



2024 Global elections & climate trends monitor

8 October 2024

Greetings,

In this issue, we revisit South Africa following its May presidential elections. The newly elected President Cyril Ramaphosa recently enacted the country's first comprehensive Climate Change Act, which [set caps for large emitters](#) and mandated every municipality to publish an adaptation plan.

The country is navigating a critical moment in its energy transition, but challenges remain and public mistrust in the government could undermine its plans.

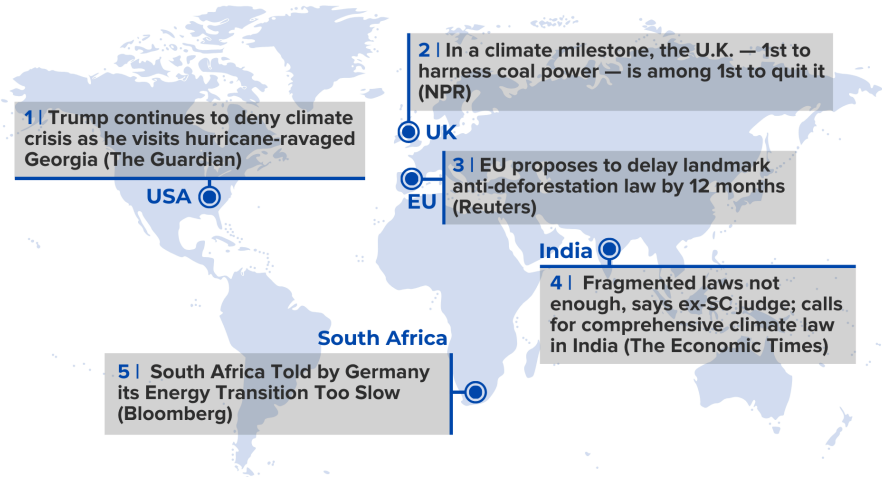
With just under a month to go before the US elections, Hurricane Helene struck the country, resulting in [over 220 deaths](#). Despite this, Donald Trump has continued to deny the climate crisis. The world is watching closely, as the outcome of the upcoming election could significantly shape international climate action.

Climate change is increasingly shaping political landscapes across key regions worldwide. [Sign up to the newsletter here](#) to learn more, and feel free to share it with your network.

Until next time,
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Key climate and election developments



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Climate politics

- [Exchange Between Vance and Walz Shows Gulf on Climate Change Views](#) (The New York Times)
"As Hurricane Helene made climate change an early focus of the vice-presidential debate, the running mates quickly demonstrated the stark differences between the parties on the issue."
- [UNGA Highlights Urgent Need for old Climate Leadership](#) (E3G)
"Leaders' speeches saw mixed climate focus, with many emphasising climate action as a priority and others packaging it within the context of other global issues."
- [UK announces new climate envoy and investment facility](#) (Reuters)
"Britain on Thursday named Oxford University professor Rachel Kyte as its new climate envoy and announced a new investment facility, the latest steps in the new government's efforts to bolster Britain's role in international climate politics."
- [Climate action will be central to 'all' foreign policy, David Lammy says](#) (Sky News)
"The foreign secretary used his first major speech in his new role to address the climate and nature crises and how they intersect with geopolitics, conflict and insecurity."
- [What's an effective climate policy?](#) (Le Monde)
"Their conclusions are distressing. They identified just 63 effective measures that reduced emissions by 4.5% to 13% in different sectors, with most improvements occurring in the building sector (24 occurrences), followed by transport (19 occurrences), industry (16 occurrences) and electricity (10 occurrences)."

- [Politicians flying less or cutting out meat is 'missing link' in climate action](#) (The Guardian)
"Researchers found that people are significantly more willing to reduce their own carbon footprint if they see leaders doing the same. The finding, by psychologists in the UK, was not a given, as green action by high-profile people can sometimes be dismissed as virtue-signalling."

Climate impacts

- [Over 120 dead and a million without power after 'historic' Hurricane Helene](#) (The Guardian)
"It's not just a catastrophic storm. It's a historic, history-making storm," Biden said on Monday morning. He added that "damage from the hurricane stretches across at least 10 states".
- [Earth may have breached seven of nine planetary boundaries, health check shows](#) (The Guardian)
"Industrial civilisation is close to breaching a seventh planetary boundary, and may already have crossed it, according to scientists who have compiled the latest report on the state of the world's life-support systems."
- [Climate change supercharged Europe floods - scientists](#) (BBC)
"Central Europe's devastating floods were made much worse by climate change and offer a stark glimpse of the future for the world's fastest-warming continent, scientists say."
- [In India, warming climate pressures scientists to keep developing tougher seeds](#) (ABC News)
"India is one of the world's largest producers and consumers of wheat and rice, but extreme weather is taking a toll on these vital crops."
- [Climate warning as world's rivers dry up at fastest rate for 30 years](#) (The Guardian)
"World Meteorological Organization says water is 'canary in the coalmine of climate change' and calls for urgent action."

Country spotlight: South Africa



Country stats

- **Political stability:** [-0.7](#) (range: -2.5 to 2.5 - World Bank, 2022)
- **Free elections score:** [0.77](#) (range: 0 to 1 - V-Dem Institute, 2024)
- **Envi Performance Index:** [37.20](#) (range: 0 to 100 - Yale CELP, 2024)
- **Happy Planet Index:** [29.3](#) (range: 0 to 100 - New Economics Foundation, 2021)
- **Net zero target:** [Pledged](#)
- **RE capacity:** [11 GW](#) (IRENA, 2022)
- **CO2 emissions (tons p/capita):** [6.7](#) (range: 0 to 40+ World Bank, 2022)

Top stories

- [TotalEnergies to appeal landmark greenwashing ruling in South Africa](#) (The Financial Times)
"The country's ad regulator found the French oil company's sustainability claims 'misleading' in a first of its kind ruling."
- [Focus on coal miners, power grid as South Africa spends just sixth of climate aid](#) (Reuters)

"South Africa's donor-funded climate programme has spent just over a sixth of its allotted \$11.6 billion..., a donor and a South African official involved in the plan, neither of whom were willing to be named because they were not authorised to speak publicly, said about \$1.9 billion had been spent, half of it on policy-based loans to the government.."

- **Op-ed: [South Africa's climate change commitments are due for an overhaul](#) | By Brian Mantlana and Steve Nicholls (Mail & Guardian)**

"While a recent report commissioned by the Presidential Climate Commission confirmed that climate change in South Africa has shifted from being a fringe issue for environmentalists to the mainstream, the medium of messaging climate change in the country remains dominated by analysis and scientific method — inadvertently privileging those that can master the mediums. In pursuance of social partner consensus building on the national position on climate change, innovation is needed to ensure meaningful interaction with society."

Regional analysis

In our previous analysis South Africa was two weeks away from what was anticipated to be a turning point election... and it was. South African voters delivered a historic blow by denying the ruling African National Congress (ANC) party a majority [for the first time since apartheid ended nearly 30 years ago](#). Now, as the ANC navigates its first coalition government, did this inspire them to intensify efforts in climate, energy and social development?

Despite the ANC's manifesto reaffirming a pledge to achieve net-zero emissions and implement adaptation strategies, the need for a coalition to maintain governance introduces uncertainties regarding the implementation of these policies.

The [recent approval of the Climate Change Act by the National Assembly](#) marked a significant legislative step towards formalising emission reduction targets and boosting climate resilience. However, as climate action [NGOs and media began to take a closer look at the act](#) many of them argued that it is unimplementable due to the money required for adaptation.

South Africa's top greenhouse gas producers, [Eskom and SASOL](#), have agreed to a memorandum of understanding to evaluate the country's future LNG requirements. This agreement will investigate potential gas sources within South Africa, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and other regions, as well as consider long-term LNG agreements. With Mozambique's Pande-Temane gas fields expected to deplete by 2026, South Africa is approaching a "gas cliff," threatening about 60,000 jobs in gas-reliant industries.

In light of these energy challenges, Electricity and Energy Minister Kgosientsho Ramogopa said [developing 2,500 megawatts of new nuclear energy generation](#), as outlined in the Integrated Resource Plan 2019 (IRP 2019), remains a priority.

So, five months down the line the election results still reflect how climate change is not a leading issue in South Africa. There is still increasing public frustration with energy instability, diminishing trust in government, and persistent economic difficulties.

Energy and transport

- **[Oil prices rise on escalating attacks in the Middle East](#) (CNBC)**
"Oil prices rose on Wednesday on fears conflict in the Middle East could turn into a wider war and disrupt oil supply from the key producing region after Iran fired ballistic missiles at Israel."
- **[EU imports ever more gas from Russia than the US](#) (Euractiv)**
"The EU imported significantly more gas from Russia than the US between April and July, marking the second quarter in a row where gas money is flowing more towards the Kremlin."
- **[Jobs in renewable energy record highest annual growth rate, reaching 16.2 million](#) (International Labour Organization)**

"2023 saw the largest ever increase in renewable energy jobs, from 13.7 million in 2022 to 16.2 million, according to the newly released Renewable Energy and Jobs – Annual Review 2024 from the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) and the International Labour Organization (ILO)."

- [Private equity firms ploughing billions into fossil fuels, analysis reveals](#) (The Guardian)
"Private equity firms are using US public sector workers' retirement savings to fund fossil fuel projects pumping more than a billion tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere every year, according to an analysis."
- [Indian companies move in as US cuts China out of its solar industry](#) (Financial Times)
"US imports of Indian panels and cells surpassed \$1.8bn last year. Indian manufacturers are also investing in US factories following Biden's IRA."
- [EU hits China with tariffs in electric car sales battle](#) (BBC)
"Big taxes will be imposed on imports of electric vehicles from China to the EU after the majority of member states backed the plans."
- [US climate change targets threatened by tech energy surge from AI](#) (Financial Times)
"Lack of grid capacity proves significant constraint in green energy transition as demand booms."

Climate movement

- [Gen Z, worried about climate change, unified in holding politicians responsible: Poll](#) (ABC News)
"Over one-third of Gen Z are worried they'll need to move away from their hometowns due to climate change -- and a majority of those in the generation across the political spectrum said politicians need to be held accountable, according to a new poll out Wednesday from Gallup and the Walton Family Foundation."
- [Scientists criticise UN agency's failure to withdraw livestock emissions report](#) (The Guardian)
"More than 20 scientific experts have written to the UN's food agency expressing shock at its failure to revise or withdraw a livestock emissions report that two of its cited academics have said contained "multiple and egregious errors".
- [Just Stop Oil protesters jailed for throwing soup at van Gogh's 'Sunflowers'](#) (Politico)
"Two Just Stop Oil climate protesters who threw soup over Vincent van Gogh's "Sunflowers" were sentenced to prison Friday, the latest in a series of hefty punishments for activists in the U.K."

Commentary

- [What Happens if China Stops Trying to Save the World?](#) | By David Wallace-Wells (The New York Times)
"As recently as 2019, China was installing about one-quarter of global solar capacity additions; last year, it managed 62 percent more than the rest of the world combined. Over those same five years, China grew its amount of new added capacity more than eight times over; the world without China didn't even double its rate."
- [In the Fight to Decide the Fate of US Steel, Climate and Public Health Take a Backseat to Politics](#) | By Kiley Bense (Inside Climate News)
"The potential sale to Nippon Steel has become a political football. But no one is listening to long-term concerns about pollution, health and global warming."
- [EU needs long-term climate investment plan aligned with just transition, French MEP tells Euronews](#) (Euronews)
"The EU will need a new energy security strategy, Thomas Pellerin-Carlin argued in interview with Euronews, including new legislation to boost domestic renewables and optimise the

electricity grid. The bloc also needs investment to develop the European industrial competitiveness and cut dependencies from China and the US. ”

- [As the waters rise, a two-year sentence for throwing soup. That's the farcical reality of British justice](#) | By George Mobiot (The Guardian)
“Why do the mass killers of the fossil fuel industry walk free while the heroes trying to stop them are imprisoned?”

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