

Can COP29 Reach Consensus On Key Climate Issues?

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Yet another climate summit COP 29 is set to be held in Baku, Azerbaijan. This event will focus, among others, on climate finance and raising funds for developing countries adversely affected by the climate crisis. People assemble every time at the summit with high expectations for meeting global leaders' minds on zeroing emissions to limit global warming, the commitment of major emitting nations to financing the recovery endeavors of affected nations from loss and damage, and phasing out of fossil fuel. At the end of hectic parleys, the conference concludes with little or no achievements. Let us hope that COP29 will be different in that some meaningful achievements will be made.

Date and time are drawing close for another Summit of world leaders, environment activists, social workers, journalists, and other stakeholders for arguing, debating, pledging, promising, and agreeing to disagree on various issues of climate change, assessing impacts, loss and damage, promising funds, working out disbursement and utilization protocol. Against the back-

drop of issues discussed and left behind for further discussion in COP28, thousands are assembling in Baku. The world has witnessed several catastrophic climate disasters over the past year. There has been a significant loss of lives and properties. There have been some meetings and workshops of specific committees to streamline various issues and agendas set for discussion during COP29. One can only keep one's fingers crossed expecting some meaningful positive outcome in COP29.

We must bear in mind a few global events. The Russia-Ukraine conflict is still not over. Israeli aggression on Gaza has spread over surrounding Arab countries into Israel-Hamas conflicts. Iran-Israel full-fledged war is looking. The US election is going to be a major event. The influence of geopolitics on COP29 cannot be ignored.

What is COP? Who Participate?

COP is the "Conference of the Parties", a generic phrase in International Relations-speak meaning a committee created after an international treaty is signed, tasked

with making decisions about how that treaty is implemented. COP was created after signing the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Politicians, diplomats, and national government representatives are not the only people invited to COP. Many others join, aiming to influence the outcome, some to push forward climate action and justice, others to advance their own interests. Many fossil fuel lobbyists join the talks to attempt to protect their industry from much-needed action to keep coal, oil, and gas in the ground.

At COP27, there were twice as many fossil fuel lobbyists as delegates from the UN constituency for Indigenous peoples. At COP28 in Dubai, there were a record number of industrial lobbyists with nearly 2,500 descending on the talks.

Land and environmental defenders including indigenous people also attend COP. They voice their protest against exploitation by environmentally destructive industries such as logging, mining, and industrial agribusiness. Climate organi-

zations such as Global Witness attend with partners to advocate for rapid and ambitious action to tackle the climate crisis while ensuring a just transition.

There are regulatory, economic, legal, and physical barriers to prevent environmental activists and civil society organizations from meaningfully participating in these global decision-making processes.

What was agreed in COP28?

After a damning verdict from the first-ever Global Stocktake, the climate summit in Dubai renewed their commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. 200 countries agreed to “transition away” from fossil fuels. Countries arguing for a “phase out” of fossil fuels met with resistance from a coalition of protesters.

For not being able to achieve an explicit call for a “phase out” (or even the less stringent “phase down”), and with no legally binding document in play, the fossil fuel industry still has plenty of leeway to continue with business as usual.

Leaders at the climate summit agreed on a net zero food plan. This would see the world’s food systems become a carbon sink by 2050. The declaration, however, failed to

mention the role of agriculture in driving over 90% of tropical deforestation.

What is expected from COP29?

The core theme of COP29 will be dramatically scaling up every country’s climate ambitions and finding the necessary funds to pay for them. Four keywords will dominate negotiations in Baku’s climate summit: loss, damage, adaptation, and mitigation.

Summit host Azerbaijan has focused on raising funds to enable climate action:

A new collective quantified goal on climate finance: In 2009, delegates reached a landmark agreement to raise \$100 billion by 2020, which would help climate-vulnerable countries adapt to the challenges of the climate crisis. A new target will be set in the Baku Summit based on the evolving needs of these nations.

Fund for responding to loss and damage: The loss and damage fund will help low-income countries pay for recovery from climate-related disasters, which no amount of mitigation or adaptation could have prevented. COP29 will see countries debating on what specifically the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage is for.

Updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs): Every five years, countries must submit revised NDCs to the UNFCCC secretariat, adapting their projected targets and actions to the evolving climate emergency. Baku will be an opportunity for countries collectively to think bigger before resubmission in 2025.

Article 6 of the Paris Agreement: Countries will debate in detail how to meet their climate goals through non-market and market-based solutions, particularly the carbon tax credits market. At COP29, nations will discuss how to regulate carbon credits.

What Bangladesh Can Expect from COP 29?

Bangladesh will look forward to a successful COP29 reaching its goals and objectives. Bangladesh does not have any obligation to reduce emissions. But being one of the most climate-vulnerable countries, it needs accessing Green Climate Funds and Loss and Damage Fund. Bangladesh needs technical and financial support to decarbonize the energy and power sector. The three-zero vision of the chief adviser of the interim government aligns with the principle of the COP mission. Bangladesh desperately needs technology transfer and investment support from developed nations for its long-term energy security and to achieve SDG targets.

But a big question is whether COP29 will reach a consensus of countries it matters in reaching conclusive agreements on GCF and Loss and Damage funding, aggressive NDCs for limiting emissions and phasing out of fossil fuel towards energy transition. In the present geopolitical situation, it is very difficult for COP29 to achieve what it envisions.

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