

Secretary-General's remarks to High-Level opening of COP27



Sharm El-Sheikh 07 November 2022 António Guterres

President Al-Sisi,

Thank you for this wonderful hospitality and for this spectacular organization.

COP-27 President Shoukry,

Your majesties,

Excellencies,

Dear friends,

In just days, our planet's population will cross a new threshold.

The 8 billionth member of our human family will be born.

This milestone puts into perspective what this climate conference is all about.

How will we answer when "Baby 8 Billion" is old enough to ask:

What did you do for our world – and for our planet -- when you had the chance?

Excellencies,

This UN Climate Conference is a reminder that the answer is in our hands.

And the clock is ticking.

We are in the fight of our lives.

And we are losing.

Greenhouse gas emissions keep growing.

Global temperatures keep rising.

And our planet is fast approaching tipping points that will make climate chaos irreversible.

We are on a highway to climate hell with our foot still on the accelerator.

The war in Ukraine, other conflicts, have caused so much bloodshed and violence and have had dramatic impacts all over the world. But we cannot accept that our attention is not focused on climate change. We must of course work together to support peace efforts and end the tremendous suffering.

But climate change is on a different timeline, and a different scale.

It is the defining issue of our age.

It is the central challenge of our century.

It is unacceptable, outrageous and self-defeating to put it on the back burner.

Indeed, many of today's conflicts are linked with growing climate chaos.

The war in Ukraine has exposed the profound risks of our fossil fuel addiction.

Today's crises cannot be an excuse for backsliding or greenwashing.

If anything, they are a reason for greater urgency, stronger action and effective accountability.

Excellencies,

Human activity is the cause of the climate problem.

So human action must be the solution.

Action to re-establish ambition.

And action to rebuild trust – especially between North and South.

The science is clear: any hope of limiting temperature rise to 1.5 degrees means achieving global net zero emissions by 2050.

But that 1.5 degree goal is on life support – and the machines are rattling.

We are getting dangerously close to the point of no return.

And to avoid that dire fate, all G20 countries must accelerate their transition now – in this decade.

Developed countries must take the lead.

But emerging economies are also critical to bending the global emissions curve.

Last year in Glasgow, I called for coalitions of support for high-emitting emerging economies to accelerate the transition from coal towards renewables.

We are making progress with the Just Energy Transition Partnerships – but much more is needed.

That is why at the beginning of COP27, I am calling for a historic Pact between developed and emerging economies – a Climate Solidarity Pact.

A Pact in which all countries make an extra effort to reduce emissions this decade in line with the 1.5-degree goal.

A Pact in which wealthier countries and International Financial Institutions provide financial and technical assistance to help emerging economies speed their own renewable energy transition.

A Pact to end dependence on fossil fuels and the building of new coal plants – phasing out coal in OECD countries by 2030 and everywhere else by 2040.

A Pact that will provide universal, affordable, sustainable energy for all.

A Pact in which developed and emerging economies unite around a common strategy and combine capacities and resources for the benefit of humankind.

The two largest economies – the United States and China – have a particular responsibility to join efforts to make this Pact a reality.

This is our only hope of meeting our climate goals.

Humanity has a choice: cooperate or perish.

It is either a Climate Solidarity Pact – or a Collective Suicide Pact.

Excellencies,

We also desperately need progress on adaptation -- to build resilience to the climate disruption to come.

Today, some three-and-a-half billion people live in countries highly vulnerable to climate impacts.

In Glasgow, developed countries promised to double adaptation support to \$40 billion a year by 2025.

We need a roadmap on how this will be delivered.

And we must recognize that this is only a first step.

Adaptation needs are set to grow to more than \$300 billion dollars a year by 2030.

Half of all climate finance must flow to adaptation.

International Financial Institutions and Multilateral Development Banks must change their business model and do their part to scale up adaptation finance and better mobilize private finance to massively invest in climate action.

Countries and communities must also be able to access it – with finance flowing to identified priorities through efforts like the Adaptation Pipeline Accelerator.

Excellencies,

At the same time, we must acknowledge a harsh truth: there is no adapting to a growing number of catastrophic events causing enormous suffering around the world.

The deadly impacts of climate change are here and now.

Loss and damage can no longer be swept under the rug.

It is a moral imperative.

It is a fundamental question of international solidarity -- and climate justice.

Those who contributed least to the climate crisis are reaping the whirlwind sown by others.

Many are blindsided by impacts for which they had no warning or means of preparation.

This is why I am calling for universal early warning systems coverage within five years.

And it is why I am asking that all governments tax the windfall profits of fossil fuel companies.

Let's redirect that money to people struggling with rising food and energy prices and to countries suffering loss and damage caused by the climate crisis.

On addressing loss and damage, this COP must agree on a clear, time-bound roadmap reflective of the scale and urgency of the challenge.

This roadmap must deliver effective institutional arrangements for financing.

Getting concrete results on loss and damage is a litmus test of the commitment of the governments to the success of COP27.

Excellencies,

Friends,

The good news is that we know what to do and we have the financial and technological tools to get the job done.

It is time for nations to come together for implementation.

It is time for international solidarity across the board.

Solidarity that respects all human rights and guarantees a safe space for environmental defenders and all actors in society to contribute to our climate response. Let's not forget that the war on nature is in itself a massive violation of human rights.

We need all hands on deck for faster, bolder climate action.

A window of opportunity remains open, but only a narrow shaft of light remains.

The global climate fight will be won or lost in this crucial decade – on our watch.

One thing is certain: those that give up are sure to lose.

So let's fight together– and let's win.

For the 8 billion members of our human family – and for generations to come.

Thank you.

Secretary-General's remarks at launch of Al Gore's Climate TRACE initiative

Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt 09 November 2022

Dear friends,

It is an enormous pleasure to be with Al Gore. He has been the voice of reason. The voice that that all the time has inspired us to fight against climate change, and to make sure that we mobilize the international community as a whole to rescue our planet.

So dear Al Gore, thank you so very much for everything you have been doing and thank you very much for this fantastic initiative that you are launching today.

Let me begin by once again thanking the Climate TRACE coalition and Al Gore for this critical initiative.

The climate crisis is in front of our eyes – but also hidden in plain sight.

We have huge emissions gaps, finance gaps, adaptation gaps.

But those gaps cannot be effectively addressed without plugging the data gaps.

After all, it is impossible to effectively manage and control what we cannot measure.

Timely and granular data on the sources of the emissions is essential.

But we are still lacking a full picture.

Many significant sources of emissions are not yet on our radar in real time.

That is where this initiative comes in.

And indeed, Climate TRACE will be ushering in an era of radical transparency for emissions tracking – providing independent emissions data based primarily on direct observation of emitting activities.

You are making it more difficult to greenwash or -- to be more clear -- to cheat.

One of the most striking early insights from this work is the scale of emissions from oil and gas production – particularly those that have not yet previously been reported.

Climate TRACE and its data show that because of underreporting of methane leaks, flaring, and other activities associated with oil and gas production, emissions are many times higher than previously reported.

This should be a wake-up call for Governments and the financial sector, especially those that continue to invest in and underwrite fossil fuel pollution.

The problem is even greater than we were led to believe and that means we must work even harder to accelerate the phase out of all fossil fuels.

Today, the Climate TRACE coalition is releasing a detailed inventory of global emissions.

This dataset is a critical resource.

For business leaders working to decarbonize their supply chains.

For governments working to align policymaking with their national climate action plans.

And for investors working to track private sector progress towards net zero.

Climate action must be guided by science, data and facts.

Thank you for helping to reveal the full picture of the challenge that underscores the need to act.

And act now.

Congratulations on this initiative and thank you.

END

Statement by the Secretary-General at the conclusion of COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh

Sharm el-Sheikh. 19 November 2022

I thank our hosts – the Egyptian government and COP27 President Sameh Shoukry – for their hospitality.

I also want to recognize Simon Stiell and the United Nations Climate Change team for all their efforts.

And I pay tribute to the delegates and members of civil society who came to Sharm el-Sheikh to push leaders for real climate action.

That is what we need.

COP27 took place not far from Mount Sinai, a site that is central to many faiths and to the story of Moses, or Musa.

It's fitting. Climate chaos is a crisis of biblical proportions.

The signs are everywhere. Instead of a burning bush, we face a burning planet.

From the beginning, this conference has been driven by two overriding themes: justice and ambition.

Justice for those on the frontlines who did so little to cause the crisis – including the victims of the recent floods in Pakistan that inundated one-third of the country.

Ambition to keep the 1.5 degree limit alive and pull humanity back from the climate cliff.

This COP has taken an important step towards justice.

I welcome the decision to establish a loss and damage fund and to operationalize it in the coming period.

Clearly this will not be enough, but it is a much-needed political signal to rebuild broken trust.

The voices of those on the frontlines of the climate crisis must be heard.

The UN system will support this effort every step of the way.

Justice should also mean several other things:

Finally making good on the long-delayed promise of \$100 billion a year in climate finance for developing countries;

Clarity and a credible roadmap to double adaptation finance;

Changing the business models of multilateral development banks and international financial institutions.

They must accept more risk and systematically leverage private finance for developing countries at reasonable costs.

But let's be clear.

Our planet is still in the emergency room.

We need to drastically reduce emissions now – and this is an issue this COP did not address.

A fund for loss and damage is essential – but it's not an answer if the climate crisis washes a small island state off the map – or turns an entire African country to desert.

The world still needs a giant leap on climate ambition.

The red line we must not cross is the line that takes our planet over the 1.5 degree temperature limit.

To have any hope of keeping to 1.5, we need to massively invest in renewables and end our addiction to fossil fuels.

We must avoid an energy scramble in which developing countries finish last – as they did in the race for COVID-19 vaccines.

Doubling down on fossil fuels is double trouble.

The Just Energy Transition Partnerships are important pathways to accelerate the phasing out of coal and scaling up renewables.

But we need much more. That's why I am pushing so hard for a Climate Solidarity Pact.

A Pact in which all countries make an extra effort to reduce emissions this decade in line with the 1.5-degree goal.

And a Pact to mobilize – together with International Financial Institutions and the private sector -- financial and technical support for large emerging economies to accelerate their renewable energy transition.

This is essential to keep the 1.5 degree limit within reach – and for everyone to play their part.

COP27 concludes with much homework and little time.

We are already halfway between the Paris Climate Agreement and the 2030 deadline.

We need all hands on deck to drive justice and ambition.

This also includes ambition to end the suicidal war on nature that is fueling the climate crisis, driving species to extinction and destroying ecosystems.

Next month's UN Biodiversity Conference is the moment to adopt an ambitious global biodiversity framework for the next decade, drawing from the power of nature-based solutions and the critical role of indigenous communities.

Finally, justice and ambition require the essential voice of civil society.

The most vital energy source in the world is people power.

That is why it is so important to understand the human rights dimension of climate action.

Climate advocates – led by the moral voice of young people -- have kept the agenda moving through the darkest of days.

They must be protected.

To all of them, I say we share your frustration. But we need you now more than ever.

Unlike the stories from the Sinai peninsula, we cannot wait for a miracle from a mountaintop.

It will take each and every one of us fighting in the trenches each and every day.

Together, let's not relent in the fight for climate justice and climate ambition.

We can and must win this battle for our lives.

You can download the video of the Secretary-Generals statement [here](#):

[The UN Secretary-General's Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change](#)

The Secretary-General's Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change provides him with practical and outcome-focused advice, diverse youth perspectives and concrete recommendations, with a clear focus on accelerating the implementation of his Climate Action agenda.

Convened under the auspices of the United Nations first-ever system-wide youth strategy, [Youth2030](#), and the [Our Common Agenda](#), the Youth Advisory Group serves as a mechanism for the Secretary-General to hear directly from young people, as the organization works to accelerate global climate action, and drive forward all [17 Sustainable Development Goals](#).

The next cohort of the Youth Advisory Group will serve for a period of two years (2023-2024). The group will be selected and appointed by the Secretary-General from a pool of candidates nominated by respected youth- and climate-focused non-governmental and civil society organizations around the world.

Please see criteria for the selection [here](#).

"We have seen young people on the front lines of climate action, showing us what bold leadership looks like."

António Guterres, UN Secretary-General



Nisreen Elsaïm (Sudan) Ernest Gibson (Fiji)

Vladislav Kaim (Moldova)

Sophia Kianni (USA / Iran)

Archana Soreng (India)

Paloma Costa (Brazil)

Nathan Metenier (France)

The big takeaway from Cop27? These climate conferences just aren't working

Rather than a bloated global talking shop, we need something smaller, leaner and fully focused on the crisis at hand

Bill McGuire, Prof Emeritus, Geophysical & Climate Hazards, UCL; author: *Hothouse Earth: an Inhabitant's Guide*



An activist holds a sign at the Cop27 conference on 19 November in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt. Photograph: Sedat Suna/EPA

In the end, the recent shenanigans at the **Cop27** meeting in Sharm el-Sheikh at least ended up making no commitment to cutting the emissions accelerating this crisis, without which this agreement is nothing more – as one delegate **commented** – than a “down-payment on disaster”. No seasoned observers are of the opinion that the world is any nearer tackling the climate emergency. The real legacy of Cop27 could well be exposing the climate summit for what it has become: a bloated travelling circus that sets up once a year, and from which little but words ever emerge.

It really does beggar belief, that in the course of 27 Cops, there has never been a formal agreement to reduce the world's fossil fuel use. Not only has the elephant been in the room all this time, but over the last quarter of a century it has taken on gargantuan proportions – and still its presence goes unheeded. It is no surprise, then, that from Cop1 in Berlin in 1995, to **Egypt** this year, emissions have continued – barring a small downward blip at the height of the pandemic – to head remorselessly upwards.

Expectations were never especially high over the course of the 12 months since Glasgow's Cop26. Even so, COP27 has to be a new low – held in a country cowed by a malicious dictatorship, the **world's biggest plastic polluter** on board as a sponsor, and hosting more than **600 fossil fuel representatives** and many others who are there to prevent, rather than promote progress and action. Some old hands have labelled it the worst COP ever, and I doubt many would argue.

What is needed is an apparatus that is less cumbersome and more manageable – something leaner and meaner that zeros in on the most critical aspects of the climate crisis, that does its work largely hidden from the glare of the media, and which presents a less obvious honey pot to the busy bees of the fossil fuel sector. One way forward, then, could be to establish a number of smaller bodies, each addressing one of the key issues – notably energy, agriculture, deforestation, transport, loss and damage, and perhaps others.

Such bodies would operate full-time, liaising with one another and perhaps coming together a few times a year. Ideally, they would be made up of representatives from both developed and majority-world countries. In direct contact with representatives of national governments, part of their remit would be to negotiate agreements that are workable, legally binding, and which actually do the job – whether reversing deforestation, cutting methane emissions, or drawing down coal usage. As and when all terms and conditions are agreed, these could be validated and signed off by world leaders as a matter of course and without the need for the ballyhoo of a global conference.

Back in the 1970s the economist and early environmentalist, EF Schumacher, wrote that in respect of economics, small is beautiful. It is a phrase that today could equally well apply to our international negotiating efforts to bring global heating to heel. After the abject failure of Cop27 it's worth a try, surely.