

COP28: What were the Most Important Decisions, Where They Fell Short

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What's in Today's Article?

- Why in the News?
- What is COP Climate Summit?
- What were the Expectations from COP28?
- Key Outcome of the COP28

Why in the News?

- The 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference or Conference of the Parties of the UNFCCC, more commonly known as COP28, was held from 30 November until 12 December at Expo City, Dubai, United Arab Emirates.
- The COP28 meet has delivered some important outcomes. However, like all previous COPs, it still remained an underachiever, unable to measure up to the expectations.

What is COP Climate Summit?

- In 1992, at the Rio Earth Summit, 154 countries signed a multilateral treaty called the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
- It aimed to stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations “at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic (human-induced) interference with the climate system.”
- The treaty came into force two years later, and since then, countries which are part of the UNFCCC, meet every year at different venues.
- Today, there are 198 ‘parties’ or signatories of the Convention.

News Summary

- Between 30 Nov to 12 Dec 2023, the Government of the United Arab Emirates hosted the 28th Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP-28).

Key Outcome of the COP28

- Overall, there is not enough in the final agreement to accelerate climate action in the short term.
- Fossil Fuel phase-out:
 - The role of fossil fuels in causing global warming had never been even acknowledged in any earlier COP decision, but this was getting increasingly untenable.
 - After much deliberations, the final agreement called upon countries to contribute towards “transitioning away” from fossil fuels, “so as to achieve net zero by 2050”.
 - There were no time schedules and no targets. Some countries were extremely disappointed that the term “fossil fuel phase-out” had not been used.
- Tripling of renewable energy:
 - This was an expected outcome, and the only one that contributes to additional emission reductions between now and 2030.
 - The COP28 agreement calls upon countries to contribute to tripling of global installed capacity of renewable energy, and doubling of annual improvements in energy efficiency.
 - Together, these two measures have the potential to avoid emissions of about 7 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent between now and 2030.
 - Tripling is a global target, and it is not incumbent on every country to individually triple its current installed capacity.
 - It is thus not clear how this tripling would be ensured.
- Phase-down of coal:
 - Despite being a fossil fuel, just like oil or natural gas, coal has received a separate mention in the agreement.
 - This is because coal was already singled out for phase-down in the Glasgow conference (COP26) in 2021.
 - There was a move to stipulate that no new coal fired power plants could be opened without an in-built carbon capture and storage facility, but this was strongly resisted by India, China, South Africa and other countries.
 - It was dropped, and finally the Glasgow language was reiterated.

- There is nothing about how this phase-down is to be measured, or from what baseline.
 - Methane Emission cuts:
 - Methane is the most widespread greenhouse gas apart from CO₂, accounting for nearly 25 per cent of all emissions.
 - It is also about 80 times more potent than CO₂ in causing global warming.
 - Methane emission reductions can therefore bring substantial benefits.
 - However, several countries, including India, are extremely opposed to any mandate to cut methane emissions, mainly because one of the major sources happens to be agriculture and livestock.
 - Cutting methane emissions could involve tweaking agricultural patterns which could be extremely sensitive in a country like India.
 - Possibly in deference to the concerns of such countries, the agreement does not mention any targets for methane emission cuts for the year 2030.
 - Loss & Damage fund:
 - For the poor and vulnerable countries, this was the most important outcome.
 - A decision to set up a Loss and Damage Fund had been taken last year in COP27 but it had not been created, and no money had been promised.
 - COP28 operationalised this fund on the opening day of the conference, and several countries, including hosts UAE, made funding commitments.
 - By the end of the conference, commitments worth about US\$ 800 million had been made.
 - The money is meant to provide financial help to countries trying to recover from climate-induced disasters.
 - Global Goal on Adaptation:
 - This was another important step developing countries had been waiting for.
 - Historically, adaptation hasn't received enough attention, or resources, as compared with mitigation activities, mainly because adaptation is largely a local endeavor. Its benefits also are mostly local.
 - Developing countries had been arguing that a global framework for adaptation was necessary to bring more attention to it.
 - COP28 adopted the framework, but much more needs to be done on this front, particularly in identifying the indicators to measure progress on each of the global goals.
 - The adaptation agreement currently lacks financial provisions, and countries would need to continue working on it to strengthen it in the coming years.
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Q1) Where will COP 29 be held?

COP29, the United Nations next climate conference in 2024, is expected to be held November 11-24 in Azerbaijan.

Q2) What is the Kyoto Protocol?

Kyoto Protocol operationalizes the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change by committing industrialized countries and economies in transition to limit and reduce greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions in accordance with agreed individual targets.

Source: [COP28: What were the most important decisions, where they fell short](#) | [TOI](#)

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