PMAC PRINCE MAHIDOL AWARD CONFERENCE 2023

PS 1.5

CLIMATE INACTION: POWER, POLITICS, AND POLITICAL ECONOMY

| BACKGROUND

Climate change and biodiversity loss are existential threats to humanity but in most countries the mitigation and adaptation measures implemented thus far have been exceedingly modest. In communities living in vulnerable circumstances in low- and middle-income countries climate change is already real. For instance, the Pacific Islands' very existence is threatened by rising sea-levels and in Bangladesh flooding is more extreme and threatening to lives and livelihoods. Extreme weather, rising water levels, and other effects have already changed lives and livelihoods for the worse. By contrast, in rich countries urgency is felt mainly by specialized groups of activists and researchers that thus far lack the political influence to drive large-scale change. The distribution of vulnerability is not well correlated with carbon emissions, either, which means that the largest contributing nations and populations are less motivated to act by the changes already apparent to others. Within countries similar dynamics mirror those of the international story. Using a lens of power, politics, and political economy this session explores reasons why countries are having difficulty acting against climate change even as is manifested in deadly or harmful ways in many settings.

| OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this session include clarifying some of the major political and political economy problems that currently frustrate action that could counter climate change and providing a forum for amplifying views on these topics. For example, the session will discuss lobbying activities of fossil fuel industries and explore the difficulties of making the plight of communities in vulnerable circumstances salient in national and global politics.

Speaker / Speaker

Benita Kayembe

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Benita's research seeks to understand and address the root causes of poverty in the Democratic Republic of The Congo to help find sustainable solutions to the country's political, economic, and sociological dilemmas. Amidst growing global demand for cobalt as a critical component in rechargeable batteries to solve climate change dilemmas and given that as much as 60% of global cobalt reserves are in Katanga, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Benita Kayembe investigates the human cost in the cobalt supply chain through a qualitative study of the health impacts of artisanal mining work. She hopes to play a role in informing policies that highlight affected communities' voices to improve miners' working conditions and ensure that the Congolese population benefits from the innovations built from their resources.