

TIME FOR ACTION: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON COP-28 CLIMATE MEETING IN DUBAI

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Environmental Degradation - GHGs, Ozone Depletion and Climate Change

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November 29, 2023 12:20 am | Updated 02:56 am IST

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The next fortnight will see world leaders, industrialists, activists, and indigenous peoples converge at the [28th edition of the Conference of the Parties \(COP\)](#). This annual affair is an attempt to inch ahead on getting at least 190 countries, all members of the United Nations climate framework, to act on weaning their economies off fossil fuels. The current goal is to make good on a collective commitment made by countries in Paris, in 2015, to strive to hold global temperatures to no higher than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels by the end of the century and definitely below 2°C. Despite countries unanimously agreeing that humanity will collectively bear a huge price if these limits are breached, and nearly all major economies framing grand national plans to show how they are doing 'their bit', the science says that instead of being cut 8% annually, emissions have grown 1.2% from 2021-22. At this rate, the world will warm 2.5-3°C by the end of the century. There have already been 86 instances just this year of global temperatures breaching the dreaded 1.5°C threshold.

In the [nearly three decades of COP meetings](#), the major economies have agreed on three broad principles. Countries that rapidly industrialised in the 20th century have disproportionately emitted more carbon than their 'fair share' given the population sustained. Economic growth premised on fossil fuel consumption, while cheaper per unit than renewable energy, spells disaster. And developing countries and those with minimal industrial infrastructure today must be compensated for adopting costlier, but cleaner, non-fossil fuel sources for growing their economies. There is also a consensus that the countries already weathering climate disasters must be compensated and also paid to bolster their infrastructure. However, getting all countries to actually act on these principles is onerous given the mutual suspicion, the spirit of de-globalisation, and the fear of political reprisal that heads of governments face within their constituencies. These themes are expected to play out this year too. Two major issues are expected to take the stage: the conclusion of the [Global Stocktake](#) and the operationalisation of the [Loss and Damage Fund](#). However, there is no clarity on the size of the fund and the individual contributions by countries. While COPs, by nature, are self-congratulatory when all they deliver are agreements with elaborate caveats, COP28 must strive to live up to its declared goal of being a conclave that compels its signatories to take definitive action.

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