



The UN & You

BY TERESA KOTTURAN SCN – OCTOBER 2022

COP27: UN Conference on Climate Change

World leaders will gather in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt for the 27th session of the Conference of Parties on Climate Change Nov 6–18, 2022. Alok Sharma, COP26 president, will hand over the presidency to the new president of COP27, Dr. Sameh Shoukry of Egypt. Egypt is a fitting location for COP27, for it

lays bare the inherent inequity of climate change: the African continent is responsible for only 3 percent of global carbon dioxide emissions, yet it is on the front lines of the world's climate, energy and food crises.

Will there be ambition, commitment and the political will to honor their commitments to implement the Paris Climate Agreement to limit global warming 1.5 degree Centigrade? According to the COP26 President, the 1.5C target is “on life support... its pulse is weak.” At COP26 countries agreed to focus on limiting global temperature rises to 1.5C above pre-industrial levels. Another unfinished business from COP26 is the pledge made by countries on emissions cuts, which was inadequate to meet the goal. So governments agreed to return this November with improved commitments.

The decision made in Glasgow to phase down fossil fuels is not going to happen. The invasion of Ukraine by Russia has created an energy crisis, and many countries are seeking more fossil fuels – the UK has offered 898 blocks of the UK seabed for exploration; Germany has returned, in a minor way and temporarily, to coal-fired power generation; the United States is pumping more gas; French companies are contemplating using oil in place of gas. The optimism of COP26 is not visible at this COP.

Between Glasgow and Sharm El-Sheik, the world has witnessed extreme weather conditions: a third of



Pakistan is flooded, Europe had the hottest summer in 500 years, and hurricanes and typhoons have flattened and flooded many areas in the world. Emissions are at an all-time high. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned the participants of the pre-COP, “we are in a life-or-death struggle for our own safety

today and our survival tomorrow,” and that there is no time for pointing fingers or twiddling thumbs. Instead, compromise between developed countries and emerging economies needs to happen.

Guterres stated that COP27 is a litmus test for the governments – how seriously they are taking the growing climate toll on the most vulnerable countries. He likes to see decisions made on the question of loss and damage, beyond countries' ability to adapt and financial support for climate action. In addition, the world needs to have clarity from developed countries on the delivery of their \$100 billion pledge to support climate action in developing countries. Failure to act will lead to more loss of trust and more climate change.

COP27 needs to deliver on solidarity and accountability. Wealthy nations must show solidarity by addressing the suffering and economic pain that disproportionately falls on vulnerable countries and marginalized communities.

Adaptation – emissions reductions alone cannot affect climate change, climate adaptation needs far more support to build resilience. At COP26 developed countries pledged to double adaptation finance and at COP27, they must show how they are going to do it, as well as define the Paris Agreement's Global Goal on Adaptation and prioritize adaptation projects led by local communities.

Address loss and damage – climate crisis is having devastating impacts on vulnerable marginalized people all over the world. Loss and damage is harming the human rights of people. According to the UN special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change, “as temperatures rise, impacts from climate and weather extremes, including storm events will pose an ever-greater social, economic and environmental threat. Climate change will lead to significant human rights impacts for millions of people around the globe, with increasing loss of life, land, homes and income.” Although the current reality warrants urgency, loss and damage received very little attention at COP26. It is still a full provisional item on the COP27 negotiating agenda. Addressing loss and damage directly and establishing a mechanism for financing will be a central measure of success for COP27.

Climate Finance – Developed countries made a commitment in 2009 to provide collectively \$100 billion every year, from 2020–2025, in climate finance to vulnerable countries. So far, they have provided only \$83.3 billion in 2020. At COP27, developed countries need to honor the commitments made and make ambitious finance goals that will address the needs of vulnerable countries for mitigation, adaptation and loss and damage from 2025.

COP27 is Africa’s COP, and it must address Africa’s climate challenges. Africa has a “low carbon footprint,” the continent emits only 3 percent of global CO² emissions, yet African nations are among the most exposed to climate change, especially to worsening droughts and floods. Africa also plays a key role in capturing greenhouse gases, including in the Congo Basin, which is home to the world’s second-largest tropical rainforest after the Amazon. According to a UN report, more than 100 million extremely poor people across Africa are threatened by accelerating climate change. African leaders from 24 countries, who met in September 2022, are urging “developed countries to fulfill their pledges in relation to climate and development finance, and deliver on their commitments to double adaptation finance, in particular to Africa. These leaders want “to have a clear road map how they will put on the table the \$100 billion per year, how we can track it.” We don’t have time to lose and Africa is one of the most vulnerable regions of the world.”

Just Transition to Clean Energy

Just Transition is a framework developed by trade union movements to encompass a range of social interventions needed to secure workers’ rights and livelihoods when economies are shifting to sustainable production, primarily combating climate change and protecting biodiversity. It also means “equitably distributing the costs and benefits of climate action, ensuring that social dialogue and stakeholder engagement takes place among workers, employers, governments, communities and civil society.”

Transitioning to clean energy can create jobs, reduce pollution and enhance quality of life. Such transitions require new policies to protect the workers and communities who historically relied on fossil fuel will be left behind. COP26 South Africa created partnerships for its clean energy transition. Their example could inspire other just transition policies and initiatives. In addition, donor countries should be prepared to support just transition efforts in other countries to move away from their dependence on fossil fuels.

Accountability – At Glasgow, governments, businesses, cities and other organizations made impressive pledges for urgent climate action. Have they made progress? COP26 had requested to revisit their 2030 emissions-reduction targets to align them with the goal of holding global temperature rise to 1.5 C. As of September 2022, only 15 countries had submitted new emissions-reduction plans. All countries are supposed to come to COP27 with more ambitious 2030 Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) backed by finance, policies and plans to ensure they can be fully implemented.

They should also demonstrate progress on the following initiatives:

- [Glasgow Leader’s Declaration on Forests and Land Use](#) – 145 countries pledged to reverse forest loss and land degradation by 2030
- [Global Methane Pledge](#) – more than 100 nations committed to collectively cut emissions of methane by 30 percent by 2030
- [Cities Race to Zero](#) – more than 1,000 cities agreed to reduce their emission to net-zero by 2040 or sooner
- [Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero](#) – more than 500 financial firms controlling more than \$130 trillion pledged to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050

COP27 and Civil Society Participation

“No Climate Justice without open civic space,” is the demand of civil society, reports Human Rights Watch. Since the 2013 military coup, Egyptian authorities have systematically targeted peaceful critics and opponents from across the political spectrum leading to the closure of civic space. The Egyptian government considers those exposing human rights violations as a threat to “national security.” According to national human rights organizations, tens of thousands of persons are arbitrarily detained on political grounds.

Lack of civic space has been corroborated by the Oct. 7 [news release from UN Human Rights](#). UN Special Rapporteurs “are alarmed by restrictions on civil society ahead of climate summit.” They have noticed a wave of government restrictions on civil society participation in COP27. Egypt has witnessed years of persistent and sustained crackdowns on civil society and human rights defenders, using security as a pretext to undermine the legitimate rights of civil society to participate in public affairs. According to the experts, “Arrests, and detention, NGO asset freezes and dissolutions and travel restrictions against human rights defenders have created a climate of fear for Egyptian civil society organizations to engage visibly at the COP27.”

Some of the concerns of civil society activists include a lack of information and transparent accreditation criteria for Egyptian NGOs, a coordinated increase in hotel room rates, undue restrictions to freedom of peaceful assembly outside the COP27 venue, unjustified delays in the provision of visas to those traveling from abroad.

It is a known fact that civil society, indigenous peoples, environmental human rights defenders, trade unions and social movements across the world have worked for decades to address climate change. These groups and movements are committed to raising awareness on environmental challenges, advocating for the right to a healthy environment and that climate justice demands social, economic and institutional changes. Climate justice demands the full and meaningful participation of civil society, including the most marginalized groups.

Links

- [COP27 web site](#)
- [UNFCCC COP27 web site](#)
- [COP27 Training Webinar](#) by Felix Dodds
- [COP27 Resource Hub](#)

UNFCCC – quick recap



Two World Climate Conferences

- 1979 – led to the creation of the IPCC in 1988
- 1990 - led to the establishment of the UNFCCC

Earth Summit in 1992

- UNFCCC signed (165 countries – currently 196)
- Needed 50 ratifications by national parliaments to come in force (December 1994)

Kyoto (1997)

- Developed countries agree to set binding emission reductions targets. (55 countries – 55% of world emissions) (2004)

Copenhagen (2009) – Climate Accord – (not binding)

- \$100 billion by 2020, establishes the Green climate fund, ALL countries to report,

Paris (2015) –

- \$100 billion (2020) and keeping global average temperature to well below 2°C (1.5°C) [55 countries – 55% of world emissions] (November 2016)

4

[COP27 Training Webinar](#): video and PowerPoint presentations by Felix Dodds, Adjunct Professor, Water Institute, University of North Carolina. The recording has detailed information on the history of UNFCCC and COP27 and tips for advocacy.