

BLOG POST October 27th 2022

An African COP: What's at stake for COP27?

Auteur

Lola Vallejo

Climate Special Adviser

🕒 Reading time: 7 min



The 27th Conference of Parties (COP27) for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) will take place in Sharm-el-Sheikh (Egypt) from November 6th to 19th. In an unprecedentedly tense geopolitical context, this conference is expected to centre on key demands coming from the African continent and the countries most vulnerable to climate impacts: finance, adaptation and loss and damage.

COP27 is shaped, more than others, by geopolitical forces. While COP26 in Glasgow was marked by the global relief at the Biden administration re-joining the Paris Agreement, and its [strategic cooperation with China](#) on climate issues, the contrast could not be starker a year later. China severed dialogue with the US on military and climate issues over an official visit to Taiwan this summer, and ramped up its [rhetoric](#) on US historical responsibility and lack of climate credibility since. The European Union (EU) is looking to rapidly wean itself off Russia's fossil fuels following Poutine's war in Ukraine, causing both a rush to save energy coupled with a ramping up of efficiency and renewables targets in the medium term, and a perceived dash-for-gas in the short term. The latter contributes to globally high energy prices and inflation, and fuels accusations of [hypocrisy](#).

Process-wise, Sharm-el-Sheikh could be seen as a 'bridging' COP. The Egyptian presidency is not expected to deliver on 'formal' milestones of the Paris Agreement ambition mechanism, such as the ratcheting up of country commitments to reduce emissions (Nationally Determined Contributions, or NDCs) like Glasgow's COP26, or politically take stock of progress made (known as the Global Stocktake, to conclude at COP28, in UAE). [COP27 presidency priorities](#) for a negotiated outcome are therefore very revealing of the political state-of-play, and of the progress or lack of made since Glasgow: i) global goal on adaptation, ii) loss and damage, iii) and climate finance, iv) mitigation work programme. These are put in context below, and a final priority added: v) accountability.

1. Climate finance

In a context of soaring energy and food prices, climate finance is becoming a litmus test for international solidarity. Countries expressing 'deep regret' in COP26 for failing to mobilise 100bn\$ a year of climate finance, have disappointed many developing countries. COP27 will be about avoiding further damage to North-South confidence, and ensuring the updated '[delivery plan](#)' led by Germany and Canada lends credibility to the 'new' delayed deadline of 2023¹. Progress made towards the COP26 promise to double (in absolute terms) adaptation finance between 2019 and 2025 will be particularly important to African countries, and weigh heavily for them on whether COP27 is a success.²

As negotiations are set to start on a new post-2025 finance goal, a new set-up to disburse finance is playing its credibility at COP27. When the \$8,5bn "Just Energy Transition Partnership (JET-P)" was announced to support South Africa transition away from coal (led by Germany, France, the USA, the UK and the European Commission) last year, it was greeted as a promising way to scale up support for energy transition in large emerging economies by pooling resources for a common project. As other announcements may follow³, it is critical to increase transparency around the South Africa deal, give assurances of its progress, and clarify which countries and what projects could get support in the future, and at what conditions.

Beyond climate finance discussions under the UNFCCC umbrella looms the larger problem of the immense financial needs of countries most hit economically by the Covid-19 pandemic, the consequences of the Russian war in Ukraine, and by various climate catastrophes. Calls for reforming multilateral financial system to provide more fiscal space and ensure debt sustainability are gaining traction, notably from the Prime Minister of Barbados (under the [Bridgetown Agenda](#)).

2. Adaptation

The two-year [Glasgow-Sharm-el-Sheikh work programme](#) launched at COP26 aims to enhance understanding of the Global Goal on Adaptation, partly as a response to a long-standing [demand](#) from African countries to link more effectively warming levels to climate impacts and financial demands. Progress on this agenda item could focus on identifying global adaptation priorities more clearly, but will also be tightly connected to perceived progress on climate finance.

3. Loss and damage

COP26 set up a two-year Glasgow Dialogue focusing specifically on financing for loss and damage (L&D); the [first dialogue](#) took place at the Bonn Subsidiary Body meetings (June 2022), and the next one is only scheduled for June 2023. While COP27 is only halfway through this work programme, the political pressure is incredibly high to already deliver i) an agenda item ensuring L&D are routinely discussed in negotiations, ii) additional funding dedicated to loss and damage under the UNFCCC Convention. This growing pressure can be traced back to the worrying gap

between NDCs and what's needed for a 1.5°C world, and the failure to meet the totemic \$100 billion goal. It is no coincidence that Pakistan, which has just been afflicted by devastating floods, has been asked to co-chair the ministerial roundtable opening COP27.

COP27 is also due to deliver on a much less visible item: agreeing on the institutional and financial arrangements to render the [Santiago Network on Loss and Damage](#) operational. Created at COP25 in Madrid, the network's objective is to 'catalyse technical assistance' by connecting vulnerable developing countries with the technical assistance of relevant organizations, bodies, networks and experts.

4. Mitigation

The [2022 synthesis of submitted NDCs](#) is the first to indicate the possibility of global emissions peaking before 2030, if governments' targets are met. And beyond these targets, the latest UNEP Mitigation Gap Report underscores the need for stronger policies and measures to reduce emissions. Yet with the bulk of COP26 advances (both in negotiations and in voluntary coalitions) centred on mitigation efforts, this field of climate action will this year struggle for political and media attention. The Egyptian presidency is focusing its efforts on mitigation to flesh out a **work programme** "to urgently scale up mitigation ambition and implementation in this critical decade" to keep the 1.5°C objective alive. The work programme's implicit objective is to put the onus on G20 economies to reduce emissions, beyond the five-year cycles of ratcheting up NDCs, and it could offer a space to develop sectoral cooperation. Despite all these difficulties, a process decision to establish the Mitigation Work Programme is one of the few formally 'mandated outcomes' COP27 is expected to deliver on.

But the [Glasgow Pact](#) adopted at COP26 had also called all countries to **submit enhanced NDCs**, effectively shortening the five-year ratcheting cycle contained in the Paris Agreement. A year later, just a few countries submitted an updated NDC⁴, including Indonesia and India, and most of them were countries which had missed the initial COP26 deadline. This shows shortening the ambition ratcheting-up mechanism, though an important signal, is rarely feasible in practical terms, though other emitters could *a minima* reflect the commitments taken at COP26 or since, without waiting for the next 2025 deadline for NDCs. These include for instance [Australia](#) or [China](#) committing to reduce their methane emissions, or the European Union adopting the [RePowerEU](#) package in the wake of the Ukraine war. From a European perspective, it's also worth remembering the Glasgow Pact also called for a phasing-out of 'inefficient' fossil-fuel subsidies—a mere months before European countries spent [half-a-trillion](#) to cushion citizens and companies from skyrocketing gas and power prices.

5. Accountability

According to IDDRI, a fifth and last priority ought to focus on accountability, on State and Non State Actors' progress and implementation under the coalitions announced at COP26, for instance to reduce methane emissions ([Methane Pledge](#)), financing forest protection ([Global Forest Finance Pledge](#)), or foster technological cooperation ([Glasgow breakthroughs](#)). The spotlight will also be on two high-profile initiatives aiming to ensure businesses, investors, cities and other Non-State Actors "walk the talk on their net-zero promises":

- The [UN high-level expert group](#) on the net-zero emissions commitments of non-state entities will release its conclusions, including a focus on the highest environmental integrity of net zero commitments and a roadmap to translate standards and criteria into international and national level regulations;
- The International Standards Organisation (ISO) is expected to launch an international platform to develop .

Seven years after the Paris Agreement, COP27 is the first "implementation COP" that will not delve into agreeing the rules of implementation ('Rulebook') at all, but focus solely on the overall credibility of the promises made. The

Agreement was built to withstand the worst headwinds, by marrying a long-term horizon to a dynamic process of five-year ambition cycles, a universal framework making room for flexibility. The current economic and geopolitical context is some of the worst headwinds the Agreement has had to face, putting all the more pressure on all climate actors to deliver. Just a few weeks ahead of the Convention on Biological Diversity's COP15, the outcomes of COP27 will be a key signal regarding the progress made on the global agenda for sustainable development, and the resilience of the multilateral system.

1 Sept. 2022 estimates from OECD reveal a \$17bn gap as of 2020, a gap that has barely reduced in the three years 2018 – 2020.

2 In 2020, just over a fourth (28%) of total climate finance funds adaptation projects (source: OECD).

3 The June 2022 G7 communiqué mentions negotiations are ongoing with India, Indonesia, Senegal, Vietnam.

4 UNFCCC Secretariat to release an updated NDC Synthesis Report prior to COP27. The Oct. 2021 report showed that 2030 GHG levels are projected to be 5% higher than 2019 levels (as per latest NDCs), when they ought to be 43% lower to stay below 1.5°C.

CLIMATE

NÉGOCIATIONS INTERNATIONALES

COP27

PARIS AGREEMENT

CARBON NEUTRALITY

PERTES ET DOMMAGES