

COP28 assessment: Impact will depend on actual implementation

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Through the Desert Towards Fresh Water - or Just a Fata Morgana?



An assessment of COP28 in Dubai

Cover COP28 assessment "Through the Desert Towards Fresh Water – or Just a Fata Morgana?" Credit: Wuppertal Institut

About a day later than planned, the 28th Conference of the Parties (COP28) to the United Nations Framework on Climate Change

(UNFCCC) closed on 13 December 2023. After much contestation, the conference adopted a decision that effectively signals the beginning of the end for fossil fuels.

The conference also successfully operationalized a new fund to support developing countries in dealing with loss and damage resulting from [climate change](#). However, the impact will depend on the actual implementation of these decisions, as the researchers from the Wuppertal Institute highlight in their initial assessment.

COP28 called on countries to transition away from fossil fuels so as to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050, as well as to triple the world's renewable energy capacity and to double the average annual rate of energy efficiency improvements by 2030. While the wording is weaker than many had hoped, the decision based on the consensus of around 200 countries nonetheless sends a clear signal that the use of fossil fuels needs to end.

"A key function of the UN climate process is to set standards for a climate protection-oriented behavior," Wolfgang Obergassel, Co-Head of the Global Climate Governance Research Unit at the Wuppertal Institute, explains. "In this respect, especially the last three COPs have made [substantial progress](#)."

After spending three decades discussing mitigation mainly in abstract terms of emissions accounting, the UNFCCC process is now finally focusing on how [emission reductions](#) can actually be achieved.

With its call to transition away from fossil fuels, COP28 contributes to the ongoing development of a new norm—namely that the use of [fossil fuels](#) can no longer be tolerated. With this outcome, COP28 provides additional legitimation to all [political actors](#) to accelerate efforts, and it supplies pro-climate constituents with ammunition to exert pressure on

governments and companies accordingly.

Another major outcome is the operationalization of the fund to support developing countries in dealing with loss and damage caused by climate change. "The Global South fought for decades to have this issue addressed, and now the fund is here," Christiane Beuermann, vice-director of the Energy, Transport and Climate Policy Research Division, explains. But here, too, the impact will depend on the actual implementation: the fund's initial capitalization can only be the starting point.

More generally, however, developed countries blocked all calls for enhancing financial support, even though many developing countries will not be able to achieve a fossil fuel phase-out without substantial financial and technological assistance. Therefore, COP29 needs to underpin the "UAE consensus" with the mobilization of adequate resources for the global energy transition.

More information: COP28 assessment: Through the Desert Towards Fresh Water—or Just a Fata Morgana? wupperinst.org/fa/redaktion/dokumentation/2023-12-cop28-impact-actual.html

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