

Clock is ticking for negotiators at climate conference in Egypt

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It's crunch time for diplomats at the United Nations-sponsored COP27 climate conference in Egypt, with dwindling days left to resolve the

thorny issue of how poor countries should be compensated for the harm inflicted by global warming they didn't cause.

After a slow start to negotiations, Egypt's COP27 presidency outlined an ambitious schedule for Week 2, with the goal of getting all countries to agree by Friday on a "cover text"—a political statement that lays out the goals and commitments agreed in Sharm el-Sheikh.

"There is still a lot of work ahead of us if we are to achieve meaningful and tangible outcomes of which we can be proud; we must now shift gears," COP27 President and Egypt's Foreign Affairs Minister Sameh Shoukry said during an address to delegates Monday. "Time is not on our side and the world is watching—let us come together and deliver now."

Despite Shoukry's pleas, a range of key issues remain deadlocked, several negotiators and observers warned. The most contentious issue on the table is loss and damage, or how developed nations should compensate developing countries for the climate-fueled extreme weather events they suffer despite not significantly contributing to [greenhouse gas emissions](#).

The topic is on the Conference of Parties' official agenda for the first time at COP27 after a yearslong fight to include it, which means ministers can now debate and make decisions about the issue.

Developing countries want to set up a new "facility" or program to provide technical assistance and funding to address climate-related losses and damages, with a clear road map toward that goal established at the end of this meeting.

"There's a longer term approach looking at setting up a financing facility, but I think from the perspective of the African Group of Negotiators we do need to see immediate support for loss and damage on the continent," said South Africa's Environment Minister Barbara Creecy.

Further stressing the urgency of the matter, some nations are calling for an "intermediary fund" to help countries recently hit by climate disasters, according to Matthew Samuda, Jamaica's minister without portfolio in the Ministry of Economic Growth.

While some technical issues were resolved during the first week, all of the biggest political matters, including loss and damage, the rules to govern international carbon markets and a program to scale up efforts to reduce emissions, remain open, said Alden Meyer, a COP veteran and senior associate with research group E3G.

"All of the crunch issues have gotten logjammed," Meyer said. "You're going into the second with most of the big negotiating issues unresolved."

With just five days left until the end of the conference, the risk is that talks become entangled around the most controversial issues, preventing negotiators from reaching an agreement by Friday and delaying the process by a full year, until COP28.

At the same time, the outcome of the talks in the Egyptian beach resort of Sharm el-Sheikh depends on another seaside gathering—the summit of the Group of 20 nations taking place roughly 6,000 miles away in Bali, Indonesia. What the G-20 says on climate change and fossil fuels in their own final communique will ripple to Sharm el-Sheikh.

"If those discussions go well and there's positive momentum coming into Bali, that will definitely help ministers here get some deals done at the end of the week," Meyer said. "On the other hand, if there's gridlock and backsliding in Bali, it will make it very difficult for ministers to compromise here because their bosses couldn't agree in Bali."

Still, getting delegates to fully agree to a brand new facility or loss and

damage program at this COP will be challenging. U.S. officials and other developed nations say there are already existing funding mechanisms, including the Adaptation Fund established in 2001, the Green Climate Fund established in 2010 or the Global Shield. The last one is a new G7 initiative coordinated by Germany to steer insurance and disaster funding to countries responding to climate-exacerbated droughts, floods and storms.

"I don't think anybody has fully defined what a facility is or what shape it might take, and there are all kinds of views about what that might be," U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry said Saturday. "It's a well-known fact that the United States and many other countries will not establish some sort of legal structure that is tied to compensation or liability."

Specific promises of funding made during past COPs have fallen short, including a pledge made in 2009 to deliver \$100 billion a year of climate funding by 2020. This time, countries are not asking for money to be provided by the end of the summit, but they do want a political agreement to establish a new facility, said Rachel Cleetus, policy director with the Climate and Energy program at non-for-profit Union of Concerned Scientists. "Pointing to existing institutions as a path forward is a diversionary tactic," Cleetus said.

Some sort of compromise on loss and damage likely will be reached by the end of this week, said Richie Merzian, director of the climate and energy program at the Australian Institute and former lead negotiator on loss and damage issues for the country. But because cover documents need to be agreed on by all countries, the final wording will likely reflect the lowest common denominator and leave many unsatisfied, he said.

"G-20 industrialized countries are not going to tip money into a compensation fund that exposes them to liability for their emissions and

for developing nations, that's a very hard pill to swallow," he said.

"Developing countries have nothing to leverage at this COP, so loss and damage might end up as a political tool to push for more mitigation and adaptation finance."

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