



ODUMUNC 2024 Issue Brief Special Session: Climate Change Conference



Supporting Efforts by Developing Nations to Achieve the Aims of CoP 28

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Introduction

Staged as a UN Special Session at ODUMUNC, the *Climate Change Conference of the Parties 28* (CoP 28) simulates the 28th annual meeting to monitor and guide implementation of the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* (UNFCCC). The 1992 Convention remains the primary international agreement guiding UN Member States as they address the issues of global climate change.

CoP 28 is a *Conference of Parties*, a regular meeting for countries that signed the original treaty, to promote compliance and make further progress toward the goals of the original agreement. Climate Change Convention CoPs meet in a different place, with a new host country, every year. CoP 28 brings together national leaders and diplomats, meeting in Expo City Dubai, United Arab Emirates. The actual CoP 28 met from 30 November to 12 December 2023. ODUMUNC delegates should think of their version as a replay. Hopefully it brings better results. But that is not guaranteed.

Previous CoPs have negotiated major agreements on implementation of the UNFCCC, most spectacularly the 1997 *Kyoto Protocol* and the 2015 *Paris Convention* on climate change mitigation, adaptation, and finance.¹ The Paris Convention established basic global goals and national targets on global temperature change and greenhouse gas emissions. Whether CoP28 at ODUMUNC is remembered as a monument to

climate progress, or a diplomatic disappointment, remains to be seen.



Opening ceremony ay CoP 28, Dubai.

The issue explored here is how, at CoP 28, to best to help developing countries achieve the goals of the 1992 UNFCCC and 2015 Paris Convention. Poorer countries are widely agreed to be the most affected by the potentially disastrous effects of climate change. While climate change affects all 8 billion people everywhere on Earth, the people of developing countries are *affected most*, and must cope with the *least means*. These are the regions and countries which historically did the least to cause climate change, and who can afford adjustment least, but who feel its effects most.

Global warming and sea level rise are drowning low-lying areas, small island states and river estuary regions especially, where poorer people tend to be concentrated. Elsewhere, as other river systems dry and rains decline,

¹ United Nations Climate Change (UNFCCC). "COP 21 - Decisions: Paris Agreement." 2015. [https://unfccc.int/process-and-](https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/conferences/past-conferences/paris-climate-change-conference-november-2015/cop-21/cop-21-decisions)

[meetings/conferences/past-conferences/paris-climate-change-conference-november-2015/cop-21/cop-21-decisions](https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/conferences/past-conferences/paris-climate-change-conference-november-2015/cop-21/cop-21-decisions)

desertification already is affecting hundreds of millions, maybe billions, of developing country residents. Changes in agriculture and fishing are further endangering livelihoods. Climate change is worsening weather calamities that affect them disproportionately.

The significance of this matter lies in the urgent need to address climate change through a collective, global effort. The United Nations (UN) plays a vital role facilitating international cooperation to achieve the aims of the UNFCCC at CoP 28 and mitigate the consequences of climate change on developing nations.

Background

In recent history, the international community has made significant strides in recognizing the severity of climate change and its potential to disrupt ecosystems, economies, and societies. The Paris Agreement of 2015 marked a landmark moment in global climate action, with nations committing to limiting global warming. It was the Paris Convention that set the global goal—agreed by all 190 participating states—to keep global warming below 1.5° Celsius (2.7° Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial levels.²

CoP 28 aims to build on this foundation by addressing the gaps in previous agreements and bolstering the efforts of developing nations to transition to low-carbon economies and adapt to the changing climate.

The current climate crisis demands urgent attention due to the escalating impacts of climate change, such as rising sea levels and extreme

weather events that are displacing millions of people and causing billions of dollars in damage each year.³ Developing nations often lack the financial and technological resources required to effectively combat climate change and adapt to its consequences, such as investing in renewable energy, building seawalls to protect coastal communities, and developing drought-resistant crops.



Developing countries also suffer from marginalization. Their voices are less likely to be heard. Leading actors in this issue include countries such as China, the European Union and the United States. The nations of the African Union or even massive developing countries like India, Indonesia, Nigeria or Pakistan are less likely to be heard. The same is true of international organizations, which tend to reflect the priorities of their donors, such as the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank, and non-governmental organizations such as Climate Reality and Greenpeace.

No issue shows this disparity more simply than the *Climate finance gap*, as the financial resources promised to support developing nations' climate efforts fall short by billions of dollars each year.⁴ This gap is a major obstacle

² 'What is the Paris Agreement?' United Nations Climate Change, n.d., <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement>

³ UN.org. "The Climate Crisis – A Race We Can Win | United Nations." the United Nations,

<https://www.un.org/en/un75/climate-crisis-race-we-can-win>.

⁴ Civillini, Matteo. "Cop28 boss slams rich nations "dismal" \$100bn finance failure." Climate Home News, 2 May 2023, <https://www.climatechangenews.com/2023/05/>

to effective climate action, as it prevents developing nations from investing in the necessary measures to mitigate and adapt to climate change. A major challenge for CoP 28 is finding the money to help developing countries go green, to adjust to coming change, and reduce their part of the global problem.

anything—since the states alone are sovereign—it can establish goals that Member States themselves agree to follow. On climate change, this takes the form of general resolutions on development generally, such as the 2015-30 Sustainable Development Goals, and resolutions on specific climate change problems.



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi meets CoP 28 host President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan of the United Arab Emirates, at CoP 28, 1 December 2023. Source: *The Print*.

United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (General Assembly Resolution 70/1): Also known as the *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs), adopted in 2015, this resolution officially launched the 2030 *Agenda for Sustainable Development*. It set development goals for all UN Member States—developed and developing—for the period 2015-30. It includes 17 Goals and 169 specific Targets aimed at addressing a wide range of global development challenges. The SDGs are the basic framework of all UN development activity, routinely cited as the basis for international action.

While not exclusively focused on climate change, the SDGs emphasize environmental sustainability as they key to many other development goals. For example, Goal 13 specifically focuses on taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.⁵

Role of the United Nations

The UN General Assembly, responsible for establishing the goals and moral principles of relations among the UN Member States, plays a continues role in climate change guidance and policy-making. Although the General Assembly cannot demand that its Member States do

General Assembly Resolution A/RES/70/299: Adopted in 2016, this resolution emphasizes the importance of international cooperation in addressing climate change and underscores the commitment to the principles of the UNFCCC.⁶

General Assembly Resolution A/RES/72/277: “Towards a Global Pact for the Environment,”

[02/cop28-boss-slams-rich-nations-dismal-100bn-finance-failure/](https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_70_1_E.pdf).

⁵ United Nations. “A/RES/70/1 Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.” United Nations, 21 October 2015, https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_70_1_E.pdf.

⁶ United Nations. Follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the global level” (document A/70/L.60). 2016. Un.org, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N16/241/59/PDF/N1624159.pdf?OpenElement>.

adopted 10 May 2018. This resolution serves as a basis for the establishment of the environmental law ad-hoc organizations to further better the situation regarding climate change and environment. In addition to that, the resolution calls for action on “2018-2028: Water resources” are intimately connected to climate change impacts and sustainable development. This resolution calls for action to address water-related challenges while promoting sustainable development.⁷



UN Secretary-General António Guterres at CoP 28 said, ‘Science is clear: we need to phase out fossil fuels within a time frame compatible with limiting global warming to 1.5 Celsius.’ Photo: Mahmoud Khaled/CoP 28 via Getty Images

General Assembly A/RES/73/333 (follow-up resolution): The UN General Assembly resolution on the follow-up to the report of the *ad hoc open-ended working group on the Global Pact for the Environment*, was adopted on 30 August 2019. It is about strengthening the implementation of international environmental law and environment-related instruments. The resolution is a significant step forward in the efforts to strengthen the global environmental

⁷ United Nations. Towards a Global Pact for the Environment (A/RES/72/277). 2018, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N18/143/66/PDF/N1814366.pdf?OpenElement>.

⁸ United Nations. Resolutions and Decisions adopted by the General Assembly during its 73rd session. 2019, <https://www.un.org/en/ga/73/resolutions.shtml>.

governance framework. It provides a clear mandate for States and other stakeholders to work together to improve the implementation of international environmental law and to better protect the environment for present and future generations.⁸

General Assembly Resolution A/77/L.58: On 29 March 2023, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution requesting an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the obligations of States with respect to climate change. The resolution was adopted by consensus. The purpose of the request for an advisory opinion on the obligations of States with respect to climate change is to seek clarification from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the specific obligations of States under international law to prevent and redress the adverse effects of climate change in order to protect the climate system as well as present and future generations.⁹

Country and Bloc Positions

Australia, Canada, Japan and other Western-oriented countries are wealthy developed countries supportive of efforts to support developing nations in achieving the aims of CoP28. They recognize that developing countries are disproportionately affected by the impacts of climate change, and that they need

⁹ UN. “Request for an advisory opinion on the obligations of States with respect to climate change - Climate Change Litigation.” Climate Change Litigation Databases, 29 March 2023, <https://climatecasechart.com/non-us-case/request-for-an-advisory-opinion-on-the-obligations-of-states-with-respect-to-climate-change/>.

assistance in order to transition to a low-carbon economy.¹⁰

However, wealthy industrialized countries also have their own concerns. Some are concerned about the cost of providing financial assistance to developing nations, including the United States, the United Kingdom¹¹, and Japan. Some countries that are concerned about the potential for developing countries to use this assistance to undercut their own industries include the United States, Germany, and France.¹² They are willing to support climate adjustment in the developing world, but insist on tangible commitments from aid recipients, thorough accounting for all money, and measurable results.

China emphasizes a balanced approach between economic growth and environmental protection. China advocates technology transfer and capacity building in developing nations.¹³ Although it is the world's largest economy, a global superpower, China considers itself a developing country. For this reason, it does not donate much to major funds for other developing states.

Instead, China stresses assistance through loans from Beijing. These usually require all purchases be from Chinese owned companies, and often require all or most work in developing countries be completed by Chinese owned

companies, with work done as much as possible by Chinese national staff.



Chinese pavilion at CoP 28, Dubai. *Source:* Chermaine Lee 'China, biggest AC producer, snubs global pledge at COP 28', *VOA*, 9 December 2023, <https://www.voanews.com/a/china-biggest-ac-producer-snubs-global-pledge-at-cop28-/7390918.html>

Many developing countries had painful experiences with similar Chinese initiatives under China's Belt and Road Initiative, started in 2013 to create new trading facilities. The Belt and Road Initiative left many developing country recipients mired in painful debt. They are suspicious of undertaking more Chinese debt. But in lieu of aid from other countries, they may find Chinese offers impossible to refuse.

The European Union, and its 27 Member States, are strong supporters of efforts to help

¹⁰ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. "Developing Countries Need Urgent Support to Adapt to Climate Change." UNFCCC, 12 October 2017, <https://unfccc.int/news/developing-countries-need-urgent-support-to-adapt-to-climate-change>.

¹¹ McVeigh, Karen. "UK criticised for failing to pay \$300m in promised climate funds ahead of Cop27." *The Guardian*, 1 November 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/nov/01/uk-criticised-for-failing-to-pay-300m-in-promised-climate-funds-ahead-of-cop27>.

¹² Bos, Julie, et al. "Are Countries Providing Enough to the \$100 Billion Climate Finance Goal?" World Resources Institute, 7 October 2021, <https://www.wri.org/insights/developed-countries-contributions-climate-finance-goal>.

¹³ Aljazeera News. "US, China to work 'intensively' on climate issues in weeks ahead." *Al Jazeera*, 19 July 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/7/19/us-china-to-work-intensively-on-climate-issues-in-weeks-ahead>.

developing nations achieve the aims of the UNFCCC and CoP 28. The EU pledged to provide its share of the Paris 2015 commitment of USD 100 billion every year in climate adjustment finance.¹⁴



French President Emmanuel Macron at CoP 28, demanding that wealthy countries 'Put an end to coal' by 2030. Photo: AFP.

But the EU expects recipients of assistance to accept that some of its aid must be spent on energy and climate adjustment projects originating within the EU and partially under EU control. The EU expects recipients to accept related EU foreign policy and development goals, including guarantees for democratic elections, protection of human rights, and progress toward green development.

The EU faces difficulty finding the money developing countries expect. Russia's invasion

of Ukraine, on 24 February 2022, dramatically altered European priorities for all forms of foreign aid, with much of their money now going to Ukraine for military assistance. Whether the EU can be relied on for additional climate aid to developing countries is not clear.

The Non-Alignment Movement (NAM) is a bloc of 120 developing countries that are not aligned with any major power bloc. The NAM has a long history of advocating for the interests of developing countries in climate negotiations. The NAM highlights the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and advocates for increased climate finance. The NAM's position on developing nations and the aims of CoP 28 stresses the interests of the majority of developing countries. The NAM's position will be highly influential in negotiations at CoP 28.

Developing countries are calling for developed countries to take more ambitious action to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.¹⁵ They argue that developed countries have historic responsibility for climate change, and they should do more to address it.

NAM Member States demand that wealthy developed countries, and especially former imperialist countries who previously ruled most NAM members, to provide more financial assistance and to transfer technology and expertise to developing countries.¹⁶ They demand that wealthy industrial countries fulfil their Paris in 2015 pledge to provide USD 100 billion annually to help developing countries adjust. They also expect the assistance to be in

¹⁴ European Commission. "International climate finance." Language selection | Climate Action, https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/international-action-climate-change/international-climate-finance_en

¹⁵ Tongia, Rahul. "It is unfair to push poor countries to reach zero carbon emissions too early | Brookings." Brookings Institution, 26 October 2022, [https://www.brookings.edu/articles/it-is-](https://www.brookings.edu/articles/it-is-unfair-to-push-poor-countries-to-reach-zero-carbon-emissions-too-early/)

[unfair-to-push-poor-countries-to-reach-zero-carbon-emissions-too-early/](https://www.brookings.edu/articles/it-is-unfair-to-push-poor-countries-to-reach-zero-carbon-emissions-too-early/)

¹⁶ Acosta, Nelson. "Developing countries double down on technology at Havana summit." Reuters, 16 September 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/developing-countries-double-down-technology-havana-summit-2023-09-16/>.

grants, not loans, and to come without strings on how it is to be used. NAM countries insist on complete control over any assistance. But donor governments, who report to their own electorates, are unlikely to yield completely on that.

Russian Federation: Before the war with Ukraine, Russia emphasized *voluntary* climate commitments and opposed *legally binding* obligations that could hinder Russia's oil and natural gas exports and its own economic development. Fear of losing freedom to export oil and gas is a major reason Russia has blocked CoP meetings. Russia has no fear of going alone, against international agreement. When its unique interests are at stake, Russia will refuse to act with international community, preventing consensus decisions on CoP 28 goals.¹⁷



America is back, personified by President Joe Biden.

The United States currently is supportive of efforts by developing nations to achieve the aims of CoP 28. The United States is not a reliable actor on climate issues. Under President Trump, the US withdrew completely from the 2015 Paris Convention and abandoned its 2-degree Celsius

target. But since Joe Biden became President in 2021, the US re-engaged climate diplomacy, focusing on collaboration with both developed and developing nations after the Trump administration. The United States under President Biden is supportive of the Paris Treaty once again, and actively participates in the CoP process. However, the US has not yet committed to a specific amount of climate finance.¹⁸

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) also play an important role in the global climate negotiations, including CoP 28. They represent a wide range of interests, including environmental groups, indigenous peoples' groups, labor unions, and youth groups. NGOs participate in the negotiations by observing the proceedings, providing input to government delegations, and organizing side events.



Opening ceremony in November 2022 for CoP 27, where host country Egypt took over the CoP Presidency from United Kingdom. In 2023 Egypt formally handed host responsibility over to the United Arab Emirates. *Source*; Public Information Bureau, Government of India.

¹⁷ Abnett, Kate, and Riham Alkousaa. "Russia aims to block EU from hosting COP29 climate summit, emails show." Reuters, 7 June 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/business/environment/russia-aims-block-eu-hosting-cop29-climate-summit-emails-show-2023-06-07/>.

¹⁸ Thwaites, Joe, et al. "US International Climate Finance Fails Again to Meet Moment." NRDC, 21 December 2022, <https://www.nrdc.org/bio/joe-thwaites/us-international-climate-finance-fails-again-meet-moment>.



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Some of the NGOs which are active for Climate Change are independent global organizations with hundreds of regional chapters such as *Climate Reality*.¹⁹ and *Earthjustice*.²⁰ Other prominent NGOs active on these issues are *Greenpeace*,²¹ the *World Wildlife Fund (WWF)*,²² and *350.org*.²³ Highly active youth groups include *Fridays for Future*,²⁴ *Global Youth Climate Network*,²⁵ and *YOUNGO* (the official youth constituency of the UNFCCC).²⁶

countries want the greatest possible control themselves, free of foreign oversight.

- Finally, there is a need to build capacity in developing countries to implement climate change projects. This includes developing the necessary skills and expertise, infrastructure facilities, and creating an enabling environment—domestic political support—for investment in low-carbon technologies.

Key Challenges

- One of the key challenges in supporting developing nations to achieve the aims of CoP 28 is mobilizing the necessary financial resources. Developed countries pledged USD 100 billion in climate finance to developing countries each year, but this goal has not yet been met. Nor have the agreed how the funding will be provided: outright grants, loans, specific projects, directly to recipient governments, or through their own aid agencies, or to business or NGOs?
- Another challenge is ensuring that climate finance is used effectively. There is a need to ensure that climate finance is used to support projects that are aligned with the aims of CoP 28 and that are sustainable in the long term. Donors demand rigorous oversight and checks to prevent fraud, misuse and inefficiency. Recipient

Some possible proposals for action

Below are some possible proposals for action. Delegations at ODUMUNC are not limited to these. The sovereign Member States of the UN are free to pursue any path their own governments decide upon. Whether they can find agreement at CoP 28 is another matter.

The United Nations is all about the politics of the possible. UN delegates represent official national policy and protect the interest of their governments. Delegates cannot transform their own governments, apply foreign standards, or act on their personal ideals. They are the countries they represent.

The proposals that follow provide a range of actions delegations at CoP 28 should consider for promoting the needs of developing countries.

¹⁹ The Climate Reality Project, <https://www.climateRealityproject.org/>.

²⁰ Earthjustice. Earthjustice: Because the earth needs a good lawyer, <https://earthjustice.org/>.

²¹ GreenPeace. Donate to Greenpeace, <https://secure.greenpeaceusa.org/>.

²² WWF. World Wildlife Fund: WWF - Endangered Species Conservation, <https://www.worldwildlife.org/>.

²³ 350.org. 350.org, <https://350.org/>.

²⁴ Fridays for Future. Fridays For Future is an international climate movement active in most countries and our website offers information on who we are and what you can do., <https://fridaysforfuture.org/>.

²⁵ Global Youth Climate Network. "GYCN - Y2Y Community." Y2Y Community, <https://y2ycommunity.org/gycn/>.

²⁶ YOUNGO. YOUNGO: Home, <https://youngoclimate.org/>.



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- **Expand climate finance mechanisms**, including innovative funding sources and debt relief for developing nations. Existing systems of international development assistance are not capable of providing the money developing countries need to go green. The only way to find USD 100. Billion annually among traditional donor countries is to increase aid giving, which would mean higher taxes or switching spending from other existing programs. Neither of those possibilities is realistic. Instead, new sources of funding must be found.

Low interest loans from the World Bank are a possibility, but that would require loan guarantees from donor governments to enable the World Bank to extend credit. Such a scheme could be self-financing. Low interest loans, with long pay-off schedules of fifty years or even one-hundred years, might satisfy developing country needs. They also would ensure oversight by donor governments and the World Bank, popular preconditions for countries who provide the money.

Another alternative is attracting new donors. China has massive cash reserves, but is cautious about using them for foreign aid. OPEC oil exporters also have massive cash reserves and could finance a new wave of assistance for green development and economic conversion. But OPEC countries also are cautious about making long-term commitments, since they don't control oil prices and are not certain to have excess revenue. A donor formula that permits them annual options might make them more generous.

- **Enhancing technology transfer** and capacity-building efforts to enable clean energy transitions in developing countries.

For example, developing countries rely on oil, gas and coal for almost all their electricity and industry. But they cannot afford technologies required to *decarbonize* (scrub and store) their fossil fuel emissions. The technologies required to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions are costly. Requiring them would greatly impede—maybe stop outright—the economic development of many developing countries. Making those technologies affordable is major problem for CoP 28, probably requiring a dedicated fund and new sources of finance.

Switching to electric vehicles is a similar problem. These countries have little or none of the infrastructure required to switch from gasoline and diesel to electrically powered vehicles. Their electrical generation capability is inadequate even to meet existing consumer needs, with power often available only for a few hours a day. Sales and maintenance infrastructure for electric vehicles often do not exist, let alone charging stations. Making those technologies affordable and readily available is a major problem for CoP 28, probably requiring a dedicated fund and new sources of finance. The World Bank, a new dedicated financial institution, or even manufacturers might be involved.

Easier access to *nuclear energy generation technology* is increasingly appealing. Currently, many developing countries are blocked by barriers to nuclear energy created by the 1968 *Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty* (the NPT), created to stop the spread of nuclear weapons. Many supplier governments are sensitive to public fear of nuclear energy, unwilling to expand nuclear energy for civilian purposes, although it has less impact of global warming than fossil fuel burning. Many developing countries would welcome easier and cheaper transfer of nuclear technology as a solution to some of



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their problems of balancing economic growth with global climate needs.

- **Relax Paris Convention targets** for specific countries or groups. Developing countries accepted the Paris goals (above all, the 1.5° Celsius goal) for international achievement. But they themselves tend to feel doubly punished by these goals. They lack the money or infrastructure to readily achieve these goals in a meaningful timeframe, and doing so would cripple their economic development and impoverish their peoples. While they agree the international community must make rapid progress toward

these goals, many developing countries want exceptions for themselves.

Developing countries often say they need to emphasize their own industrial development above all. China, India and Indonesia, for example, announced they will expand reliance on coal burning for electricity generation, regardless of demands from others to stop using this most polluting fuel. Some oil exporters, led by Russia and CoP 28 host United Arab Emirates, refuse to accept the goal of ending all fossil fuel burning. Many developing countries want exceptions for themselves.



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