

# COP27 - On urgent implementation in times of greatest uncertainty.

## A field report from the UN Climate Change Conference in Sharm El Sheikh.

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### Introduction

The 27th Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change, or simply “COP” for short, took place in Egypt and thus on African soil under the motto “Together for Implementation”. A central topic of the negotiations was therefore “Loss & Damage”, often shied away from in the past. In the wake of rising greenhouse gas emissions the question is increasingly being asked how vulnerable countries that are particularly affected by the impacts of climate change should be compensated.

But let’s start from the beginning: it is exactly 30 years since the Framework Convention on Climate Change was signed at the so-called “Earth Summit” in Rio de Janeiro. Two years later it entered into force. Then in 1995, heads of state and government met for the first UN Climate Change Conference in Berlin, which was chaired at the time by Angela Merkel, at the time the Federal Minister for the environment. Much has happened since then and COP27 can certainly be described as a super-sized conference. Around 45,000 people were registered. On the first Monday after the opening of the two-week conference alone, around 18,000 delegates arrived on site.

### Organisation and Participation - Report from the “Blue Zone”

The size and the objectives of the event proved challenging for the host country in all dimensions. The existing exhibition center, which was converted into the so-called “Blue Zone”, is only designed to accommodate just under 1000 people. A huge exhibition area was added for the COP27. Distributed in large temporary structures, countries and organisations had the opportunity to give space to their topics in individually designed pavilions. The number of pavilions increased considerably, so that by now almost every country as well as many NGOs, universities and international organisations were represented.

In addition to the “Blue Zone”, there was also a “Green Zone”. Here, mainly international companies and increasingly civil society organisations presented their activities. While the contingents and accreditation for participation in the “Blue Zone” were limited to negotiators and observers, the “Green Zone” was accessible to all interested parties with a simple on-site registration, where the logistics proved challenging. The two areas were several hundred metres apart this time, and not well connected even by shuttle bus. This did not provide an optimal setting for the required cooperation of implementation together with the real economy.

### The two-week conference is divided into different thematic days - new focal points have been added in recent years, such as the Finance and the Decarbonisation Day. What were the standouts?

Events were held on the various focal points at their own discretion of the participating actors, which leads to a high degree of parallelism in the offerings. The struggle for a “share of voice” translated into a noise level of up to 80 decibels, measured between the pavilions. While a momentum could clearly be experienced, the possibilities to find a personal thread were challenging. An impression that was deepened by the still missing standards and definitions, when hundreds of presented activities can hardly be translated into standardised (transparency) quantities for their effects. All in all, we were left with an impression of polyphony, parallelism - and also inefficiency.

Numerous examples, e.g. on the reintroduction of traditional methods of agriculture and nutrition, resulted in a new and additional thematic focus of this conference in the direction of sustainable “food systems”. Especially the delegates from indigenous peoples, dressed in their traditional costumes, illustrated this topic with numerous examples.

They are often already existentially exposed to the consequences of climate change and at the same time massively threatened by land grabbing.

Banks and the financial sector were much more prominently represented this time than in previous years. The discussions focused on carbon markets and the question of how the transition can be financed with innovative forms of climate protection financing. Less discussed, for example, were concrete approaches to cross-sectoral cooperation, which were, however, introduced in the joint event “collaborative approaches for financing the transition” of the [Pathways to Paris project](#)<sup>1</sup> and the NZBAG hosted by the United Nations Development Program Pavilion.

### **The results**

The [Sharm el-Sheikh Implementation Plan](#)<sup>2</sup> summarises the results, to which more than 190 countries were able to agree on under the guiding principle of “common but differentiated responsibility” where, once again, the principle of unanimity for decisions and formulations remained a central and recurring challenge.

The plan is based on the guiding articles of the Paris Climate Agreement and comments on or supplements and specifies existing paragraphs with further topics and outcomes. The document contains numerous linguistic references, mostly written in the subjunctive, acknowledgements, reminders, admonitions and acknowledgements, but ultimately little that is concrete with regard to the implementation of climate protection and adaptation measures.

While at the Glasgow COP26, for example, the “phase-out” formulation on fossil fuels was still being wrestled with (which ultimately led to a “phase-down” wording), the current final declaration only contained a commitment to accelerate “low-emission” energy systems.

The fact that the 1.5 degree cels. target was successfully “defended” in the face of increasing Paris incompatibility is not so much a success as it highlights the massive tensions and counter-movements that have arisen from the Paris climate target. These increase the expectations of the COP conferences and preparatory meetings and increasingly lead to a communication challenge and even a credibility problem.

On the topic of “Loss and Damages” however, a fundamental perspective was created for a long unresolved area of tension between the industrialised countries and the developing and emerging countries. This can be considered a success. Nevertheless, many details are still open. A commission will be established to define and propose the application catalogue and mechanism of the compensation fund, which will then be debated at COP 28 in Dubai. The question of whether China will continue to fall into the category of developing countries and thus “recipient countries” also remains on the table.

### **Outlook**

The transformation risks associated with decarbonisation are becoming more pressing. The twin crisis of biodiversity has long since come to the fore. The responsibility for the next COP and the preparation through the so-called and also annual “intersessionals” will therefore be even greater, also in tension with the literal sense of the current income sources of the host country. These are, of course, issues that will not wait a year. In these times, it is to be hoped that, from a risk mitigation perspective alone, numerous advances from the private sector will ensure the progress for the necessary realisation.

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1 <https://pathwaystoparis.com/en>

2 <https://unfccc.int/documents/624441>