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11:00 am – 12:30 pm KSA

Countdown to COP28 Webinar



Gulf Research Center
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Countdown to COP28: Webinar Summary Report

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Countdown to COP28: Webinar Summary Report

On November 2, 2023, the Gulf Research Center organized an online webinar entitled “Countdown to COP28” examining the issues that would define the upcoming COP28 conference in the United Arab Emirates in December 2023.

Speakers in the webinar included: Dr. Mohamed Abdelraouf, Environment and Sustainability Research Program Director at the Gulf Research Center; Eng. Emad Saad, CEO of the Abu Dhabi Environment Network; Juhaina Al Ghafri, Youth Representative from the Oman Environment Association; and Tareq Hassan, Founder of the Arab Youth Sustainable Development Network. Dr. Christian Koch, the Director of Research at the Gulf Research Center, moderated the webinar.

The session focused on the following key issues:

- What can realistically be expected from the COP28 climate talks?
- How can an agenda be agreed upon that begins to meet climate goals?
- What consensus must be forged for COP28 to be seen as a step forward?
- What is the view and role of the GCC states?
- What are the expectations and benefits for the GCC states from hosting a climate COP in the region?
- What is the role of civil society and youth voices in the climate debate within the GCC and as it relates to COP28?

COP28 comes at a decisive moment for international climate action. Temperature records are being repeatedly broken and climate impacts felt in unprecedented wildfires, floods, storms, and droughts worldwide. Many issues are therefore on the table of negotiations at COP28 such as climate finance, loss and damage, the Paris Agreement target of 1.5 degrees Celsius, clean and renewable energy, etc. It is necessary to discuss these important topics not only from an environmental point of view but also in terms of the numerous economic, social, and security implications that play a role as well.





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 is hoped that COP28 will help keep alive the goal of limiting long-term global temperature rises to 1.5°C. This was agreed by nearly 200 countries in Paris in 2015. The 1.5°C target is crucial to avoid the most damaging impacts of climate change.

At the COP28 climate summit in Dubai, the international community will take a look in the mirror including the fact that the first assessment of the implementation of the Paris Agreement, the Global Stocktake (GST), will be carried out in terms of whether countries have met the climate commitments set in Paris in 2015. Based on the findings 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 suggest mechanisms to step up further international support. This will subsequently provide the scientific and political foundation for future COPs.

The picture looking back is not expected to be flattering: the critical target of keeping global warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius by the end of the century is expected to be surpassed in the 2030s. The COP28 GST therefore presents a unique opportunity for a drastic course correction.

Another important issue will be that of climate finance. Negotiations over this critical aspect were not fully addressed at COP27, including finalizing institutions for the Loss and Damage Fund and accelerating efforts of doubling adaptation finance. While a Loss and Damage Fund was agreed to at COP27 that would see richer countries pay poorer countries facing the effects of climate change, the exact modalities of how this would work were left undefined. In addition, developed countries committed in 2009 to give \$100bn annually by 2020 to developing countries to help them reduce emissions and prepare for climate change. This target was missed-- it is now expected to be reached by the end of 2023.

Other areas that will feature prominently at COP28 include:

- **Mitigation:** Mitigation refers to efforts to reduce or prevent the emission of greenhouse gases. Mitigation can mean using new technologies and renewable energies, making older equipment more energy efficient, or changing management practices or consumer behavior.
- **Adaptation:** Adaptation is the ways required to adapt to the impacts of climate change. That means altering our behavior, systems, and—in some cases—ways of life to protect our families, our economies, and the environment in which we live from the impacts of climate change.
- **The Legal Framework:** The principle of common but differentiated responsibilities is enshrined in international environmental law which establishes that all countries are responsible for addressing greenhouse gases, yet not equally responsible. At the same time, there is a need for industrial and Western countries to bear their historical responsibilities for emissions.



Progress is also expected on the issue of water. The COP28 Water Agenda identifies three priority areas: conserving and restoring freshwater ecosystems, enhancing urban water resilience, and bolstering water-resilient food systems. As a result, COP28 will elevate water on the climate agenda and seek to drive forward progress and raise ambition.

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 lessons is expected to contribute to fostering a more sustainable future for the GCC and Middle East countries. COP28 further allows the UAE and its neighboring 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. Thus, hosting the COP in the GCC region signifies the area's commitment to global climate action and is seen as a potential encouragement for stakeholders to address the environmental challenges specific to the region.

The meeting should also be seen as an opportunity for the GCC states to learn and benefit from international expertise in climate change solutions, for example in the areas of innovative practices as well as skills exchange. It can also facilitate the transfer of climate-related technologies, allowing the GCC to access cutting-edge solutions and innovations in renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and water management.

Furthermore, it is a chance to garner potential economic opportunities through investments in renewable energy, sustainable technologies, and green infrastructure. This includes exploring funding mechanisms of innovations/technology and capacity building to help mitigate climate change impacts and reduce carbon emissions.

Introduction

Our Vision
To play a leading role in the conservation of Oman's natural heritage.

Our Mission
To protect and conserve Oman's natural environment and influence environmentally sustainable behaviour through education, awareness and conservation.

Supporting:

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Participants: 36, Q&A, Chat, Share Screen, Record, Show Captions, Arabic, Raise Hand, Apps, Whiteboards, Leave



A very important aspect highlighted in the discussion was the need to encourage the youth to be part of the negotiating parties. The COP being hosted in the GCC will encourage the youth from the region to take on a more participatory role in the GCC courtiers, vocalizing the importance of climate issues. Youth voices already play an important role in society, especially considering the current youth bulge being witnessed in the region. Oman is a good example of this, where outreach initiatives such as Oman Climate Dialogues, the Namat Competition, and Plastic Awareness Effort, as well as other educational activities in terms of capacity building for local talents all play a critical role.

It was also mentioned that COP28 holds the potential for increased collaboration and cooperation among GCC countries and the broader international community in addressing regional and global climate challenges. Thus, hosting the COP in the GCC region will significantly enhance the global visibility and reputation of the region, providing an opportunity to highlight its environmental efforts and commitment to addressing climate change on the international stage.

At the same time, many issues require more concrete solutions. Specific clarification is needed for the common but differentiated responsibilities between developed and developing countries based on the historical responsibility of emissions. Climate finance is one answer on this front but how developing countries and small islands can be assisted to cope with the impacts of climate change, as well as transferring green technology to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, remains unclear.

It was further argued that the climate change debate needs to connect with discussions about social vulnerability, gender inequality, and wider instability. Global and regional research shows that women and girls face increased vulnerabilities to climate change, therefore gender issues need more attention including in almost all of the MENA countries.

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