

COP27: Five things to expect from this year's UN climate summit

November 7 2022, by Jen Allan



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The world's leaders are gathering for another global climate meeting, this time in [Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt](#). Expect a bustle of promises and pacts from countries and companies. Expect pressure on states to support people who are most and permanently affected by climate change. Don't expect much more, but equally don't lay the blame solely on the United

Nations.

States are not doing what they've promised, according to a slate of recent reports. Countries' promises and early actions show "[no credible pathway](#)" to keeping the world below 1.5°C. Financial promises [remain unkept](#).

This meeting is an "in between" COP, focused on implementing policies that were agreed at the meetings in Glasgow (2021) and Paris (2015). That means there need to be clear signals that states are following up on past promises and decisions.

Overall, there will be a lot of "dialogs" and "work programs" but there really is no area where a major outcome is expected—if you're hoping for a Paris-style "Sharm El-Sheikh agreement" then you will be disappointed.

Nonetheless, lots of crucial discussions will take place over the next two weeks. Here are five key issues to look out for. In each case, failure to follow up on previous promises will likely haunt negotiations.

1. Contentious new agenda items

The first decision of the conference will be to adopt the agendas by consensus. These documents set out what issues will be discussed. The agendas can tell us a lot about the [traditional priorities](#) of the [climate change](#) negotiations, particularly that [mitigation and national reporting](#) issues dominate.

There are four proposals for new agenda items at COP27 and at least three are contentious. At the outset—and, hopefully, before the negotiations formally begin—the presidency team will look to broker a deal to help get the agenda through.

Two of the new items relate to [finance](#). One seeks negotiations on finance for loss and damage(more on that below). The other will try to align global financial flows to sustainable development pathways. This is very needed, but countries have wildly different views on how to go about pushing global financial assets toward low-carbon, climate-resilient investments.

A third agenda proposal concerns the "[special circumstances of Africa](#)." In 2015, there was a push to have the climate vulnerability of the continent recognized in the Paris agreement. This didn't happen and ever since has been proposed and deferred. But this year, the COP is in Africa.

2. Vulnerable countries will demand finance for 'loss and damage'



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Loss and damage refers to the permanent and negative impacts of climate change. Think of droughts and lost crops, super typhoons and lost lives. It's the result of high emissions that cause problems beyond what can be adapted to.

How to provide finance for these losses is extremely contentious. Developed countries previously [blocked a proposal](#) to include this item on the agenda. These historic major emitters worry about liability and compensation. Vulnerable developing countries point to the need to plan for people to relocate and rebuild when disasters strike. For them, the [Glasgow dialogue](#) to explore finance options on loss and damage is not enough.

3. Will there be stronger pledges?

A key promise of Glasgow was to "keep 1.5 alive." It didn't succeed. The pledges put forward before Glasgow put us on track for a nearly 3°C warmer world. In the Glasgow climate pact, countries agreed to go home, revisit their pledges and bring something better to COP27. But to date, only 24 countries have put forward updated NDCs (nationally determined contributions—each country's pledge to reduce emissions). According to the [UN Synthesis Report](#) on these pledges, the dial has barely flinched since Glasgow.

A work program on how to scale up climate ambition before 2030 will continue in Egypt. It got off to a [contentious start](#) and so far, seems stalled.

4. Progress on climate finance

In Glasgow, developed countries had to admit they failed to reach their ten-year-old promise to provide [US\\$100 billion \(£88 billion\) per year of climate finance](#). This can be spent on anything from new solar farms to stronger sea walls or retraining for people whose livelihoods are no longer viable. One year on, developed countries still haven't met this goal. It's a huge blow to trust among countries.

Glasgow launched a work program to design a new collective finance goal for 2025. These talks will continue at COP27 and will show the wide gulf in how countries view the quantity and quality of climate finance provided. Again, it's likely there won't be a big-bang outcome here but hopefully some progress.

5. Building resilience among the most vulnerable

Adaptation is often ignored compared with mitigation, but building resilience is an urgent need. There is a "global goal for adaptation" in the Paris agreement, and now a [two-year dialogue](#) on how to make that goal usable for [countries](#) as a guiding star to reduce their climate vulnerability. This will also help capture global progress on adaptation. The Egyptian COP presidency has cited adaptation as a priority, so perhaps there is room for a mid-dialogue outcome to raise the profile of adaptation.

Overall, COP27 is a mismatch of ambitions. While we need [urgent action](#) from states, the institutional machinery will keep ticking along. Both are important and need to reinforce one another. To advance these discussions, states need to implement climate policies at home, then showcase meaningful actions when they gather again for COP28 in Dubai in a year's time.

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