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## Regional Programme Energy Security and Climate Change in Sub-Saharan Africa



Figure 1: Credit: COP28 / Mahmoud Khaled

# COP28 Outcomes: Have African Interests and Priorities been addressed?

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The recently concluded 28<sup>th</sup> session of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP28) attracted a record number of participants. Over 97,000 individuals were registered for on-site attendance in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE) and another 3000 were admitted for virtual participation.<sup>1</sup> While being viewed as the most important COP for accountability for climate action, COP28 provided delegates, on behalf of their parties, to deliberate and reach decisions on fast-tracking energy transition; climate finance; centering nature, people, lives, and livelihoods; and

<sup>1</sup> [https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/COP28-PLOP\\_1.pdf](https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/COP28-PLOP_1.pdf)

strengthening inclusivity. In large alignment with COP28 thematic areas, the African interests and priorities in this year's global climate summit were outlined by the African leaders in their common position submission including Global Stocktake (GST); strengthening adaptation actions; operationalization of the loss and damage fund; just energy transition; and a push for Africa to be granted the special needs and circumstances status.<sup>2</sup> For the African region, however, it is particularly important to establish the relevance of these outcomes and decisions including the extent to which they addressed the interests and priorities of the region. This paper is aimed at doing precisely this.

## The Global Stocktake

Concluding the first-ever GST – the process for assessing the world's collective progress in addressing the climate crisis as defined in the Paris Agreement – was a key expectation of COP28. While the September 2023 GST synthesis report acknowledged significant efforts by some countries, it strongly indicated that the current collective efforts are far off-track from its goal of holding global temperature rise to 1.5°C, thus the world may not avoid some of the most disastrous impacts of climate change. This has far-reaching implications for developing countries, particularly in Africa, which are already adversely impacted by climate change. The synthesis report emphasized the need for both state and non-state parties and actors to scale up efforts to avoid disastrous impacts and keep the 1.5°C target alive.<sup>3,4</sup> It follows those substantive and meaningful agreements and commitments that were urgently needed at the Dubai climate summit by the countries, companies, cities, financial institutions, and other stakeholders in efforts to scale up efforts and close the huge gap between current climate action and the 1.5°C target.

At COP28, Parties decisively needed to commit to rapidly and equitably shift away from fossil fuels and transit to affordable, reliable, and sustainable energy for all. Evidence indicates that collectively, the world needs to abate GHG emissions by 43% below 2019 levels by 2030 to avoid some of the disastrous effects of climate change. Unfortunately, the current efforts may realize only up to 8%.<sup>5</sup> Further, country commitments and COP28 outcomes needed to signal efforts that will, at minimum, triple renewable energy capacities by 2030 from their current levels, enhance investments in renewable energy systems, and at least double energy efficiency: these being some of the priority actions aligned with the global ambition to limit warming to 1.5°C. Notably, nearly 200 Parties that participated in the Dubai climate talks had their respective country positions on the first GST, with an overarching aim of keeping the global temperature limit of 1.5°C within reach. In this relation, COP28 ended with an agreement signaling the *"beginning of the end" of the fossil fuel era by laying the ground for a swift, just, and equitable transition, underpinned by deep emissions cuts and scaled-up finance*. As a next step, governments, business leaders, and other non-state actors must move swiftly to unpack the agreements and pledges into quick action.

The highly anticipated call to *'phase out'* fossil fuels was highly contested in the negotiations with UAE Consensus calling for a *'transitioning away ... in a just, orderly, and equitable manner'* from fossil fuels<sup>6</sup>; tripling of renewable energy and doubling of the global average annual rate of energy efficiency improvements by 2030; accelerating and substantially reducing non-carbon-dioxide emissions globally by 2030; accelerating reduction of emissions from

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/december-2023/africa%E2%80%99s-top-six-priorities-cop28>

<sup>3</sup> [https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma2023\\_L17\\_adv.pdf](https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma2023_L17_adv.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/GST\\_2.pdf](https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/GST_2.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.wri.org/un-climate-change-conference-resource-hub/key-issues-watch-cop28>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.carbonbrief.org/cop28-key-outcomes-agreed-at-the-un-climate-talks-in-dubai/>

the transport sector and; phasing out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies.<sup>7</sup> As Africa possesses a great renewable energy capacity potential, these decisions present great opportunities in the context of the region's ambitions to realize industrialization.<sup>8</sup> However, the call to phase out unabated coal and move away from fossil fuels might be challenging in those countries where interests lie within the capitalization on fossil fuels, currently readily available. In this context, it needs to be remembered that a just transition and industrialization remain important priorities for Africa.<sup>9</sup> Additional funding for green energy projects that has been granted to Mauritania, Kenya and Nigeria for example will help to support climate positive growth.<sup>10,11,12</sup> In addition to contributing to a transition away from fossil fuels, it will promote the call to accelerate 'zero- and low-emissions technology, particularly in the hard-to-abate sectors, and low-carbon hydrogen production'.<sup>13</sup>

## Measurable Adaptation Targets

While it is appreciable that Parties at COP28 reached an agreement on a framework for the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) that establishes global time-bound targets for specific themes and sectors and for the adaptation policy process, the targets remain unquantified. With respect to support and financing, the framework did not make any indication of the provision of financial support to developing countries but only commented on the widening adaptation finance gap. Importantly, the established two-year work program provides an opportunity to frame the indicators for measuring and assessing progress toward the overarching targets of GGA. As adaptation is a priority for Africa, there are now new opportunities to push for the formulation of a clear roadmap and mechanisms for scaling up adaptation finance, in efforts to meet the ambition of doubled adaptation finance by 2025.<sup>14</sup> In the decision adopted by COP28, the framework called for accelerated efforts and action at scale in achievement of set targets by 2030 which involve building and enhancing resilience, and reducing the effects of climate change to the water, food and agricultural productivity, health, ecosystems and biodiversity, infrastructure and human settlements, poverty and livelihoods, and cultural heritage thematic sectors.<sup>15</sup> These sectors being 'context-specific', no specific sub-goals were provided, as such, Parties are to develop the goals in their respective contexts, which would be incumbent to the country's ambition. The omission of the UNFCCC principle of 'Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities' (CBDR-RC) in the GGA text is worth noting. The equity that is advocated for in the Paris Agreement is loosely stated, which makes the work of adaptation seem more like a burden for the developing countries. Most of the African Nations, being part of the G77+China, aimed for more explicit language on adaptation finance. Given the

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<sup>7</sup> See footnote 2 above.

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.afdb.org/en/news-and-events/press-releases/africa-must-optimise-all-it-has-achieve-universal-energy-access-says-african-development-bank-head-64099#:~:text=Africa%20has%20an%20almost%20unlimited,15%20GW\)%2C%20he%20said.](https://www.afdb.org/en/news-and-events/press-releases/africa-must-optimise-all-it-has-achieve-universal-energy-access-says-african-development-bank-head-64099#:~:text=Africa%20has%20an%20almost%20unlimited,15%20GW)%2C%20he%20said.)

<sup>9</sup> <https://mo.ibrahim.foundation/sites/default/files/2022-11/growth-without-emissions.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> <https://african.business/2023/12/long-reads/cop28-provides-a-mixed-picture-for-africa>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-12-02/kenya-signs-deals-worth-4-48-billion-to-develop-green-projects>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/climate-energy/nigeria-germany-sign-500-mln-renewable-energy-gas-deal-2023-11-21/>

<sup>13</sup> See footnote 4 above.

<sup>14</sup>

[https://unfccc.int/files/documentation/submissions\\_from\\_parties/adp/application/pdf/adp\\_african\\_group\\_workstream\\_1\\_adaptation\\_20131008.pdf](https://unfccc.int/files/documentation/submissions_from_parties/adp/application/pdf/adp_african_group_workstream_1_adaptation_20131008.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> See footnote 5 above.

growing gap in adaptation finance, between the adaptation finance needs of developing nations estimated at USD 215 – 387 billion annually up to 2030 compared to USD 89.6 billion provided and mobilized in 2021, developing nations, including African Nations, aimed for clearly stated finance targets.<sup>16</sup>

Additionally, the GGA has called for ‘continuous and enhanced support’ for developing countries, with the developed countries expected to ‘continue to take the lead’ in mobilizing climate finance as per the Paris Agreement Article 9.1. This statement allows for the mobilization of funds from the private sector which would mean financing sought from local, national, or transnational financing including concessional funding. However, given the desire to generate revenue, which adaptation efforts may not, private investment may be limited especially for developing countries such as African Nations.<sup>17</sup>

Further, in acknowledging Africa’s distinct climate challenges and therefore ushering transformative and targeted and contextual commitments and climate action for the region, COP28 in its decision, CMA.5 paragraph 11, *Recognizes the specific needs and special circumstances of developing country Parties, especially those that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, as provided for in the Convention and the Paris Agreement*.<sup>18</sup> By highlighting Africa’s specific needs, COP28 opens the door for transformative and targeted climate actions, paving the way for contextual commitments that can mitigate the impact of climate change on a continent already bearing the brunt of environmental challenges. This recognition sets the stage for a more inclusive and effective approach to global climate efforts.

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.carbonbrief.org/cop28-key-outcomes-agreed-at-the-un-climate-talks-in-dubai/>

<sup>17</sup> [https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english\\_paris\\_agreement.pdf](https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> [https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma5\\_auv\\_4\\_gst.pdf](https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma5_auv_4_gst.pdf)

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