

Forum: Environmental Committee

Issue #EV-02: Follow-up on the Sharm el-Sheikh Climate Conference COP 27

Student Officer: Skye Atkins

Introduction

The Sharm el-Sheikh Climate Conference COP 27 is a major international conference to debate climate change and its consequences for the world. The conference provides a venue for many stakeholders to come together and share ideas, strategies, and solutions to the climate change problem. This report will present an in-depth summary of the issue, including important terms, historical context, latest events, significant parties participating, past action and potential solutions.

Definition of Key Terms

Climate change

The United Nations stated “Climate change refers to long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns. These shifts may be natural, such as through variations in the solar cycle. But since the 1800s, human activities have been the main driver of climate change, primarily due to burning fossil fuels like coal, oil and gas” (United Nations, para. 1).

Greenhouse gases

Gases that trap heat in the Earth's atmosphere, such as carbon dioxide, methane, and water vapour.

Mitigation

Actions taken to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases and slow down the rate of climate change.

Adaptation

Actions taken to cope with the impacts of climate change and to minimize their negative effects.

COP

Conference of the Parties. An annual meeting of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to discuss international efforts to address climate change.

Issue Overview

Climate change is a worldwide concern that impacts every country. If allowed uncontrolled, it has the potential to create significant economic, social, and environmental harm. The main cause of climate change is greenhouse gas emissions, which are mostly caused by the use of fossil fuels for energy.

The COP 27 Climate Conference in Sharm el-Sheikh aims to address this issue by debating options for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to the effects of climate change. The meeting addressed how to implement the Paris Agreement, which was signed in 2015 and aims to keep global warming far below 2 degrees Celsius.

Global climate targets

One of the key goals of the COP 27 conference was to evaluate and revise the Paris Agreement's global climate targets. The Paris Agreement intends to keep global warming to less than 2°C over pre-industrial levels, with efforts to keep it to 1.5°C. The conference examined progress toward these goals and indicated areas where additional action is required.

Carbon Reduction Strategies

Countries must implement efficient carbon-reduction programs in order to meet global climate targets. Countries were able to discuss their plans for decreasing greenhouse gas emissions and transitioning to a low-carbon economy at COP 27. The conference also looked at measures to help underdeveloped countries cut emissions while encouraging sustainable development.

Climate finance

Climate finance is critical for assisting developing nations in transitioning to a low-carbon economy and adapting to the effects of climate change. The focus of COP 27 was on climate finance mobilisation and strategies to improve financial flows to assist climate action in developing nations. The conference also looked at the role of the business sector in climate action financing.

Adaptation and resilience

Climate change's effects are already being seen around the world, and many countries are trying to adapt. COP 27 prioritized resilience and adaptation initiatives, particularly in vulnerable areas. The conference discussed strategies for increasing the availability of finance for adaptation initiatives as well as identifying best practices for adaptation and resilience.

Historical Background

The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was founded in 1992 to address global climate change. Since then, the organization has convened yearly COP meetings, each concentrating on a different aspect of climate change.

The Paris Agreement was adopted at the most critical COP conference in 2015 in Paris. The accord intends to keep global warming below 2 degrees Celsius and to pursue efforts to keep temperature increases below 1.5 degrees Celsius over pre-industrial levels.

Latest Events

The Sharm el-Sheikh Climate Conference COP 27 was originally scheduled for November 2021, however, it was pushed back because of the COVID-19 epidemic.

Major Parties Involved

The significant players were those with the highest levels of greenhouse gas emissions, as these have the biggest impact on global climate change. These countries included the United States, China, the European Union, India, Russia, Japan, and others. Developing countries were also key participants since they were heavily affected by the effects of climate change, such as rising sea levels, harsh weather events, and droughts.

The involvement of large parties is critical to the success of climate conferences since these countries have the most power to change their emissions and energy policies. Without their collaboration and commitment to decreasing emissions, meaningful progress in mitigating climate change is unlikely.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of Event
1992	The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is established.
2005	The Kyoto Protocol, which sets binding emission reduction targets for developed countries, enters into force.
2009	The Copenhagen Accord was adopted at COP 15, but it is not legally binding.
2015	The Paris Agreement is adopted at COP 21, which aims to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius.
2021	The Sharm el-Sheikh Climate Conference COP 27 is postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) - An international treaty adopted in 1992 that aims to prevent dangerous human interference with the climate system.

Kyoto Protocol - An international treaty adopted in 1997 that sets binding emission reduction targets for developed countries.

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) - A scientific body established by the UN in 1988 to provide scientific information and assessments on climate change.

United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) - A conference held in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, that resulted in the adoption of the UNFCCC.

Past Action

Previous initiatives to address climate change have included the establishment of international treaties such as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Kyoto Protocol, and the Paris Agreement. Furthermore, several governments have established policies and steps to minimize greenhouse gas emissions, such as encouraging the use of renewable energy and improving energy efficiency.

BBC News stated that “Back in 2009 richer nations promised developing countries they would give them \$100bn (£88bn) a year by 2020 to help with climate change, that goal was missed and there has been no action” (BBC, para. 51, 2022).

Funding in COP 26

Several countries announced climate funding pledges in the weeks preceding up to and during the summit. “The US has pledged \$11.4 billion per year by 2024, as well as \$3 billion specifically for climate adaptation. The UK says it will double its climate finance to \$11.6 billion between 2020 and 2025. Canada has announced a doubling of its climate finance support to \$5.3 billion between 2020 and 2025. Japan has offered \$10 billion over the next five years for reducing emissions in Asia. Norway has committed to tripling its adaptation finance; Australia will double its contribution. Spain will increase its climate finance pledge by 50% to \$1.55 billion a year from 2025” (BBC, para.18, 2021).

Possible Solutions

Climate change mitigation strategies include shifting to renewable energy, increasing energy efficiency, and implementing low-carbon transportation systems. Furthermore, regeneration and afforestation, as well as the use of sustainable agriculture methods, may help to alleviate the effects of climate change. Adaptation methods such as sea wall construction, drought-resistant agricultural improvement, and migration of vulnerable people could potentially be done.

Commitment to ambitious climate goals

Countries should set ambitious goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. This means significant investments in sustainable energy, electric vehicles, and carbon capture technology will be required.

Increase funding for climate action

Developed countries should increase financial assistance to underdeveloped countries in order to help them cut emissions and adapt to the effects of climate change. Funding for renewable energy initiatives, climate resilience measures, and adaptation activities could all fall under this category.

Phasing out of fossil fuels

Nations should resolve to phase out the usage of fossil fuels as soon as practicable, including coal, oil, and natural gas. This will necessitate a shift to cleaner energy sources such as wind, solar, and hydropower.

Promotion of energy efficiency

Energy efficiency initiatives such as upgrading building insulation, utilizing energy-efficient lighting, and investing in smart grid technologies should be prioritized by governments and enterprises. This has the potential to cut both energy usage and greenhouse gas emissions.

Protection of forests and natural ecosystems

Forests and natural ecosystems play an important role in absorbing CO₂ from the atmosphere. Member states should work together to safeguard these ecosystems against deforestation, overexploitation, and other threats.

Promotion of sustainable agriculture

Agriculture is a major source of greenhouse gas emissions, but it can also help to trap carbon in the soil. Governments should provide assistance to farmers and promote environmentally friendly agriculture techniques that minimize emissions and increase soil health.

Education and raising awareness

Educating the public about the causes and consequences of climate change can assist to increase public support for climate action. Climate literacy should be promoted through collaboration among governments, corporations, and civil society organizations.

Collaboration and international cooperation

Climate change is a global issue that requires a coordinated worldwide response. Governments should collaborate to exchange knowledge, technology, and best practices, as well as to develop a framework for climate action collaboration.

Buying less stuff

Currently, governments assess total emissions and establish targets based on what they produce within their borders, such as power production or fuel combustion. This means that they do not account for emissions originating from goods and services produced by another country for them. Notwithstanding the fact that industrialized countries import a considerable amount of produced goods. "If these "consumption-based" emissions were counted then the UK's carbon footprint would more than double. For the first time in a global climate agreement countries recognised 'the importance of transition[ing] to sustainable patterns of consumption'. It is not yet clear how governments will translate this into local plans or actions." (BBC, para. 32, 2022).

These are just a few possible solutions to address climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The success of the follow-up on the Sharm el-Sheikh Climate Conference COP 27 will depend on the commitments and actions taken by governments, businesses, and civil society organizations around the world.

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