

Climate summit talks begin with breakthrough on loss and damage from extreme weather

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U.N. climate talks began in Egypt with a breakthrough agreement to discuss who pays for damages caused by increasingly extreme weather events—an issue that had exposed splits between rich and poor nations.

The deal, reported in advance by Bloomberg, will allow diplomats to officially debate the matter of so-called "loss and damage" for the first time during the two week conference in the Egyptian resort of Sharm el-Sheikh.

Egypt's Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry, who took up his position as COP27 president Sunday, said the breakthrough was reached after 48 hours of intense talks. Delegates would aim to reach a conclusive decision on loss and damage "no later than 2024."

"This creates for the first time an institutionally stable space on the formal agenda of the COP and the Paris Agreement to discuss the pressing issue of funding arrangements needed to deal with existing gaps in responding to loss and damage," he said.

"Inclusion of this agenda reflects a sense of solidarity and empathy with the suffering of the victims of climate-induced disasters."

A year of record heat, drought and floods has added urgency to this year's climate talks. With the meeting taking place in African country that's suffering some of the worst effects of a warming planet, the issue of loss and damage is expected to be a key focus of proceedings.

Developing countries and small island states, which contributed a tiny amount to historical emissions of planet-warming gases but have been battered by the impact, stepped up in recent weeks a push for the issue to at least be discussed.

The demand has been on the table since Conference of Parties, or COP, meetings started in the early 1990s.

However, industrialized nations that have prospered for two centuries at the expense of the planet had repeatedly blocked efforts to add it to the

agenda, fearing it would open up demands for billions of dollars in compensation to poor nations.

Recent climate disasters, such as the floods in Pakistan, have given new impetus to their push.

The smooth adoption of the agenda came on the back of sustained behind-the-scenes negotiations to reach a compromise and avoid a messy skirmish during the first hour of the conference, when the order of proceedings is agreed.

The opening session was delayed for more than an hour to accommodate final discussions over the wording and content of the agenda item.

An advance version of the official agenda showed an item titled: "Matters relating to funding arrangements responding to loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change, including a focus on addressing loss and damage."

Shoukry said a compromise had been reached to ground the discussion in "cooperation and facilitation" and not in "liability or compensation."

While an agreement on an agenda item is a diplomatic success, countries will now have to work out how best to measure loss and damage and how much money will be put on the table by the wealthiest.

Those from developing nations have been burned before. A plan announced in 2009 to provide an annual \$100 billion of mitigation and adaptation finance has never been met.

The Alliance of Small Island States welcomed the measure but said the issue should have been discussed long ago; instead [rich countries](#) continued to burn fossil fuels that threaten the lives and homes of others.

"We do not want to be treated as though you are doing us a favor by adding an agenda item or creating a voluntary fund," it said in a statement. This agenda item "reflects the floor of what is acceptable; it is our bare minimum."

Egypt already suffers suffocating heat. The flow of the Nile is dwindling and rising sea levels are damaging some of its most fertile farmland.

As Egypt formally took the presidency at the opening session on Sunday, one official after another called for the global gathering to move from a forum of talks, to one of implementation, warning that the window for meaningful action was closing.

"A reasonable sum is more than zero," Saleemul Huq, a professor at the Independent University in Bangladesh, said in an interview. "Right they're offering zero, which is absolutely unacceptable."

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