agola emphasized that faith communities remain among the country's most trusted institutions and possess significant grassroots influence through schools, hospitals, humanitarian agencies and community networks.

He called on African faith leaders to strengthen coordinated advocacy ahead of upcoming global climate negotiations, including COP31 and COP32.

E: CALLS FOR URGENT REFORM

The presentation urged governments, development partners and civil society organizations to pursue urgent reforms aimed at restoring fiscal accountability and strengthening climate resilience.

Among the key recommendations were:

- Increased investment in climate adaptation and disaster preparedness;
- Greater transparency in public borrowing;
- Stronger anti-corruption enforcement;

- Protection of healthcare and education budgets;
- Tax reforms to reduce pressure on low-income households;
- Improved governance of natural resources and extractive industries.

Rev Dr Agola concluded by urging African faith institutions to take a more active prophetic role in defending human dignity accountability and environmental stewardship.

“The crises facing Kenya reflect broader continental realities,” he said. “Africa’s faith leaders must stand together in advancing ecological and economic justice for present and future generations.”