

## South Africa Sustainability Summit Publication

**Title: Africa's Path to Sustainability: Learning from Global Perspectives**

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In today's interconnected world, pursuing [sustainable development](#) has become increasingly important for society. With its [diverse ecosystems](#), [rapid urbanization](#), and [growing population](#), Africa faces unique challenges and opportunities in achieving sustainability. As an independent organization with global reach and leading expertise, BSI is in a unique position to impartially identify regional and global sustainability trends and understand what best practices exist to give confidence and drive change. In this article, we will explore emerging trends in Africa from a sustainability perspective and highlight valuable lessons to learn from other regions that share similar challenges.

### **Renewable Energy Transition:**

One of the most prominent emerging trends in Africa is the shift towards renewable energy sources. From 2019 to 2020 alone, [solar and wind capacity](#) increased by 13% and 11% respectively, whilst [hydropower](#) soared by 25%. [The World Economic Forum](#) reports that North Africa is the continent's current leader in terms of renewable energy capacity, whilst the largest increase is expected to be seen in Central Africa when all under construction projects are completed and renewable energy capacity is set to double. Africa can learn from the experiences of regions like Europe, which has have [more than doubled renewable energy consumption since 2004](#). By adopting best practices in policy frameworks, investment strategies, and technology transfer, Africa can accelerate its transition to renewable energy.

### **Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security:**

Ensuring [food security while promoting sustainable agricultural practices](#) is a key challenge for Africa. The continent is experiencing [population growth](#), [rapid urbanization](#), and [changing dietary patterns](#). Valuable lessons can be learned from Latin America and Asia, where in some cases sustainable agricultural practices have been successfully implemented. For example, by the 1990s [Costa Rica](#) faced significant deforestation due to agricultural expansion and logging. However, through a range of policy measures and implementation of innovative technology, [Costa Rica has become a leader in sustainable agriculture](#) benefiting the environment, economy and society. [In Bhutan](#), collaboration between a range of stakeholders from government, NGOs, the farming industry, and schools has seen a strengthening of food systems and uptake of sustainable farming digital innovations. Although each part of Africa has its own specific farming considerations, there is an opportunity for the continent to take inspiration from other regions to promote organic farming techniques, agroforestry, and efficient irrigation systems to optimize productivity while minimizing environmental impacts.

### **Conservation and Biodiversity Protection:**

[Africa has remarkable biodiversity](#), hosting unique ecosystems such as the Serengeti in Tanzania and the Okavango Delta in Botswana. However, the continent faces the threats of [illegal logging](#), [poaching](#), and [habitat destruction resulting in 65% biodiversity loss since 1970](#). Learnings can be taken from [South America](#), where in 1998 the Brazilian government pledged to conserve 10% of its Amazon rainforests. This led to collaboration between the Brazilian government, WWF, the World Bank, and the Global

Environment Facility, and saw the development of the Amazon Region Protected Areas programme. Funds from this are used to finance protected areas indefinitely. International cooperation, stricter law enforcement, community engagement, and sustainable tourism practices are effective measures that Africa can adopt to protect its biodiversity.

### **Waste Management and Circular Economy:**

Thanks to factors including rapid urbanization and increased consumption Africa's waste generation is [expected to reach 244m tons by next year](#), almost double that of 2012, indicating the importance of better waste management strategies. In [Europe, where the EU Commission adopted the circular economy action plan in 2023, serves as a valuable example](#) of how regions can embrace a circular economy mindset to reduce pressure on natural resources and improve their waste strategies. Other [strategies](#) that have been employed elsewhere including enhancing recycling capabilities, promoting waste-to-energy initiatives, and improving waste diversion and recovery systems. By incorporating sustainable [waste management practices](#), Africa has the opportunity to reintroduce secondary resources, minimize pollution, conserve resources and create green jobs.

### **Sustainable Urbanization:**

With Africa's population expected to nearly triple by [2050, sustainable urban planning and development is critical](#). Lessons can be learned from Northern Europe, where Scandinavian countries are known for prioritizing sustainability in their urban planning, with all three Scandinavian capitals listed among the top cities in the [Arcadis Sustainable Cities Index](#). North America also provides successful examples of implementing sustainable urban design principles, such as San Francisco's transport plan, which sets investment priorities to [build an effective, equitable and sustainable transport system](#). Prioritizing efficient public transportation, green building designs, walkable neighborhoods, and affordable housing could be routes to enhance quality of life in Africa in the long term while reducing carbon emissions and promoting social inclusion.

### **Mining Sector:**

Africa has [abundant natural resources](#) from land, water, oil, natural gas, minerals, forests and wildlife. The continent is home to nearly 30% of the world's natural mineral reserves, 8% of natural gas and 12% of oil reserves. This offers immense potential for [economic growth](#). However, the mining sector often faces [sustainability challenges](#) related to environmental conservation, social responsibility, and economic diversification. The Oceana region's sustainable mining initiative '[Towards Sustainable Mining \(TSM\)](#)' can provide a framework example for the development of sustainable mining practices. The TSM aims to improve site-level safety, sustainability and environmental, social and governance performance whilst also focusing on operations that support traditional landowners and their heritage and maintain social and economic goals. Initiatives that emphasize extensive environmental assessments, strict regulations, and reclamation plans, can bring benefits. By adopting responsible mining practices and emphasizing the social well-being of mining communities, Africa can progress on the journey towards sustainable mining operations.

### **Carbon Reduction Strategies:**

Addressing [carbon emissions](#) is crucial for sustainable development, especially in the face of climate change. If we continue to produce carbon emissions at our current rate, global temperatures are

[expected to rise beyond 1.5 degrees](#) to levels that could threaten the lives and livelihoods of people everywhere. There are valuable insights to draw from countries like [Germany](#) and [Switzerland](#), which have made significant progress in carbon reduction strategies. Transitioning to cleaner energy sources, investing in research and innovation, and providing policy incentives can all shift the dial.

### **Gender Inequalities:**

[Gender equality](#) is understood to be essential for sustainable development, given the societal benefits of fostering social inclusivity, advancing economic growth, and reducing poverty. In the [Nordic countries](#), substantial progress has been made narrowing gender gaps since 2010. Implementing legislation, promoting equal opportunities in education and employment, and encouraging female political representation are [strategies](#) that African nations can adopt. Already, countries such as [Rwanda have shown global leadership in promoting women's representation in politics](#); currently 61% of the country's parliamentary seats are held by women candidates. Sharing experiences and collaborating with these countries could be beneficial for others seeking to address gender inequalities.

Africa's pursuit of sustainability can be accelerated by embracing emerging trends and learning from successful practices across the globe. The continent can take inspiration from various regions, such as Europe, Latin America, and Asia, to address its unique sustainability challenges. By turning ambition into action in areas such as leveraging renewable energy, adopting sustainable agricultural practices, protecting biodiversity, improving waste management, implementing sustainable urban planning, and advancing gender equality, there is scope for Africa to accelerate progress towards a fair society and a sustainable world. Collaboration, innovation, and shared knowledge will play crucial roles in Africa's journey towards sustainability. BSI is here as a trusted partner on this journey of change.