

Opinion

What was achieved at the Dubai COP28 Climate Conference: Opinion note

Ricardo O Russo*

Professor, Researcher, & Environment Consultant, Forestry, Yale University, USA

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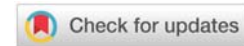
*Corresponding author: Ricardo O Russo, PhD, Professor, Researcher, & Environment Consultant, Forestry, Yale University, USA, E-mail: rrusso@ulasalle.ac.cr, ricardo.russo@ucr.ac.cr; ricardo26@hotmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3530-1834>

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Abstract

The opinion note presents the author's evaluation of the accomplishments of The COP28 climate conference in Dubai, which took place from November 30 to December 12, 2023. It is noted that a significant level of consensus was achieved during the conference. A notable majority of nations, such as the European Union (EU), the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and the United States, acknowledged the imperative of transitioning away from fossil fuels. Despite facing resistance from major oil-producing nations in the region, the conference managed to arrive at acceptable resolutions by the conclusion of the event.

Introduction

A few months ago, the outcome of the Dubai Climate Conference [1] was announced. Although the author did not attend the event, he followed up the development of the event simultaneously and virtually and he is presenting this brief review as an informative opinion to his reading population.

It is evident that the measures agreed upon at the conference are still far from what is necessary to achieve the objectives of the Paris Agreement [2]; however, there are signs of progress such as the decision to take a global emissions balance and the need to abandon fossil fuels in energy systems; and above all the expectations of financing for adaptation and mitigation of climate change: such as the creation of the Loss and Damage Fund – LDF – by United Nations Development Programme's – UNDP [3]. The launch of the LDF was a major achievement, especially for poor and vulnerable countries.

Another aspect is that, for the first time, the conference recognized the circular economy as a mitigation tool, this aspect had been previously mentioned in other bibliographic

sources as a key strategy in achieving the goals outlined in the Paris Agreement [4]. And while it is not a total solution, it is hopeful.

In other words, COP28 reached an agreement that will increase pressure to move away from fossil fuels; Even though the oil-producing countries softened the language, they eventually agreed to a compromise.

It can be said that the conclusions in Dubai ended with a compromise on fossil fuels and that the negotiations have been recognized as the most important since the 2015 Paris Climate Conference [5,6].

What was achieved in Dubai? According to the author's perception, it is clear that a reasonable compromise was reached.

A historic majority of countries, including the European Union (EU), the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and the United States, recognized the need for the phase-out of fossil fuels. However, there was strong opposition from the region's oil powers,



such as Saudi Arabia. But, in the end, the presidency of the United Arab Emirates brought the negotiations to a tolerable conclusion. For the first time, the transition away from fossil fuels is mentioned in the final text of the UN climate negotiations, albeit in lukewarm terms. From the perspective of the climate crisis, stronger language would have been needed. Unfortunately, the decision includes a reference to so-called transition fuels [5,7]. This leaves the door open to natural gas and runs counter to climate goals. The signal on fossil fuels remains clear: the end is in sight. Finland, as part of the EU negotiating team, championed ambitious decisions. The countries of the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People [8] – an intergovernmental group of more than 115 countries trying to reach the global goal of preserving and managing the world's land and ocean by 2030. Which contributed greatly to the Paris climate agreement, also worked hard, and managed to make the result a little better.

The meeting took stock of global climate action and discussed whether what has been done is sufficient and what should be done in the future. And that, even though the event marked an important milestone in global climate action, there is no doubt that more actions need to be taken.

The message is clear: *more action is needed*, or the danger of global warming will accelerate further. And also, as in the fight against poverty: *There is no time to lose* [9]. The response to the critical situation in the final text is polite. All countries must update their climate targets, as already agreed in the Paris Agreement. The targets until 2035 are due to be announced about a year before the climate conference in Brazil, i.e. by the end of 2024. However, according to some experts, the results of COP28 in Dubai were disappointing and with more shadows than lights, despite some progress, such as: a) While a historic agreement was reached to make a "transition away" from fossil fuels to carbon neutrality by 2050, this fell short by not committing to a total phase-out of fossil fuels. (b) In addition, room was made for coal and "transition fuels" such as natural gas; (c) Oil-producing countries opposed progress in the substitution of fossil fuels; Designating the United Arab Emirates, an oil-producing country, as host was a bad sign that hindered progress; and (d) Experts consider that the results are insufficient for the severity of the climate crisis [10,11] The agreement is not expected to help meet the Paris Agreement's goal of reducing emissions to safe levels.

Although it was agreed to triple renewables and double energy efficiency by 2030, there was a lack of concrete mechanisms and funding to implement these commitments. Although there was progress in including the gender approach, it was still lacking to be reflected in the final texts and ensure a just transition for women, who are more vulnerable to climate change.

In short, the scientific community greeted the results with skepticism as insufficient for the climate emergency and lacking concrete and binding measures [5,6,12].

The author endorses the assertion that COPs do not seem to be the best forum to move forward with the necessary urgency, but he is hopeful.

Finally, it is important to mention that the author sympathizes with the concept of the social construction of CC; which not only considers CC as a biophysical and meteorological phenomenon but also includes socio-cultural, economic, geo-political, and communicational components [13]. CC is considered to be a social construct because it is a construct of an occurring reality, in which the importance of social interaction and language in the construction of that reality is visualized [14,15]. On the other hand, it should not be forgotten that CC will have uneven consequences in different countries, regions, and social groups. This variability results from a variety of factors that determine the sensitivity to environmental change, including wealth, knowledge, dependence on natural resources, disaster preparedness, and institutional capacities.

The CC will enhance existing vulnerabilities by increasing the constraints to which they are subjected. It's how the phenomenon of CC could increase poverty if the policies needed to promote the adaptation of communities with higher rates of poverty are not applied by the environmental authorities [13,16].

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