



Road Map to COP29, What Lies Ahead?

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Strengthening Africa in World Trade

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Background

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was established in 1992 at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro to address global climate change. UNFCCC is an international treaty through which member countries commit to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and addressing climate change impacts. Central to the UNFCCC is the annual Conference of the Parties (COP), where representatives from 198 nations gather to discuss, negotiate, and determine actions on global climate policy.

The first COP (Conference of the Parties) meeting occurred in 1995 in Berlin, where nations began negotiating frameworks for climate action. Key milestones include the Kyoto Protocol (COP3, 1997), which set binding emission reduction targets for developed countries, and the Paris Agreement (COP21, 2015), which established voluntary climate commitments with the goal of limiting global warming to well below 2°C. Since then, COP meetings have been held annually, gathering countries to assess progress, negotiate actions, and enhance climate commitments.

One of the most notable achievements at COP was the adoption of the Paris Agreement at COP21, in Paris. This legally binding treaty, endorsed by 196 parties, sets a unified goal of limiting global temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. Countries are actively working to reduce emissions in line with their targets and building resilience to adapt to climate impacts¹.

As the climate crisis intensifies, with particularly severe effects on vulnerable developing countries, COP conferences have become critical in uniting global efforts. These meetings bring together world leaders, policymakers, scientists, and activists as a central platform for advancing climate action and addressing inequalities worsened by climate change².

How does COP work?

The conference spans two weeks, with various negotiations occurring each day. Beyond formal talks, COP also provides opportunities for discussions across different societal levels. At COP29, there will be two main areas: the Blue Zone, which hosts politicians and officials, and the Green Zone, where youth, NGOs, and media representatives. This structure encourages wider participation³.

Countries form negotiation groups like the African Group, EU, G7, and AOSIS⁴, which advocate for common regional or political interests. Uganda is in the African Group which emphasizes initiatives benefiting Africa and focuses on the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) not to fall further behind⁵.

COP has introduced several key mechanisms over the years to tackle climate change, each designed to support global emission reduction and adaptation goals under the UNFCCC framework. However, these mechanisms come with both advantages and disadvantages. Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), is a cornerstone of the Paris Agreement, where countries must state how they plan to reduce emissions every five years. This allows each country to voluntarily set and report its own targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The purpose of NDCs is to unite countries in the fight against climate change by having each nation establish its climate targets based on its own circumstances and ambitions. This system provides flexibility through a nationally driven approach where countries independently set their goals. However, this flexibility also leads to varied progress across countries, and some critics argue that the system lacks binding enforcement, making it insufficient to prompt the swift global action needed⁶.

1 [The Paris Agreement | UNFCCC](#)

2 [Conference of the Parties \(COP\) | UNFCCC](#)

3 [COP29 Green Zone](#)

4 <https://www.aosis.org/>

5 [African Group of Negotiators Put Forward COP29 Positions – African Climate Wire](#)

6 [The COP Process: What You Need to Know – EcoWatch](#)

Why COP?

The UNFCCC organized the world's first COP meeting in 1995, marking the beginning of an ongoing effort to address climate change globally. Each COP aims to build upon previous decisions and enhance the global response to the climate crisis. Since then, significant progress has been made in mitigating climate change and its effects, with one of the landmark achievements being the Paris Agreement, where countries reached a consensus on a framework to limit global warming.

However, COP also reflects the complexity and diversity of interests, where countries and stakeholders approach issues from different perspectives. These differences often stem from variations in economic development, vulnerability to climate change, and ideological priorities. Perspectives vary notably between developed and developing nations. Developed countries, which are often larger polluters, are pressured to take immediate and substantial action. In contrast, developing countries advocate climate justice, seeking financial and technological assistance to combat climate change without hindering their economic growth. This dynamic has fueled extensive discussions on climate finance, carbon markets, and "loss and damage", a framework aimed at addressing the irreversible impacts of climate change on vulnerable nations.

Despite these challenges, COP remains essential. It brings together key figures from around the world, offering a platform to address diverse needs. Scientists agree that limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius is the best way to protect the planet from the severe effects of climate change. However, current efforts are not on track, and global temperatures continue to rise, resulting in more frequent extreme weather and climate-related disasters. Thus, urgent action is required. COP presents a unique opportunity for world leaders to act collectively in limiting temperature increases and mitigating climate change, recognizing that this global issue demands a global solution⁷.

Outcomes and lessons from COP 28.

As we approach COP29, we must first understand the successes and failures of previous years to ensure progress at the next conference. Last year's COP meeting, in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates was truly unique, marking an unprecedented gathering of participants united in action against climate change. The most significant breakthrough was the historic recognition by participating countries of the urgent need to transition away from fossil fuels. In the closing speech, UN Secretary-General António Guterres emphasized that the era of fossil fuels must come to an end fairly and equitably. He stressed that developing countries "must be supported every step of the way". The emphasis on a just transition was one of the central themes of COP28, where clearer guidelines for the financing of the Loss and Damage Fund were also agreed upon⁸.

Climate finance was at the heart of the conference, with discussions extending beyond the Loss and Damage Fund to include several other funds aimed at addressing the impacts of climate change. All funds either received increased support or saw new commitments announced⁷.

Although COP28 was unique in its efforts to increase all types of climate financing, developing countries expressed disappointment over the lack of new financial commitments to support their transition away from fossil fuels and adaptation to climate impacts. The UN Environment Program estimates that developing countries need between \$194 billion and \$366 billion annually to adapt to a warmer world. While \$700 million was allocated to a loss and damage fund, this amount was considered insufficient relative to the actual needs. Developing nations also pointed to the absence of a clear plan for climate adaptation and the funding required to implement these adaptations⁹.

Concerns about the potential negative impacts of "green" trade policies on developing countries have been raised. Certain measures, like the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), are seen as potentially punitive toward developing nations. Worries have been expressed that these measures

7 [History of the Convention | UNFCCC](#)

8 [COP 28: What Was Achieved and What Happens Next? | UNFCCC](#).

9 [COP-28-OUTCOME-PAPER-2023.pdf](#)

could disadvantage poorer trading partners and create trade barriers. Additionally, calls were made for the World Trade Organization (WTO) to take a more active role in the energy transition, which would require reforms. However, no clear response was provided on this matter⁸.

One area of unfinished business was the absence of a decision on the rules governing carbon markets, including the pricing and trading of carbon credits. These negotiations collapsed due to disagreements, with African delegations leading calls for stronger oversight and reduced confidentiality. Once again, the voices of the least developed countries were not adequately heard¹⁰.

In June 2024, a preparatory meeting was held in Bonn, Germany to review the outcomes from COP28 and set the stage for decisions anticipated at COP29. The discussions allowed participants to deliberate on and point out critical issues and address points of contention that would need resolution before COP29. Though progress in Bonn was somewhat limited, it played an important role in shaping the groundwork for the negotiations set to take place at COP29¹¹.

By drawing lessons from COP28 and prior meetings, we can work towards a fairer and more effective climate policy that drives real change. Some key takeaways include the importance of inclusivity, which has been lacking in previous years. Developed countries must fulfill their commitments, as their emissions projections for 2030 indicate an increase compared to 2020, reflecting insufficient ambition. Additionally, financial support for developing countries remains inadequate, and current carbon markets do not yet benefit Africa.

Roadmap to COP29, what lies ahead?

This year, expectations for meaningful change are high. At COP29, governments must come together and set new targets for climate adaptation that reflect the scale and urgency of the climate crisis. It is also essential to continue progress toward fully implementing the Paris Agreement.

What's on the agenda?

The COP29 Presidency's plan is structured around two core pillars that will shape the roadmap for the negotiations. The first pillar, "enhancing ambition," focuses on ensuring that all parties commit to ambitious national plans and maintain transparency in their climate actions, to strengthen global efforts to limit global. The second pillar, "enabling action," emphasizes the crucial role of climate finance. It seeks to mobilize the necessary resources to turn ambition into action by supporting efforts to reduce emissions, adapt to climate impacts, and address loss and damage, particularly in the most vulnerable countries¹².

A central focus of COP29 will be on securing the vast financial resources needed to combat climate change. Trillions of dollars are required for countries to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions and safeguard lives and livelihoods from the increasingly severe impacts of climate change. Climate finance will be key in transforming ambitious climate goals into actionable plans, ensuring that both mitigation and adaptation strategies are adequately funded.

Recently, nine different declarations and pledges have been introduced, which will be a key focus of the conference:

- Truce Appeal: Calls for a global truce during COP29 to reduce emissions from military activities and emphasize the link between peace and climate action.
- Global Energy Storage and Grids Pledge: Aims to increase global energy storage sixfold by 2030, targeting 1,500 GW of capacity, and to enhance grid infrastructure by adding 25 million kilometers of energy grids by 2030.
- Green Energy Zones and Corridors Pledge: Promotes investment in green energy zones and corridors to foster sustainable growth, energy security, and regional cooperation.

10 [TESS-Briefing-Note-Carbon-Markets-Net-Zero.pdf \(assets-servd.host\)](#)

11 [Summary report 3–13 June 2024](#)

12 [COP29 Venue](#)

- **Hydrogen Declaration:** Seeks to unlock the potential of a global clean hydrogen market by addressing regulatory, technological, and financing barriers to accelerate the adoption of clean hydrogen.
- **Green Digital Action Declaration:** Encourages the use of digital technologies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, while also addressing the environmental impact of digitalization, such as energy consumption and e-waste.
- **Reducing Methane from Organic Waste Declaration:** Focuses on reducing methane emissions from organic waste by implementing circular economy practices and improving waste management systems globally.
- **Multisectoral Actions Pathways (MAP) Declaration:** Advocates for cross-sectoral cooperation to build resilient and healthy cities, emphasizing sustainable urban development and climate finance for urban areas.
- **Enhanced Action in Tourism Declaration:** Calls for integrating tourism into national climate strategies, promoting sustainable practices, and reducing emissions within the tourism sector.

Water for Climate Action Declaration: Highlights the importance of addressing water-related challenges, including floods and droughts, through integrated water management as part of global climate mitigation and adaptation efforts.¹³

Uganda's anticipation of COP29

Uganda's preparations for COP29 involve uniting its voice with Africa and other developing nations to prioritize climate financing. The focus will be on ensuring a fair distribution of climate finance, specifically to support adaptation measures in countries most affected by climate change. To achieve this, a unified African stance is crucial, as it will strengthen Africa's bargaining power and effectively advocate for the continent's specific needs and priorities in these negotiations.

Additionally, Africa aims to push for practical solutions that enhance local community resilience to climate shocks, which includes scaling up climate innovations and promoting climate-smart agriculture. Africa also seeks to develop robust systems to monitor, evaluate, and learn from adaptation initiatives, which is vital for tracking progress, identifying effective measures, and refining adaptation strategies¹⁴.

It also requires a system that gives Africa control over the value of carbon credits and does not lead to further exploitation of resources. Away from the current carbon market that does not benefit developing countries.

A successful outcome for developing countries at COP29 would include a strong commitment from developed countries to climate financing, enabling developing nations to implement essential adaptation measures. It would also involve recognition of the need for a fairer financial framework that considers the unique challenges faced by developing countries. Furthermore, effective negotiations could lead to tangible steps in establishing a new, collective, and quantified climate finance target and defining details for carbon markets. This is to eliminate unfair trade mechanisms and support the right of developing countries to use their resources for sustainable development and advancing climate justice for Africa¹⁵.

Conclusion:

As we look ahead to COP29, it is clear that while significant progress has been made, much work remains to be done to meet the urgent climate crisis demands. Building on the outcomes of COP28, where hope for a fossil-free world felt closer than ever and a more inclusive transition took center stage, COP29 offers an opportunity for governments and stakeholders to push forward the work yet to be completed. Now is the time to make meaningful progress by focusing on ambitious climate finance, a just energy transition, and stronger commitments to net-zero targets.

13 [COP29-Declarations-and-Pledges-Letter.pdf](#)

14 [Opinion: COP29 must remedy the injustice of climate finance in Africa - The Africa Report.com](#)

15 [Ahead of COP29, African climate negotiators make case for scaling climate innovations | AICCRA](#)

In conclusion, COP29 must go beyond promises and rhetoric and drive real action and accountability. It is important to ensure that all voices, especially those from the Global South, are included in the transition to a sustainable and resilient future. By fostering a spirit of cooperation and focusing on inclusive and equitable energy solutions, COP29 can be a turning point in the global fight against climate change.

Recommendations:

- Adopt an Africentric, just, and inclusive approach to the energy transition rooted in the continent's development aspirations and quest for structural transformation. This approach is critical for the realization of Africa's short, medium, and long-term energy development pathways towards accelerating universal energy access and transition.
- There is a need to challenge false solutions such as carbon trading and using Africa as carbon sinks for carbon offsets as has been discussed here. This has dire implications for local communities.
- Rethink economic growth to tackle climate change: Economic growth is associated with the accelerated degradation of the environment and often increases air pollution. Thus, there is a need to rethink economic growth to be more pro-environment.
- Engage at the World Trade Organization level towards addressing trade and climate (environment) related tensions. There is a need to ensure that agreements at the WTO level work towards addressing climate change and development-related challenges¹³.

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