



## Countdown to COP28: What do the GCC countries expect?

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The 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) will take place from November 30 to December 12, 2023, in Dubai, UAE. The conference will feature four cross-cutting themes: Technology and Innovation, Inclusion, Frontline Communities, and Finance<sup>1</sup>. Thematic programs at COP28 are expected to initiate fruitful discussions among various stakeholders, including governments, corporates, investors, academia, youth, gender groups, and indigenous peoples, and contribute to scalable approaches to leveraging finance and technology for a resilient future.

Marking a halfway point between the Paris Agreement and the 2030 target, COP28 will be key to bridging climate actions from the past to the future. It will build on negotiations over key issues that were not fully addressed at COP27, including finalizing institutions for the Loss and Damage Fund and accelerating efforts of doubling adaptation finance<sup>2</sup>.

One reason that the forthcoming event is so critical is that the first Global Stocktake (GST) since the ratification of the Paris Agreement will happen during the conference<sup>3</sup>. Based on the findings

1 <https://www.cop28.com/en/thematic-program>

2 <https://agsiw.org/from-sharm-el-sheikh-to-dubai-what-to-expect-from-the-uae-as-host-of-cop28/>

3 [https://climatechampions.unfccc.int/what-is-the-global-stocktake/?gclid=CjwKCAjwg4SpBhAKEiwAdyLwvCVIrWGnvaRZMys6\\_D3wmW2ZJVCygj2MOVDXDNLF2P8f6B-uw9GV5RoCsXIQAvD\\_BwE](https://climatechampions.unfccc.int/what-is-the-global-stocktake/?gclid=CjwKCAjwg4SpBhAKEiwAdyLwvCVIrWGnvaRZMys6_D3wmW2ZJVCygj2MOVDXDNLF2P8f6B-uw9GV5RoCsXIQAvD_BwE)



of the technical assessment, the GST will present a comprehensive review of where the world stands on climate change, especially the results achieved so far on Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), identify needs and opportunities of limiting global warming to 1.5 °C and stepping up international support, and provide a scientific and political foundation for future COPs.

### **How have the GCC states prepared for COP28?**

For the UAE's hosting of COP28, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) has shown full support with active preparations. A series of preparatory meetings and preceding events have been held to facilitate the successful organization of COP28 as well as feed into future discussions at the conference. In a virtual ministerial meeting requested by the UAE on June 12, 2023, the GCC countries highlighted their recognition of the commitment of the UAE under the Paris Agreement, as well as their firm support to the COP28 UAE Presidency through active coordination and joint action<sup>4</sup>. The Environment Authority of Oman<sup>5</sup> and the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change of Qatar<sup>6</sup> also organized capacity-building workshops in preparation for the climate negotiations at COP28. Additionally, key events on climate change in the GCC region such as Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Climate Week in Riyadh provided platforms for policymakers, practitioners, and investors to exchange insights and solutions with a regional focus on the MENA, raising public awareness of climate change challenges and contributing to the GST at COP28.

More importantly, with the critical event around the corner, the GCC nations have been taking practical climate actions to set the scene for COP28, as the world keeps an eye on how the UAE and its neighboring petrostates make pledges and enable implementation. So far, all GCC countries have submitted their climate mitigation pledges with national action plans ahead of COP28. As the host country, the UAE took a leading role in making the commitment to reduce emissions by 2030 and launching its national Net Zero by 2050 initiative in November 2022. In addition to the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Oman have also set their Net Zero emission goal around the mid-century.

Climate-focused institutions and initiatives have been established across GCC nations for the supervision and implementation of mitigation and adaptation measures. For example, Qatar formed its Environment and Climate Change Ministry and National Climate Change Plan in 2021 in response to a growing concern about vulnerability to the adverse effects of climate change<sup>7</sup>. Besides national commitment, regional climate cooperation across the GCC has also witnessed progress, with the Middle East Green Initiative (MGI) a prominent example. Under the leadership of Saudi Arabia along with its US \$2.5 billion investment, MGI aims to prevent, mitigate, and adapt to the risks posed by climate change in the Gulf region as well as the broader Middle East and North Africa.

### **What will COP28 bring to the GCC?**

COP28 offers a platform for different countries, especially the GCC nations, to demonstrate their climate-resilient and nature-positive strategies and initiatives. The exchange of experience and

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4 <https://www.zawya.com/en/world/middle-east/gcc-nations-rally-behind-cop28-uae-to-drive-pragmatic-and-transformational-climate-progress-xuqo3pri>

5 <https://arabiandaily.com/omans-ea-holds-preparatory-meeting-for-participation-in-cop-28-conference-in-uae/>

6 <https://www.qna.org.qa/en/News-Area/News/2023-09/25/0048-moecc-hosts-workshop-in-preparation-for-cop28-conference>

7 [https://issuu.com/marhabaqatar/docs/marhaba\\_information\\_guide\\_issue\\_83/s/15365632](https://issuu.com/marhabaqatar/docs/marhaba_information_guide_issue_83/s/15365632)



lessons is expected to contribute to fostering a more sustainable future for the GCC and Middle East countries.

COP28 allows the UAE and its neighboring oil-rich countries to demonstrate their ambitious but realistic commitments and down-to-earth progress in terms of decarbonization in response to the concerns and critics of the GCC region. As major global oil and gas producers and exporters, the GCC countries have been facing contradictory pressures due to increasing demand from European countries for gas supplies against an urgent agenda of achieving emission reduction and net zero. Moreover, from “phasedown of unabated coal power and phase-out of inefficient fossil fuel subsidies” at COP26 to “accelerating efforts towards the phasedown of unabated coal power and phase-out of inefficient fossil fuel subsidies” at COP27, the negotiation on phasing out fossil fuels has become more and more fierce with the European Union and the United Nations actively pushing the global pledge.

Meanwhile, doubts are arising about the factual progress of transitioning away from fossil fuels in the Gulf region, along with skepticism about the capability of the UAE, a major hydrocarbon producer, to hold the position of an impartial host<sup>8</sup>. Therefore, COP28 is expected to be a critical platform where the GCC countries showcase their accountability and endeavors in clean energy, green finance, and advanced technology towards the global climate agenda.

Furthermore, the GCC nations also view COP28 as a catalyst for economic transformation with an increasing contribution from the private sector. The Gulf countries have been actively embracing green energy and sustainable growth strategies by actively engaging the private sector. It is predicted that the non-oil GDP growth in GCC economies will reach around 3 to 5 percent this year<sup>9</sup>. The exploration and experimentation of strategies including carbon capture technology in the energy sector of GCC nations have been benefiting from the expertise and financial support of the private sector.

COP28 President and Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) CEO Dr. Sultan Al Jaber highlighted the indispensable role of the private sector in leveraging capital and enabling collective endeavors to achieve climate goals, such as issuing green bonds and financing clean energy projects<sup>10</sup>. COP28 is therefore expected to enable wider inclusion and greater input from businesses, and the World Climate Summit from 7 to 8 December, a leading forum for public-private partnerships as a side event of COP28, is expected to foster a stronger link between companies and governments in decarbonization innovations across different sectors<sup>11</sup>.

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8 <https://agsiw.org/from-sharm-el-sheikh-to-dubai-what-to-expect-from-the-uae-as-host-of-cop28/>

9 [https://asiahouse.org/research\\_posts/47644/](https://asiahouse.org/research_posts/47644/)

10 [https://asiahouse.org/research\\_posts/47644/](https://asiahouse.org/research_posts/47644/)

11 <https://www.worldclimatesummit.org/>

