COP28 DEBRIEF

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Executive Summary

The expectations attached to COP28 were initially rather modest. One reason for this was the hosting of the conference by the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which has a particularly large oil and gas industry. The lack of optimism further strengthened by the announcement that Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber, the CEO of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC), would serve as COP President. Al Jaber had sent mixed signals concerning the need to phase out fossil fuels, generating uncertainty surrounding the objectives he would pursue as COP President.

In the opening plenary session, the COP President managed to avert debate on the conference agendas, thus allowing their immediate adoption and a rapid start of negotiations. However, this proved detrimental to later negotiations, as it delayed discussion of various contentious issues, which became apparent during debate on the Global Stocktake (GST) and the Standing Committee on Finance (SCF).

A noteworthy decision made by the COP President was to announce multilaterial initiatives that were not part of negotiations at the outset of the conference. This included the promise to triple global renewable energy and double the energy-efficiency improvement rate. The decision to spotlight these pledges at the outset was a testament to the determination of the UAE to make positive headlines in the first few days of COP28. Another unique development was the immediate adoption of the decision on the Loss and Damage Fund during the opening plenary session. This early decision – which included finance commitments from Germany, the UAE, and others – generated strong positive publicity for the conference during its opening days.

Ultimately, the most significant COP28 outcome was the decision reached concerning the first GST. In contrast to previous years, COP28 did not adopt a Cover Decision, a document that can have an important political signalling function; this year, that function was fulfilled by the GST.

The GST negotiating text initially included a controversial call for the phasing out of fossil fuels. In the end, the delegates pledged to 'transition away' from fossil fuels and to accelerate corresponding efforts during this decade. In combination with the goal of tripling the capacity of renewable energy by 2030 and doubling the energy-efficiency improvement rate, COP28 can be rightfully celebrated as heralding the beginning of the end of fossil fuels.

The second major decision reached at COP28 was the adoption of the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA). Despite the difficult course of negotiations, the countries were ultimately able to agree on a GGA framework. However, this framework is not yet specific enough to provide genuine guidance for improving adaptation measures. Another weakness is the continued inadequate financing for adaptation efforts. Indeed, many countries have been falling short of their commitments to support adaptation financing in recent years, a fact that was clearly evident at COP28.

The negotiations with regard to adaptation finance largely revolved around process-related details. This was attributable in part to the fact that no country wanted to reveal its cards prior to the 'finance showdown' that will take place in 2024, when a new climate finance target is decided. Various long-standing questions remain unanswered, including the lack of a clear definition for climate finance and the need to ensure that global financial flows are consistent with the Paris Agreement (as foreseen by Article 2.1c).

Increasingly, climate issues are also being raised that were not negotiated before.Many countries in the Global South, for example, have argued they are unable to contribute to mitigation action due to the excessive debt burdens they face. While these are complex issues, at least one thing is clear: as the climate crisis intensifies, the international community will need to grapple with an ever-expanding list of topics that entail difficult negotiations.

GERMANWATCH

1. The Global Stocktake

The first Global Stocktake (GST) was completed in Dubai, and the GST decision text adopted at COP28 sends important political signals for the future. Indeed, the GST decision can be considered as 'the start of a new era', for it foresees the comprehensive analysis and political assessment of all relevant domains – mitigation, adaptation, finance, loss and damage, and international co-operation – while also explicitly naming fossil fuels for the first time. The GST decision thus creates important impetus for the adoption of robust Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) by signatory states; the new NDCs are due early 2025.

Key outcomes

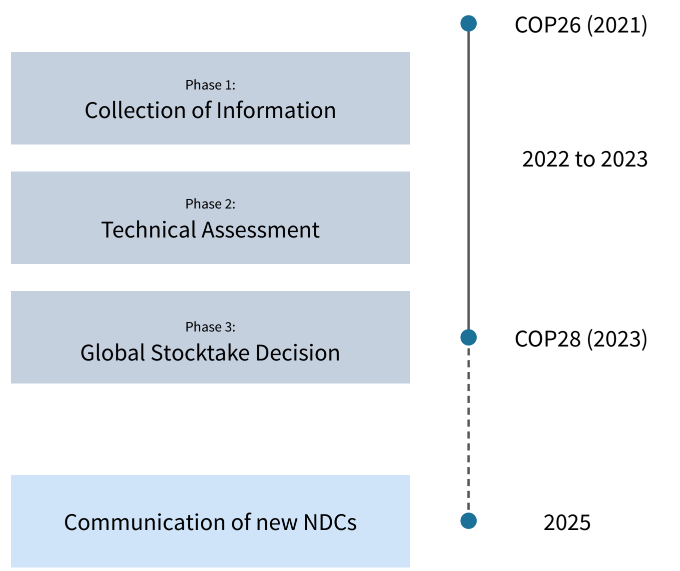
- ✔ The GST decision calls for an accelerated yet just and orderly transition away from all fossil fuels in energy systems to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.
- ✔ The GST decision foresees the adoption of a comprehensive package of energy measures by 2030, including (1) a planned trebling of globally installed renewable energy capacity, (2) a doubling of the energy-efficiency improvement rate, (3) a significant reduction in non-carbon emissions, particularly methane, and (4) a reduction in emissions from road transport.
- ✖ The package of proposed measures is marred by gaps and loopholes. For example, some of the solutions mentioned can only make a very limited contribution to tackling the climate crisis, including the promotion of carbon capture and storage (CCS), carbon capture and utilisation (CCU), low-carbon hydrogen, and 'low-emission' technologies such as nuclear energy.
- ✖ As part of the GST decision, no adequate agreement was reached concerning measures to support implementation (e.g. for finance, capacity building, or technology transfer).
- ✖ The GST decision does not make direct reference to the Mitigation Work Programme (see section 2).

Next steps

In accordance with the GST decision, UAE, Azerbaijan, and Brazil will form a 'troika' to organise activities in the run-up to COP30. Specifically, they have been tasked with facilitating international co-operation in relation to NDC implementation and the development of more ambitious climate targets (Roadmap to Mission 1.5°C). The decision on the first GST is an important element of the debate regarding the ambition that must be shown in the third round of NDCs, which are to be submitted by 2025. According to the 'UAE Consensus', the current NDCs are not sufficiently ambitious.

The new NDCs that are being developed this year must take into account the COP28 energy package; this is essential for the implementation of the package's measures.

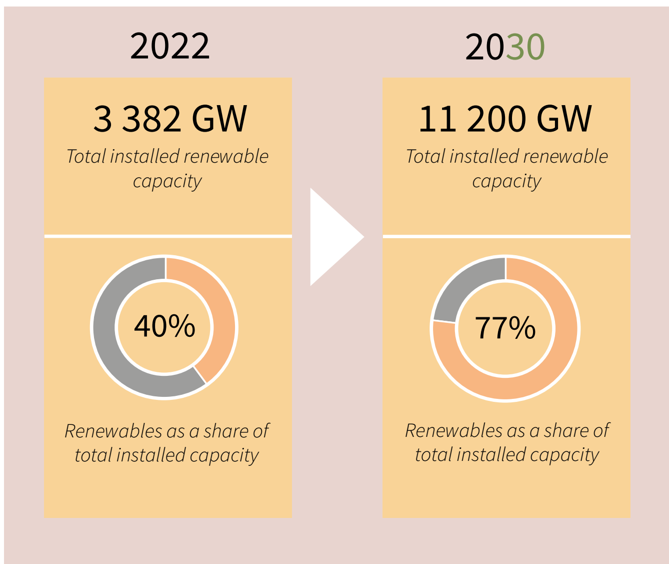
Timeline for First Global Stocktake



Source: Authors' figure, based on information from the UNFCCC, see: https://unfccc.int/topics/global-stocktake.

Furthermore, without a significant increase in financial resources, the energy package cannot be implemented, particularly in the Global South. Rich countries with high emissions, such as Germany, must support the countries of the Global South – for example, through technology transfer, capacity building, or financial assistance. Accordingly, there is a clear need to develop a comprehensive support package that is designed to aid implementation of the COP28 energy package.

Necessary Expansion of Renewable Energy to Keep 1.5C Threshold Within Reach



Source: Authors' figure, based on: https://www.irena.org/News/articles/2023/Oct/Tripling-Renewable-Power-and-Doubling-Energy-Efficiency-by-2030.

A key moment will be COP29, when a new finance target (the New Collective Quantified Goal, or NCQG) will be set for the period after 2025. In addition, German and European energy co-operation with countries of the Global South should reflect the commitments made in the COP28 energy package. In this connection, existing initiatives and projects can play a role following targeted adjustment. The provisioning of adequate finance for mitigation also necessitates the comprehensive reform of the international financial architecture. This includes dealing with excessive debt burdens in many countries, the possible introduction of targeted taxes on sectors such as aviation and maritime transport, the global abolition of subsidies for fossil fuels, and the introduction of a global tax on fossil fuels.

2. Mitigation

Mitigation Work Programme

The Mitigation Work Programme (MWP) was adopted at COP27 in Sharm El-Sheikh with the aim of closing the existing ambition and implementation gap by 2030. Unfortunately, the MWP was significantly weakened at COP28. There is thus uncertainty as to whether its original goal can be achieved.

Key outcomes

- ✔ It was affirmed that the MWP should be a fixed agenda item not only at COP, but also during the intersessionals (Subsidiary Bodies, SBs) in June of each year.
- ✔ It was agreed that investment-focused events should be improved in order to enhance the effective participation of all stakeholders and mobilise financial resources.
- ✘ At COP28 it was not possible to formally adopt the key messages and proposed solutions that were identified as part of the two MWP Global Dialogues. Accordingly, the MWP is unable to fulfil an important signalling function.
- ✘ The next Global Dialogues will address other topics. This could prevent the necessary discussion of energy-sector issues that were already on the agenda last year.
- ✘ The UAE 'Consensus' did not establish a enough of a connection between the Global Stock Take (GST) and the MWP. The MWP was not given a mandate to work on the GST measures.

Next steps

The MWP must fulfil its mandate to 'urgently scale up mitigation ambition and implementation in this critical decade'. The technical discussions that take place during the Global Dialogues and the investment-oriented events should therefore focus on how the GST outcomes on mitigation can be implemented, particularly with regard to transitioning away from fossil fuels, expanding renewable energy, and improving energy efficiency. It is important that the MWP retains the topic of 'accelerating a just energy transition' until it has fulfilled its mandate.

During the next intersessional in Bonn (SB60) in June of 2024, the delegates will once again review progress made in implementing the MWP, including the COP28 energy package. It is crucial to ensure that the MWP is not further undermined. Furthermore, the weak MWP decision from COP28 needs to be improved by 2026.

Regional dialogues should be organised, possibly starting in Europe, to discuss proposed solutions for improved mitigation measures at the local level. This could open the door to an in-depth discussion on the transformation of the energy sector and the implementation of the COP28 energy package (see also section 1).

Just Transition

In line with Article 2 of the Paris Agreement, measures to combat climate change must also take sustainable development and poverty reduction into account. The Just Transition Work Programme was introduced at COP27 and adopted at COP28. The focus now should be on implementation. Reducing CO2 emissions is a global challenge, but it directly affects the most vulnerable populations (such as low-income households) and workers in certain economic sectors (such as fossil-fuel workers). The realisation of a just and inclusive transition will hinge on the identification of suitable transition pathways as part of the COP process.

Key outcomes

- ✔ It was decided that the objectives and scope of the JTWP should be based on Article 2 of the Paris Agreement. This allows for a broader definition of a just transition beyond a sole focus on the workforce (paragraph 1, 2.a).
- ✔ The enshrinement of national development goals as a principle should be greeted as positive. Nevertheless, further consideration is required with a view to the realisation of these goals in the context of a just transition.
- ✘ The participation of organisations that are not state actors is only possible to a limited extent, although the decision text provides for their participation in principle (paragraphs 6, 7, and 8).
- ✘ The protection of biodiversity (as part of a broader definition of just) is still only defined to a very limited extent in the preamble and is otherwise not explicitly mentioned.

Next steps

The just transition was hotly debated during the last two climate conferences. Numerous events have addressed this topic from various perspectives, thus ensuring continued keen interest amongst UNFCCC actors (UN Framework Convention on Climate Change) and national and regional stakeholders. For example, Germany has adopted the just transition pathway as a principle informing its strategy in climate diplomacy. In addition, some countries are considering including just transition pathways in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

Just transition policies can benefit all countries, including Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and other countries in the Global South. Furthermore, because of the interwoven nature of the global economy, domestic just-transition policies can have beneficial knock-on effects abroad. The topic of just transition is sure to assume a prominent position in future debates, not least because there is an urgent need to make progress in this area.

3. Global Goal on Adaptation

The adoption of a framework for the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) at COP28 was a key concern of the ones most vulnerable to the impacts of the climate crisis. While the two-year Glasgow–Sharm El-Sheikh work programme had been tasked with developing such a framework in the run-up to COP28, the draft proposals lacked granularity.

Key outcomes

- ✓ A framework for the Global Goal on Adaptation was successfully adopted in Dubai.
- ✗ However, the seven subgoals contained in the framework suffer from various gaps, and indicators for measuring progress are still lacking.
- ✗ In addition, there is still a funding gap for adaptation measures in developing countries.

Next steps

In light of the difficulties that pervaded negotiations on the GGA in Dubai, the fact that a GGA framework was actually adopted should be welcomed as positive. The adopted framework, titled the UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience, aims to provide guidance to countries as they implement adaptation measures, with the goal of augmenting their adaptive capacity, strengthening their resilience, and reducing their vulnerability to climate change (cf. Paris Climate Agreement, Art. 7). Despite vigorous efforts on the part of developing countries, especially the African Group, the GGA framework as adopted remains excessively weak. The seven thematic subgoals – including those concerning food security, health, poverty reduction, ecosystems, and infrastructure – have not been formulated with sufficient granularity, nor undergirded with quantitative assessment metrics. In some cases, these targets even fall short of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (2015). A new two-year work programme has been tasked with developing indicators so that target fulfilment can be quantitatively assessed. These deficits will need to be addressed as part of this work programme.

The GGA framework does not yet provide countries with the guidance they require to develop and implement regional and local adaptation measures and thereby reduce the risks posed by the climate crisis to particularly vulnerable countries and people. As National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) must be implemented by all countries, industrialised countries – including Germany – have work to do.

In this connection attention must also be drawn to the continuing funding gap for the development and implementation of adaptation measures in developing countries. A clear shortcoming of the GGA resolution is its failure to set goals for the thematic subgoals in relation to funding assistance, technology cooperation and capacity building. As the NCQG for climate finance will take centre stage in climate policy deliberations this year, the upcoming COP29 offers an important opportunity to increase financial support for adaptation. This is an opportunity that we cannot afford to miss.

The current adaptation measures that have been announced by the global community, including associated funding commitments, in no way reflect the urgency with which societies and ecosystems must adapt to the climate crisis. Significant progress must therefore be made this year, not just in fulfilling existing commitments, but also in expanding the scope of planned adaptation measures. Paris signatories will begin preparing their new NDCsthis year. The inclusion of vulnerability assessments, specific adaptation goals for various sectors, and practical implementation plans that include budgetary figures (funding requirements/support needs) in these NDCs will make an important contribution to promoting adaptation measures that protect the most vulnerable from the effects of the climate crisis.

4. Loss and Damage

Two important decisions to support affected countries in coping with loss and damage were reached at COP28: the Loss and Damage Fund (LDF) and the Santiago Network for Loss and Damage (SNLD) were both operationalised.

Key outcomes

- ✓ The Loss and Damage Fund has been successfully established.
- ✓ Furthermore, the Santiago Network for Loss and Damage is now operational.
- ✗ However, the LDF has not been endowed with sufficient funding..

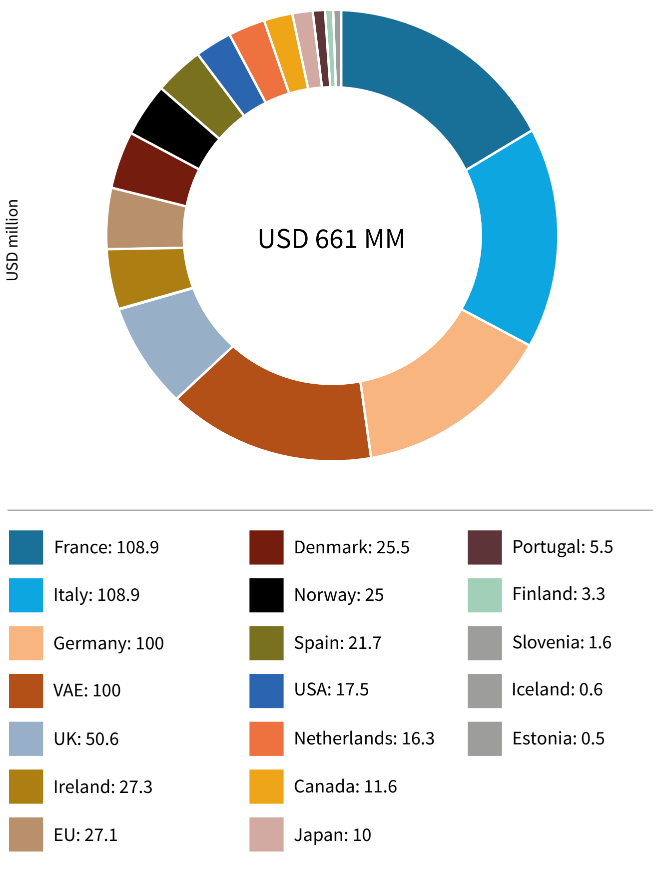
The Loss and Damage Fund and funding arrangements

With the establishment of the LDF, an important first step has been taken to support countries and people that are particularly affected by the climate crisis to cope with its unavoidable effects. Funding of almost USD 700 million has been pledged, following an initial pledge by the United Arab Emirates and Germany of USD 100 million each. In addition, for funding arrangements such as the the Global Shield and Pacific Resilience Facility, USD 227.5 million in funding commitments have been obtained.

Santiago Network for Loss and Damage (SNLD)

First established in 2019, the SNLD was made operational at COP28. The purpose of the SNLD is to provide technical assistance for coping with losses and damages. The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) have been appointed to host the network for a five-year term; this appointment can be renewed for another five years. Although several countries have pledged financial support, the SNLD still lacks the funding necessary to act as an effective catalyst for technical assistance.

Pledges to L&D Fund



Source: Authors' figure, based on: https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/bodies/funds-and-financial-entities/loss-and-damage-fund-joint-interim-secretariat/pledges-to-the-loss-and-damage-fund.

Next steps

Loss and Damage Fund

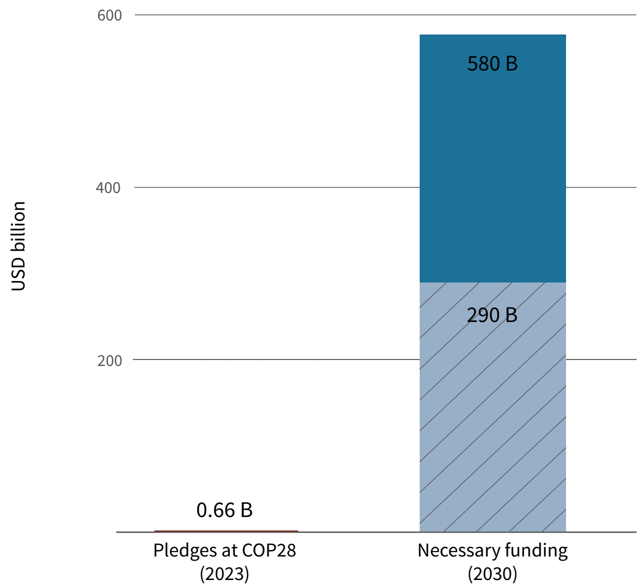
The LDF must now be rendered operational as quickly as possible so that support can flow to those affected by the consequences of climate change. A first step in this regard is to establish the LDF Board. This requires appointing the members of the Board and selecting a host country. Unfortunately, this process has been delayed because the industrialised countries did not meet the deadline for nominating their representatives. Accordingly, the first meeting of the Board was postponed from January to the end of March/early April, such that valuable working time has been lost. The Philippines, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados and the Bahamas have communicated their interest in serving as a potential host country for the LDF Board.

The first task of the LDF Board will be to clarify various details and rules, including the following important issues:

- adoption of a system for allocating LDF resources,
- implementation of safeguards to ensure that the fund's work and projects rely on a human rights approach,
- establishment of processes for the effective participation of civil society in Board meetings, and
- development of a long-term fundraising strategy to ensure adequate financing for the fund.

As the World Bank intends to act as the host institution for the first four years, an additional important step is for the World Bank to review whether it can and wishes to fulfil the conditions associated with this role (e.g. concerning the definition of eligibility criteria, direct access, and access for non-World Bank members). This is crucial, because fulfilment of these conditions is necessary for the World Bank to host the LDF.

L&D Fund: Pledges vs. Necessary Funding



Source: Authors' figure, based on: Markandya, A., González-Eguino, M., 2019, Integrated Assessment for Identifying Climate Finance Needs for Loss and Damage: A Critical Review.

While the nearly USD 700 million in funding commitments that have been obtained to date represent an important symbolic step for the capitalisation of the LDF, this sum falls woefully short of meeting the Global South's finance needs, which have been estimated at between USD 290 and 580 billion each year by 2030. The LDF can only promote climate justice if it is adequately capitalised. Accordingly, the fund replenishment process, which should occur at least every four years, will need to generate new and additional funding. Dollar anwächst.

Santiago Network for Loss and Damage

The next steps included deciding on the location of the secretariat and setting up the Advisory Board. The Board met for the first time in March 2024, where it decided on Geneva, Switzerland as the location of the secretariat.The SNLD, as well, requires additional funding.

5. Climate Finance

Finance issues once again played a key role at this year's COP. In the deliberations on mitigation, adaptation, and financing, obtaining commitments in the area of finance was absolutely essential for an ambitious outcome. The start of the conference was marked by a mood of discontent on this issue, given the failure of various industrialised countries to meet their prior finance commitments, both in terms of payments to the Adaptation Fund and the USD 100 billion climate finance pledge.

Key outcomes

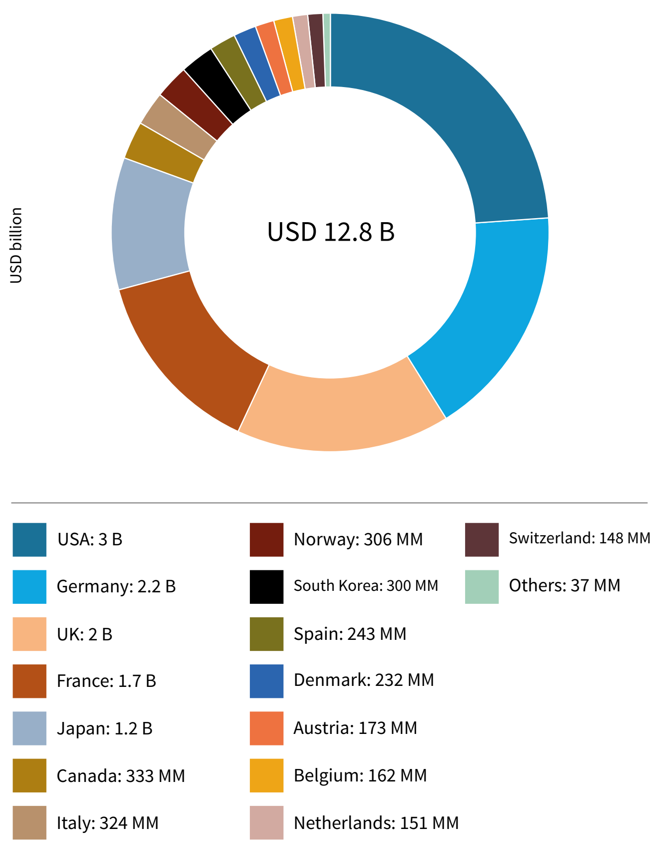
- USD 13.5 billion in funding commitments have been obtained for the Green Climate Fund (GCF), the largest amount in the fund's history.
- Unfortunately the industrialised countries failed to take action in Dubai that would reverse the decline in adaptation financing.
- The financially relevant provisions of the GST decision are, on the whole, formulated in a very vague manner.
- The debates surrounding the implementation of Article 2.1c of the Paris Agreement, which states that all financial flows must be made consistent with the agreement, did not result in a binding work programme.

Next steps

Discussions regarding the NCQG for climate finance for the period after 2025 focused on improving the process in 2024 in order to enable the drafting of the negotiating text prior to COP29. Specifically, three additional meetings will be held to prepare 'the substantive framework for a draft negotiating text'.

Following the second donor conference in October 2023, the GCF has received further pledges for the next four years, including from the US, Switzerland, and Italy. A total of USD 13.5 billion has been obtained so far for the second replenishment of the GCF.

Pledges to Green Climate Fund



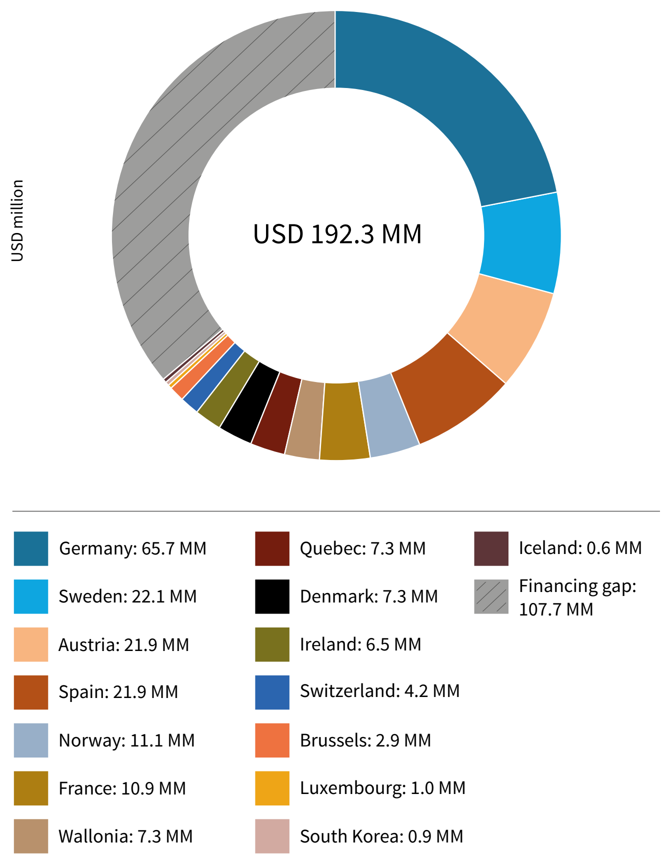
Source: Authors' figure, based on: https://www.greenclimate.fund/about/resource-mobilisation/gcf-2.

While a total of USD 13.5 billion in new funding has been secured for the GCF – the largest replenishment amount in the fund's history – it remains to be seen whether all countries will stand by their pledges moving forward, not least given various political developments in 2024, including the US presidential election this November. Some donors, such as Sweden, have yet to spell out how they intend to support the work of the fund in the coming years.

While the commitments obtained for adaptation financing must be assessed as very meagre overall, there are a few small glimmers of hope. One bright spot is that the industrialised countries have now been called upon to report on their efforts to double adaptation finance. At the same time, the promise of doubling adaptation finance still falls short.

Nevertheless, the industrialised countries failed to send a clear signal that they intend to reverse the decline in the level of adaptation finance mobilised – an essential first step for regaining trust. Indeed, it was not even possible to achieve the Adaptation Fund's minimum resource mobilisation target of USD 300 million, including adequate multi-year funding commitments.

Pledges to the Adaptation Fund



Source: Authors' figure, based on: https://www.adaptation-fund.org/press-release-adaptation-fund-mobilizes-nearly-us-160-million-in-new-pledges-at-cop28-for-the-most-climate-vulnerable.

The deliberations surrounding the implementation of Article 2.1c of the Paris Agreement continued to be difficult. Article 2.1c states that all financial flows must be made consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development. While differences of opinion abound regarding the specific way in which Article 2.1c relates to other provisions of the Paris Agreement, we can at least welcome the fact that this issue will be discussed for a further two years as part of the dialogue format established at COP27. It was not possible to agree on a binding work programme at COP28. Furthermore, the financially relevant provisions of the GST are, on the whole, formulated in a very vague manner. Although the growing gap between current climate financing and the necessary level of resource mobilisation has been recognised, a concrete roadmap for closing this gap has not yet been outlined.

Negotiations this year will be dominated by the new climate finance target. Prior to the 'climate finance showdown' that is expected to take place at COP29, the technical expert dialogues will be supplemented over the course of the year by a political work programme. While the Dubai decision leaves the details of this work programme largely open, it is hoped that the final decision will reflect the needs and priorities of developing countries. The question of which countries will be contributing to international climate finance will be a major issue next year, not only as part of deliberations concerning the NCQG, but also beyond this issue. Industrialised countries have a clear obligation to recognise their historic responsibility and to lead the way on this issue. However, attention will also turn to other countries with high incomes and emissions, including wealthy oil-rich countries and China.

6. Other important issues not included in the negotiations

Reforming the international financial architecture

The countries of the Global South, with the exception of China, will require an estimated USD 2.4 trillion by 2030 for mitigation, adaptation, loss and damage, and nature. Of this amount, approximately one trillion USD in finance will need to be provided from international sources. As public sector finance is unable to cover this level of need, the international community must look to additional sources of funding. This issue represents one aspect of the debate surrounding proposals to reform the international financial architecture (IFA).

Reforming the IFA entails not only restructuring financial institutions such as multilateral development banks (MDBs) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), but also reaching multilateral agreements concerning international taxation and debt relief for the Global South, among other issues – none of which fall under the remit of the UNFCCC. The COP28 decision concerning the GST nevertheless has an important signalling function.

Key outcomes

- ✓ COP28 has sent a clear positive signal in favour of a reform agenda. In particular, the MDBs and other international financial institutions (IFIs) were called upon to step up their collaboration, to further scale up their climate investment, and make the finance more accessible and more concessional.
- ✓ The MDB shareholders have been asked to increase the level of concessional finance. Since almost all UNFCCC parties are also MDB shareholders, this implies a mandate to increase the capital allocated to climate-related funds and investment vehicles.
- ✓ The COP28 decision calls on the establishment of innovative sources of finance to be accelerated while stressing the particular the role that can be played by international taxation, especially in generating additional grant financing.
- ✓ The Paris signatories formally recognised that fiscal barriers are slowing down more ambitious climate action. Although debt was not expressly mentioned, this last point can be understood as an allusion to it.
- ✗ The topic of debt relief was removed from all decision-making texts. For many countries in the Global South, however, the debt relief issue is of considerable importance, as increasing public debt levels are impairing more ambitious climate action. China in particular prevented the inclusion of debt relief in the decision-making texts.
- ✗ Until the last draft of the GST, the need to reform the credit-rating agencies was emphasised. Rating agency assessments of MDB creditworthiness and debt-instrument default risk are of incredible importance for climate investment. This point was removed from the final decision text. Who was behind its removal remains unclear.

Next steps

The MDBs made considerable progress in implementing reform measures in 2023. This year the World Bank will need to clarify the remaining questions regarding its reform plans. In order to improve, the World Bank must not only ensure its activities are fully consistent with the Paris Agreement, but must also provide climate finance on favourable terms to vulnerable middle-income countries while working to scale up its finance activities. Other MDBs will also need to follow suit.

More than half of low-income countries are in or close to a debt crisis. What is more, the existing debt framework offers these countries no real options for extracting themselves from this crisis. The provisions that would allow relief are not far-reaching enough – and they only take effect once the debt burden is already crushing. The Global Expert Review on Debt, Nature, and Climate will study this issue in an attempt to develop solutions. Germany has jointed this initiative, which was launched by Colombia, France, and Kenya.

Without tapping into new sources of funding, climate targets will not be achieved. Implementing new global levies on emissions from shipping, aviation, and the fossil fuels trade, or adopting taxation measures that target the 'carbon majors' could significantly contribute to financing efforts aimed at addressing climate change. France, Kenya, and Barbados are leading a new Task Force on Taxation that will endeavour to bring these new taxes closer to reality. A decisive factor is to ensure that new tax burdens are fair and equitable for the countries of the Global South. Germany should join the Task Force on Taxation.

Food Security & Deforestation

Around a third of global greenhouse gas emissions are attributable to food systems – for example, due to the conversion of forests to agricultural land, which causes forests to be lost as a carbon sink. At the same time, intensifying climate change has a significant negative impact on agricultural yields and thus on food security. Accordingly, in Dubai a focus was placed on discussing globally concerted measures to promote climate-resilient, sustainable, and deforestation-free agricultural production.

Key outcomes

- ✓ The COP28 decision sets forth the goal of achieving climate-resilient food and agricultural production by 2030 and of ending deforestation by this year.
- ✗ Nevertheless, no specific or binding targets for reducing emissions in the food sector were adopted.
- ✗ The UNFCCC Work Programme on Agriculture and Food Security once again postponed important decisions.

The UAE Declaration on Sustainable Agriculture, Resilient Food Systems, and Climate Action, which was published at the outset of COP28, was ultimately signed by more than 150 countries by the end of the conference. Signatory countries have commited themselves to including their food systems in national mitigation measures. Of considerable political significance was the fact that for the first time, the GGA now calls on countries to achieve climate-resilient food and agricultural production by 2030; in addition, the GST emphasises that deforestation should be ended by 2030. Another positive aspect is that the corresponding decision texts underscore the need to consider social concerns, sustainable development, poverty reduction, and the integrity of ecosystems.

Unfortunately, however, the signatory countries were not prepared to adopt concrete and binding targets for reducing food-system emissions. Another point of weakness is that the GST does not emphasise clearly enough the urgent need for a sustainable transformation of food systems. It was also extremely disappointing that the UNFCCC Work Programme on Agriculture and Food Security once again postponed making a decision on the substance of its work programme and an associated timetable, despite the urgent need for such a decision. Deliberations on this matter have been postponed to the upcoming intersessional in Bonn.

Next steps

Efforts are now required in the run-up to the intersessional in Bonn to establish effective links between the negotiating groups of the UNFCCC Work Programme on Agriculture and Food Security, not only to pave the way for an agreement to be reached in Bonn regarding a substantive work programme, but also to lay the groundwork for concrete commitments and measures to be adopted at COP29 with a view to bringing about a meaningful transformation of national food systems. In this connection, trust-building efforts are essential.

Outlook

During elections this year more people than ever before will be asked to elect heads of state, including in many G20 countries (UK, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Russia, South Africa, South Korea, and the US). At the same time, many democracies are under pressure from right-wing populism. One narrative frequently advanced by right-wing populists is that climate policiesprimarily burdens low-income households. Politicians in industrialised and developing countries alike must respond cogently this criticism so that the transformation toward carbon neutrality can proceed with the necessary speed while also ensuring that democracy is strengthened and the most vulnerable do not fall further behind.

Brazil stands to play a key role in the debates that transpire in the months ahead. As the host of the G20 – which includes the African Union for the first time this year – Brazil has the potential to make decisions that generate important momentum for future developments. The country has already put the climate agenda on centre stage by forming a working group on mitigation that is composed of the heads of the country's finance, environment, and foreign ministries. Brazil is also the first G20 country to make serious efforts to encourage a global wealth tax. The adoption of such a tax could generate new funds for mitigation, reduce inequality, and build impetus for additional global taxes.

Brazil will also host the COP30 in 2025. The 'COP Presidencies Troika' unites COP28 (United Arab Emirates) with COP29 (Azerbaijan) and COP30 (Brazil) in a formal fashion with the aim of driving greater climate ambition. It should not be forgotten that an important political showdown will take place at COP29 in Baku regarding the NCQG for the period after 2025. Without an ambitious target, it will be difficult to prevent global temperatures from crossing the 1.5°C threshold. The ambition shown by the next round of NDCs will depend to large extent on the NCQG. Azerbaijan does not appear at present to be sufficiently prepared for the negotiations at COP29 as COP President. This is a worrying development.

In order to support the adoption of an ambitious NCQG, the reform of the international financial architecture must continue to make progress. As an historically neutral player at global level, Brazil is recognised as an honest broker. The country should leverage the trust it enjoys internationally to tackle two highly challenging issues: one the one hand, the issue of equal representation for the Global South in multilateral institutions, and, on the other, the need to expand of the roster of countries that donate to climate finance.

The first new NDCs are to be formally submitted by the end of 2024. G20 countries should lead the way here, as well, by at least presenting already in this year their national mitigation targets for 2035. The new NDCs should be more strongly geared to quickly actionable planning that allows for rapid finance and investments. Together with other developed nations, Germany should support the development of quickly actionable planning in developing countries.

Here, as well, Brazil is already leading the way with a plan for ecological transformation. This plan emphasises the interplay of social, ecological, and industrial factors. One key aim of the plan is to develop domestic industry and create well-paying jobs. Last year, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz announced that countries in the Global South should be assisted with the diversification of their domestic economies. In 2024 the Chancellor should fulfil this promise by working with countries from the Global South that stand at the vanguard of climate action.

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