

1.5C goal on the line as countries gear up for key climate talks

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Heatwaves have scorched the planet in 2023.

Facing record-shattering temperatures and a geopolitical tinderbox, countries are scrambling to lay the groundwork for crucial UN climate talks next month tasked with salvaging global warming goals laid out in

the landmark Paris deal.

Ministers meet next week in the United Arab Emirates to grapple with flashpoint issues, including the future of fossil fuels and financial solidarity between rich polluters and nations most vulnerable to the devastating impacts of [climate](#) change.

World leaders meeting in Dubai for the COP28 summit between November 30 and December 12 will also have to respond to a damning progress report on the world's commitments under the Paris Agreement.

The 2015 deal aims to limit [global warming](#) to well below two degrees Celsius since the pre-industrial era and preferably a safer 1.5C.

The results are already in on that "global stocktake": the world is far off track.

"The challenge we face is immense," incoming COP28 president Sultan Al Jaber acknowledged in October.

Keeping the Paris goals in reach needs an enormous collective effort to slash [greenhouse gas emissions](#) this decade.

But that may be even more challenging in a world roiled by geopolitical storms, with conflict between Israel and Hamas adding to tensions over Russia's invasion of Ukraine, United States-China rivalry and a mounting debt crisis.

This year has seen a catalogue of climate extremes and the highest global temperatures in human history, stoked by the El Niño weather phenomenon that is warming temperatures.

That may serve to focus minds, making clear that the dangerous changes

to Earth's fragile life support systems are already in motion.

The question is whether countries perceive [climate change](#) as a "collective threat", Alden Meyer of think tank E3G told AFP.



Greta Thunberg is arrested in London during a demonstration organized by Fossil Free London and Greenpeace.

Fossil fight

The climate talks, which will kick off with a two-day world leaders summit, are expected to be the biggest ever, with predictions of 80,000 attendees.

Observers have raised concerns that eye-catching initiatives on the sidelines of the meeting could obscure the main negotiations, which this year should reflect the [poor performance](#) on the Paris goals.

"The risk is that we will be sold a whole raft of declarations and side coalitions," said Lola Vallejo, of the Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations.

The focus should instead be on "an ambitious agreement on the stocktake of the Paris Agreement, including fossil fuels and loss and damage", she said.

The UAE has proposed targets to triple global renewable energy capacity, double the annual rate of energy efficiency improvements by 2030 and called for massive scaling up of climate finance.

Rich polluters are under pressure to finally meet their promise to provide \$100 billion in funding by 2020 for poorer nations to prepare for climate extremes and fund the energy transition.

An agreement to help vulnerable countries cope with climate "loss and damage" is also a key point of contention.

The flagship achievement of last year's COP27 in Egypt, it was mired in disagreement during recent talks to flesh out the details—like who pays, how much and the fund structure.

But the biggest tussle is likely to be over weaning the world off coal, oil and gas—the main drivers of global warming.

Jaber, who heads the UAE state-owned oil firm ADNOC, has said he believes the phasing down of [fossil fuels](#) is "inevitable", without specifying when.

ADNOC last year announced plans to invest \$150 billion in oil and gas expansion over five years.



Exceeding 1.5C risks dangerous tipping points in the climate system.

Meyer said technology to capture emissions at source or remove them from the atmosphere touted by the UAE and others are not anywhere near at a scale to make a significant contribution in the years to 2030.

"You can have a pathway to 1.5C or you can expand oil and gas production. You can't have both," he told AFP.

"The UAE is trying to pretend it doesn't have to choose."

'Jumpy ride'

There are some positives.

The International Energy Agency has said world fossil fuel demand is forecast to peak this decade due to the "spectacular" growth of cleaner energy technologies and [electric cars](#), helped by ambitious policies in China, the United States and Europe among others.

But that is not enough.

On our current trajectory the world will still warm by far more than 2C.

With nearly 1.2C of warming so far, scientists warn some impacts are hitting harder and faster than expected.

Climate change should be viewed as an "existential threat", according to a recent study by prominent researchers.

Co-author Johan Rockstrom, director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, said he now expects the world to blow past the 1.5C threshold, before attempting to drag temperatures back down again by 2100.

"That will be a very jumpy ride, a real gauntlet for humanity," he told AFP.

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