



COP27 REPORT

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Cop 27: What Was It All About?

Cop 27, held in Egypt in November 2022, was the latest in the long series of UN conferences (the Twenty Seventh Conference of the Parties to the United Nation Framework Convention on Climate Change) that seek to address the global challenge of climate change. The scale of the event was daunting with reports of over 30,000 participants. While smaller than Glasgow this is still a huge number with delegates from countries great and small, advisers, media, lobbyists, and campaigners. The agenda and associated reports were complex and the stakes could not have been higher. Unlike Cop 26 in Glasgow where many faith groups from Scotland were able to participate in fringe events community participation in Egypt was more limited. There was extensive media coverage, for example from the [BBC](#) and detailed daily reporting from [Carbon Brief](#).

Headline Outcomes

[Stop Climate Chaos Scotland](#) summarized the outcome in three bullet points.

- Loss and Damage was on the agenda for the first time, and positively, agreement was reached to establish a dedicated new fund for this
- Lack of firm commitment to immediately phase out all fossil fuels sets us on course for extremely dangerous levels of heating and will result in escalating Loss and Damage debt owed
- The Scottish Government has continued to show welcome leadership on Loss and Damage on the international stage, but must commit to urgent new action to slash Scotland's emissions and meet domestic climate targets by making polluters pay for the damage they are creating. Committing to a just phase out of oil and gas is essential to this.

Loss and Damage

Each Cop revisits the same themes: mitigation (what can be done to reduce greenhouse gas emissions for example by phasing out fossil fuels); adaptation (how to adapt to a changing climate); and loss and damage (how do rich countries support and finance poorer countries who contribute least to the problem but are hit hardest by climate change). Countries worst affected by climate change have lobbied for many years but richer countries have been reluctant to accept responsibility for loss and damage as it could commit them to enormous payments over years to come. The UN for example has since 2009 set a target for rich counties to pay \$100 billion a year to help poorer countries deal with adaptation – a target that has not yet been met.

The new commitment to provide support to deal with loss and damage is in addition to payments for adaptation. It was a significant achievement to persuade the Cop to agree to set up a new [Loss and Damage Fund](#). How it will be set up, how it will be financed and how it will be managed and monitored are challenges yet to be resolved.

Phasing Out Fossil Fuels

Progress on emissions reductions was disappointing with well reported blocking moves from oil producing countries and it was also reported that there were over [600 fossil fuel lobbyists](#) at the Cop – twice the number of representatives from indigenous communities. Oil and gas companies are benefitting from high energy prices and continue to invest tens of billions of dollars in new oil and gas fields while maintaining that they are concerned about climate change. The target of limited global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius remains on ‘life support’ according to [Alok Sharma](#), the retiring president of Cop 26. The viability of this target has always been open to question and on current trends it will not be achieved. Emissions from all sources (including fossil fuels and land use) are still running at over [40 billion tonnes](#) of carbon dioxide each year pointing to likely temperature rises of over two degrees Celsius. Even if current commitments made by national governments are put into effect temperatures are still likely to rise by 1.8 degrees Celsius.

Scottish Government

Nicola Sturgeon received [international coverage](#) by committing the Scottish Government to fund loss and damage projects, perhaps embarrassing the UK Government in the process. At home the Scottish Government has a good record on promoting wind power and in supporting the phased run down of North Sea oil and gas production. However most homes in Scotland remain dependent on gas central heating and progress in switching to low carbon alternatives (heat pumps or district heating schemes for example) is very slow. [Emissions from transport](#), now the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in Scotland, remain high due to increases in road traffic. Public transport services are less carbon intensive but remain poorly coordinated and sometimes unreliable. [Agriculture](#), another large source of greenhouse gas emissions, has been relatively slow to change with a continued dependence on livestock farming, the principal source of agricultural emissions in Scotland. For many farmers in upland areas there are few alternatives other than forestry, raising difficult challenges of adjustment.

Faith groups

Faith groups are represented at the Cop but are not part of the negotiating process and don’t always receive as much media coverage as other players. Faith leaders [called for action](#), but it is uncertain to what extent they were able to bring effective pressure to bear on the discussions.

Henrik Grape of the World Council of Churches expressed [disappointment](#) at the outcome pointing to the ‘massive gap between what science tells us we must do and the political will to do what we must’. While faith groups are marginal to the Cop negotiations, they are central to the process of change. Faith groups are communities that can promote and facilitate change among their own members according to their own traditions of caring for each other and caring for creation. This work does not take place at Cops, it is ongoing and builds the conditions where faith groups can encourage political leaders to have the confidence to do what must be done. The Cop is the annual display of progress (or the lack of it) but the real work goes on locally and nationally all year. In that work faith groups across Scotland have a challenging but essential role to play.

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