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COP 26: What are the highlights of the Glasgow Climate Pact



The Glasgow pact tackles a number of important issues as well as promises for aiding developing countries in making the switch to green and clean energy.

While developing countries are satisfied with the promises made, concerns were raised over how they will be implemented on the ground.

Egypt is set to host the 27th edition of COP in 2022.

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Our Views

The COP has been held in Berlin since March 1995, the seat of the secretariat is in Bonn, Germany unless one of the countries offers to host the session which is held annually. This year, COP 26 was held in Glasgow, Scotland from the 31st October to the 13th November 2021. COP stands for "Conference of the Parties," and the one in Glasgow was the 26th annual summit. This year marks the return of the COP, following a hiatus last year, as the last version was held in Madrid under the presidency of the Chilean government from December 2nd to December 13th 2019.

In an earlier edition of "Views on News", we alluded to the fact that COP 26 was going to be tough given that the G20 summit held from the 30th to the 31st of October did not reach a consensus pertaining to environmental issues that are affecting the planet.

This year's conference witnessed a consensual agreement (although not legally binding) on the global agenda on climate change for the next decade, by agreeing on the following points:

- Emissions: It was agreed countries would meet next year to pledge further cuts to emissions of carbon dioxide (CO₂). This is to try to keep temperature rises within the 1.5C required to prevent a "climate catastrophe".

- **Coal:** For the first time ever at a COP conference, there was an explicit plan to limit coal usage, which is responsible for 40% of annual CO₂ emissions. However, countries only agreed to a weaker commitment to "phase down" rather than "phase out" coal after a late intervention from China and India.
- **Fossil fuel subsidies:** Countries agreed to phase out subsidies that artificially lower the price of coal, oil, or natural gas. However, no firm dates have been set.
- **Methane:** A scheme to cut 30% of methane emissions by 2030 was agreed on by more than 100 countries.
- **Trees:** Leaders from more than 100 countries making up about 85% of the world's forests, promised to stop deforestation by 2030. This plan is also more efficiently funded .
- **Financing the Agreement:** Financial organizations controlling \$130tn agreed to back "clean" technology such as renewable energy, and direct finance away from fossil fuel-burning industries. This initiative is attempting to involve private companies in meeting net zero targets.
- **Developing countries:** The agreement pledged to significantly increase money to help poor countries cope with the effects of climate change and make the switch to clean energy. A trillion dollars a year fund from 2025 was suggested, albeit a previous pledge for richer countries to provide \$100bn a year by 2020 was missed.

- US-China agreement: The world's biggest CO₂ emitters, the US and China, pledged to cooperate more over the next decade in areas including methane emissions and the switch to clean energy.
- In light of the information mentioned above, the Glasgow Climate Pact strengthened adaptation, mitigation, and finance measures; and laid important building blocks for future action. This was very much in line with the Paris Agreement of 2015; however, what remains to be seen is how these points will be implemented and to what extent will countries commit to their requirements. In order for this conference to bear fruit, countries should commit to achieving the goals that they stated and not simply re-iterate past policies.
- Egypt is set to host the following COP in 2022 and it should be noted here that efforts must be made in order for Egypt to become a role model. At the moment, Egypt ranks low in the AQI (Air Quality Index), as it ranked the 56th most polluted out of a total of 98 countries in 2020¹. In 2019, the World-Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) stated that Egypt was the biggest contributor in terms of waste mismanagement of all Mediterranean countries². In terms of Carbon emissions Egypt ranks 27th world wide indicating that Egypt is among the top polluters³. The above indicators raise a question mark on the effectiveness of the environmental strategies implemented in Egypt, and the need to improve the environment in the country.

¹ <https://www.iqair.com/egypt>

² <https://egyptianstreets.com/2021/04/10/banlastic-leading-the-fight-against-egypts-plastic-problem/>

³ <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/s41207-020-00184-w.pdf>

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