

United Nations Framework Conference on Climate Change (UNFCCC)  
Conference of Parties (COP)  
COP27, November 6-18 (extended two days to November 20)  
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“We are on the road to climate hell. We need to take our feet off the gas pedal.”

— John Kerry)

“UNLESS someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It’s not.”

—Dr. Seuss, *The Lorax*)

### Basic Background

UNFCCC-COP27, as the name indicates is the 27<sup>th</sup> gathering of people from around the world working on the dire issues related to climate change. The number of people attending COP27 was more than 35,000, representing 198 countries. Whether these are official numbers I am not sure, but there certainly were a lot of people there.

The League was allotted nine observers. Some of the nine attended the first week and others the second week. Some attended in person, some virtually.

Some stated goals for the conference by various individuals: Cover more topics, adopted stronger language, emphasize implementation, emphasize human rights, collect and use more data, call for end to deforestation, change economic model, more and better communication, human rights, emphasize the role of women, integrate development and aspirations.

“The objective of the UNFCCC is to ‘stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system’.”  
(UNFCCC)

### Previous agreements and work

#### **Kyoto Accords**

##### Points and goals offered in the Kyoto Accord

- Framework for bottom-up approach of the Paris Agreement
- Adopted 1997
- 2005 to 2012
- Limited set of countries
- Extended by the Doha Amendment in 2012 to 2020
- US did not ratify (legally binding)

## **Paris Agreement**

### Points and goals offered at the Paris Agreement meeting

- Equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities among nations
- Best available scientific knowledge
- Developing countries - impacts of measures taken
- Equitable access to sustainable development and eradication of poverty
- Safeguarding food security and ending hunger
- Importance of conservation and enhancement, as appropriate, of sinks and reservoirs
- Just transition of the workforce (equity)
- Integrity of all ecosystems
- Education, training, public awareness, public participation, public access to information and cooperation
- Engagements of all levels of government
- Sustainable lifestyles and sustainable patterns of consumption and production
- Data to measure success
- Modelling

“Acknowledging that climate change is a common concern of humankind, Parties should, when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights, the right to health, the rights of indigenous peoples, local communities, migrants, children, persons with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations and the right to development, as well as gender equality, empowerment of women and intergenerational equity.”

## **COP26**

### Main points

1. Accelerate national action plans
2. Move away from fossil fuels
3. Deliver on climate finance
4. Step up support for adaptation
5. Complete the Paris rulebook
6. Focus on loss and damage to developing countries from climate change

### New Deals and Announcements

1. Forests – halt and reverse forest loss and land degradation
2. Methane – Global Methane Pledge: “Methane, one of the most potent greenhouse gases, is responsible for a third of current warming from human activities.”
3. Cars – zero-emission vehicles by 2035 in leading markets, accelerating the decarbonization of road transport = 10 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions

4. Coal – South Africa, the United Kingdom, the United States, France, Germany, and the European Union announced a ground-breaking partnership to support South Africa, the world's most carbon-intensive electricity producer - \$8.5 billion help over 3-5 years
5. Private finance – private finance and central banks move to realign trillions of dollars towards achieving global net zero emissions.

### **Women Leading Fossil Fuel Divestment and Resistance, September 22, 2022**

“Gender inequity and violations of women’s rights continue to proliferate globally due to the interconnected systems of patriarchy, capitalism, racism, the commodification of nature, colonialism, and imperialism. Due to unequal gender norms globally, women are simultaneously the most adversely impacted by climate change and socio-ecological degradation, and yet are indispensable actors and leaders of just and effective solutions. . . . [Women should] stand at the forefront of policy-making and action to create long-term systemic change.”

COP27 was charged with evaluating progress made, if any, and to focus on implementation.

#### Site

The site for the conference depends on nations volunteering to host the conference. If no country volunteers, the default is Germany. This year the conference was held in Sharm el-Sheikh (Sharm), Egypt, the City of Peace, on the Sinai Peninsula. The town is at the southern tip of the peninsula where the Suez and Aquaba Gulfs of the Red Sea meet. Sharm is a new town with today's town beginning in 1967. As an example of the newness of the town, it has an old market and a new market the only difference being is that the old market was built where a market existed previously. In essence the two markets were built at the same time. Funding for the development is primarily from Israel. It has been developed as a tourist destination (snorkeling and diving are preeminent) and as a conference center.

The 2023 conference (COP28) will be held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

#### Conference Center

The conference center, a large facility, was divided into different zones and areas:

Blue Zone – where the main activities of the conference took place (e.g., negotiations, official side events, official exhibits, media/press)

Green Zone – (e.g., side events, exhibits, showcase hub). “With a growing interest of all stakeholders to take part in the COPs activities, and with a strong belief from Egypt to allow for an inclusive COP and provide the space needed to different stakeholders, . . . The Green Zone is the platform where business community, youth, civil and indigenous societies, academia, artists and fashion communities from all over the world can express themselves and their voices would be heard.”

To attend activities in the Blue Zone, it was necessary to have a specific badge. If you had a blue badge, you could go, with a few exceptions, to all the activities in the blue zone. Demonstrators needed a special permit and were limited to specific areas outside the zones. There were delegates, negotiators, observers. The League of Women Voters of the United States was allocated nine observers. Many participants (not just League representatives) found it difficult to find their way around the site; signage wasn't always clear, and the map handed out with the materials was stylized and difficult to follow. In addition, there were two plenary room (quite large), meeting rooms, gathering, and eating places.

The United States had a pavilion in the green zone, and two Colorado colleges, Colorado College and Colorado State University and others, had "stalls" to show case their education activities regarding climate change projects.

### Agenda Groupings

Nine major groups: Business and Industry, Environmental, Farmers, Indigenous people, Local government and municipal authorities, Research and independent, Trade union, Women and Gender, and Children and Youth were the major groups. The nine groups generally addressed all the following topics: finance, science and youth, decarbonization, adaptation, agriculture and food systems, land, gender, water, water ACE, energy, biodiversity, oceans and costal zones, transport, solutions, and human settlements, in one way or another. The agenda was thus extensive and difficult to follow compounded by the difficulty of finding various rooms. Some of the areas were drop in areas and others more formal with translations. English was the official language of the conference.

### Themes

The overall theme of the conference was **implementation**. After years of "blah, blah, blahing,," participants wanted action.

**Loss and damage** was a main topic also. By this the conference meant that a fund should be set up worth billions (or trillions) to help the most vulnerable countries contend with climate induced storms and damage. The voices and needs of the most climate vulnerable nations must be heard and climate justice must be delivered. Wealthier countries should contribute \$100 billion per year to aid developing countries get back on their feet. The developing countries had little to do with contributing to climate damage created disasters and should be compensated for experienced damage. Loss and damage funds are to be used to help repair damage from storms and other factors. Funds also need to be invested in transitioning to alternative energy.

The reoccurring comment in most areas was that everything needs to move faster. A new system needs to be put in place that would encompass risk mapping, or global exposure mapping. This would go a long way to preventing disasters to begin with. Examples of this would be to move sensitive land use out of delicate areas such as flood plains, shorelines, fire chutes,

etc. Fiji is an example of pre-planning to address disasters. The country is working on moving all people out of dangerous areas.

“In parallel with the formal negotiations, the Global Climate Action space at COP27 provided a platform for governments, businesses and civil society to collaborate and showcase their real-world climate solutions. The UN Climate Change High-Level Champions held a two-week programme [COP27] of more than 50 events. This included a number of major African-led initiatives to cut emissions and build climate resilience, significant work on the mobilization of finance. (UN Climate Change News, November 20, 2022. *COP27 Reaches Breakthrough Agreement on New “Loss and Damage” Fund for Vulnerable Countries*)

A subset of loss and damage is adaption and mitigation.

Another main topic under the implementation was the division between participants on the timing of **phase out of fossil fuels**. It is fair to say that most participants and the organizations they represented want an immediate phase out. This attitude was tempered by fossil fuel companies that want to see a gradual reduction of fossil fuel usage. By one estimate there appeared to be about 90 groups with connections to the fossil fuel industry. Many of them were there to showcase advances they are making in alternative energy sources. John Kerry weighed in on this topic. He said we do not have time to phase out fossil fuels; the time is now, or we will continue the environmental disaster to hell. Greenhouse gas emissions must decline 45% by 2030 to limit global warming to 1.5 C. It is not just the cap on global warming but a reduction in the current temperature that must be taken seriously.

#### Other Topics and Goals at COP27

A press release summarized the major actions taken by the delegates at the conference. Here is a short summary hitting the highlights. Even in the face of geopolitical issues, the conference made some progress. Let's see if the decisions are implemented.

- Technology – A five -year work programme to promote energy solutions in developing countries
- Mitigation – Mitigation work programme for governments to revisit and strengthen 2030 targets by the end of 2023. Phasedown of unabated coal power and phaseout of inefficient fossil fuel subsidies, Clean and just transitions to renewable energy
- Global Stocktake – A mechanism to raise ambitions under the Paris Agreement. Global Stocktake or taking stock of the implementation of the Paris Agreement evaluating progress made and adequate goals, “It will inform what everybody, every single day, everywhere in the world, needs to do, to avert the climate crisis.” (Press Release)
- Twenty-five new collaborative actions –
  - USD 3.1 billion plan for protection of everyone with an early warning system
  - Net-Zero report serving as a guide to ensure credible, accountable net-zero pledges by industry, financial institutions, cities, and regions

- Global Shield against Climate Risks with new commitments of over USD 200 million initial funding
- Global Environment Facility funds supported with USD 105.6 million (Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, the Walloon Region of Belgium, Indonesia)
- Just Energy Transition Partnership with USD 20 billion next three to five years.
- Forest Protection continuation of important progress made on forest protection with the launch of the Forest and Climate Leaders' Partnership, which aims to unite action by government, businesses, and community leaders to halt forest loss and land degradation by 2030

Globally clean energy supplies must double by 2030 for the world to limit global warming within set targets.

The COP27 was extended by two days; most delegates did not want to leave the conference without finishing its business.

Comments made by three country leaders

#### **President Sisi (Egypt) at the beginning of the conference**

- Have we faced our responsibility? Have we put an end to suffering?
- Developing countries are suffering
- Transition not working
- Need to -
  - do the work laid out in the Paris Agreement
  - reduce all emissions
  - commit to net zero
  - be accountable and transparent
  - financing for renewables

#### **UAE President**

- Peaceful work
- Dialogue
- Need responsible supplies of energy – least carbon production
- Working to produce sustainability

#### **Points Made by President Biden**

COP27 is a critical summit

The last eight years have been the warmest leading to drought, fire, hurricanes

For humans it is an economic issue; for the planet it is life

Need -

- Environmental justice

- Adaptation fund/private investment fund
- To stop deforestation

### **Points Made by John Kerry**

- Keeping the increase in temperature below 2.0 C is not an option but an imperative
- 1.5 C (2.7 F) is a physical limit not a goal
- Culture of death
- Fossil fuel colonization [imperialism]
- Climate change is the apartheid of our time
- Road to hell; take foot off the gas pedal
- Methane is 80 times more polluting than carbon
- Need private sector investment
- Double money for adaptation
- Need to integrate climate and economic security
- More jobs with renewables
- Wholistic system

### **General points** (variously from Congo, Jordan, Gabon, Seychelles, Mauritania, France, Tanzania, Iraq, Slovakia, Mozambique, and Columbia)

- Moral imperative
- War on nature is a war on human rights
- Need a much stronger message
- Goals too weak
- Continue to work on framework
- We are in worse shape than most people think
- Empower stakeholders/participation (Women produce 80% of food but not part of decision making)
- Inaction exceeds the cost of action
- A global transformation to a low-carbon economy is expected to cost at least USD 4-6 trillion a year (There are other estimates per year or for a few years)
- Need combination of public and private funding
- All and all we are way behind in adopting alternative energy and doing away with the mistakes of the past
- Countries negotiate for themselves not people
- There is no room for back sliding
- Shouldn't sacrifice agreements even in face of Ukraine (France and Iraq)
- US and China have a great responsibility
- Refugees and "hosts" most susceptible
- Desertification
- Deforestation is a critical issue

- Water crises/flood plains/wetlands
- Damage to coral reefs, algae bloom, coastal communities severe
- Ocean climate crises new frontier

Thwaites Glacier Antarctica

### Specific Notes

There are many areas related to climate change that we probably have not thought about. By the actions of humans, we are affecting all systems individual and collectively. Here are three areas that fall into this category.

Butterflies. While I do not know your general knowledge about bees, you probably have been exposed to the fact that the population of bees world-wide is declining. This has dire consequence for farming and thus food security. Butterflies are pollinators and serve a similar purpose as bees as well as being pretty to look at. Butterfly habitat is being destroyed allowing less and less vital area for the butterflies. Butterflies have become a part of world trade. They are being captured, pinned, and sold as a commodity. The lure of capturing butterflies is not much different than collecting ivory for jewelry and aphrodisiacs. Both these and other examples are complicated by the need to support families. We have an intersecting problem of economics, climate change, and habitat destruction.

Mangroves. Mangroves provide shelter from storms, birth and incubation of many species, recreation for humans, firewood, building material, and stabilize coast lines. The root system binds and builds soils and helps to improve water quality. They also capture “massive amounts of carbon dioxide emissions and other greenhouse gases from the atmosphere, and they trap and store them in their carbon-rich flooded soils for millennia.” In general, they are an important habitat and ecosystem for the earth and the species residing on it.

Mangrove forests are being threaten from many directions – dredging, water pollution, erosion, habitat destruction. When they are destroyed, the release massive amounts of carbon dioxide. Thus, the destruction of mangrove forests whether because of direct activities of people or from climate change have many dire consequences.

Financing. What is affected by financial systems? Current business models have proved inadequate to protect the environment from climate change – carbonization is the biggest capitalism failure.

A financial system creating a net zero system needs to be establish and functioning we. An estimated amount of money needed is USD 136 trillion. Where does the money come from? In general the wealthier countries will contribute money to a fund to be used for ending the usage of coal, reduce methane, end the use of fossil fuels.

To have a world-wide financial system for climate change, an international system must be developed and used in the areas of: accounting standards, technical assessment, international



climate change standards for global sustainability, vulnerability index, and comprehensive discloser standards for investment (proportionate and appropriate for developing countries). Capacity building is also part of the system.

There is working groups that intends to start work in March on this project; there will be two prototypes developed to assess the outcomes of the two.

As part of the financial program, financial risks from climate changes will be assessed. The working groups intends to have climate standards by the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> quarter next year. Areas identified in financial risk are: climate stress test, international integration, sustainability, and common usage.

Other items discussed: societal transformation, deforestation, melting glaciers, permafrost and warming (methane), sea level rise, ocean warming.

### Benefits of COPs

Brings more people to the table

Agreement is limited still there is some headway

Opportunity to converse with a variety of people

Make protesters feel they are doing something about the problems

Offers and opportunity to showcase work

### What shall we do?

Multilateral diplomacy is not dead. It still works and may be our only hope for success. We must develop a collective will and remain committed to the fight against climate change.

The League has many positions to be used to address both international and environmental issues. These are list below. While there is a national group working on climate change and also state groups, the League has not taken a leading role in addressing the issues. The time is now! There is no more time to hesitate.

- Make climate change a League priority across the country

- Set an agenda of reforms

- Produce a marketing campaign

- Elevate the climate change task force and give it a national platform within League

- Empower members and others by concerted education projects

- Brief COP attendees and coordinate attendance at various discussions

- Attend most meetings virtually

- Evaluate legislation introduced concerning climate change

- Encourage introduction of legislation

- Send action alerts to members on particularly important aspects of climate change

- At COP28 take advantage of a platform to highlight the League and its work in this area

- Become part of negotiations

Need to work before hand and discover how to have input in the negotiations  
Follow up by observing various working groups especially UN working groups

Let us be clear. While the League works on many very important issues and aspects of society, there is none as important as climate change. The earth is on a fast downward spiral to destruction. Without a healthy environment supported by a health climate, all other areas, economy, jobs, education, equity, justice, cannot function.

#### League of Women Voters relative positions

Think globally, act locally

### INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Promote peace in an interdependent world by working cooperatively with other nations and strengthening international organizations.

**United Nations** Support a strong, effective United Nations to promote international peace and security and to address the social, economic, and humanitarian needs of all people.

**Trade** Support U.S. trade policies that reduce trade barriers; expand international trade; and advance the achievement of humanitarian, environmental, and social goals.

**Developing Countries** Promote U.S. policies that meet long-term social and economic needs of developing countries.

### NATURAL RESOURCES

**Environmental Planning and Management** Support measures to improve the coordination, effectiveness, and efficiency of governmental units . . . and measures that promote integrated planning for environmental management, wise use of . . . natural resources, comprehensive state-wide planning for land use, and a balanced transportation system.

Support policies that enhance public participation in the permitting and monitoring of oil and gas operations in the state.

**Climate Change** The League believes that climate change is a serious threat facing our nation and our planet and steps must be taken to protect the globe immediately.

**Land Use** Support responsible land use planning by all levels of government. Support the creation of regional boards and commissions to address regional concerns.

**Air Quality** Promote measures to reduce pollution from mobile and stationary sources.

**Energy** Support environmentally sound policies that reduce energy growth rates, emphasize energy conservation, and encourage the use of renewable resources.

**Hydraulic Fracking** Support policies that enhance public participation in the permitting and monitoring of oil and gas operation in the state. Support improved coordination with local government and strong environmental regulations.

**Water** Support of measures that promote the wise and balanced use of water . . .

**Waste Management** Promote policies to reduce the generation and promote the reuse and recycling of solid and hazardous

## NATURAL RESOURCES

Promote an environment beneficial to life through the protection and wise management of natural resources in the public interest.

**Resource Management & Protection** Promote the management of natural resources as interrelated parts of life-supporting ecosystems. Promote resource conservation, stewardship, and long-range planning, with the responsibility for managing natural resources shared by all levels of government. Preserve the physical, chemical, and biological integrity of the ecosystem with maximum protection of public health and the environment.

**Air Quality** Promote measures to reduce pollution from mobile and stationary sources.

**Energy** Support environmentally sound policies that reduce energy growth rates, emphasize energy conservation, and encourage the use of renewable resources.

**Land Use** Promote policies that manage land as a finite resource and that incorporate principles of stewardship.

**Transfer of Federal Public Lands** Promote policies that Federal public lands should remain under the jurisdiction of the federal government.

**Water** Support measures to reduce pollution to protect surface water, groundwater, and drinking water, and set up a process to evaluate inter-basin water transfers.

**Waste Management** Promote policies to reduce the generation and promote the reuse and recycling of solid and hazardous wastes.

**Nuclear** Promote the maximum protection of public health and safety and the environment.

**Climate Change** Support climate goals and policies that are consistent with the best available climate science and that will ensure a stable climate system for future generations.

**Public Participation** Promote public understanding and participation in decision making as essential elements of responsible and responsive management of our natural resources.

**Agriculture Policy** Promote adequate supplies of food and fiber at reasonable prices to consumers and support economically viable farms, environmentally sound farm practices, and increased reliance on the free market.

**Federal Agriculture Policies** Provide financial support to subsidize agriculture in specific instances, enforce federal antitrust laws to ensure competitive agricultural markets, and apply clean air and water regulations to all animal and aquaculture production. The federal government should fund basic agricultural research to provide adequate safety of our food supply wastes.