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What Europe Expects from COP28

Robert Mason*
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The EU's general negotiating position for the 28th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28), set to take place in Dubai from 30 November to 12 December 2023, was [published](#) by the Council of the European Union and updated on 17 October. The Council draws attention to the opportunities presented by ambitious climate change action for the world (to keep global warming with the 1.5°C objective set out in the [Paris Agreement](#)). It also stresses the importance of a just transition to climate-resilient and climate-neutral economies, meaning that no one is left behind.

In particular, the EU encourages its member states to strengthen their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), since they are not currently ambitious enough to reach the 1.5°C target and encourages major economies to include a net-zero emissions target to be reached by 2050 at the latest. Although fossil fuel consumption is expected to peak in the 2020s, the EU NDC has already submitted a 'Fit for 55' package which is expected to reduce EU emissions by at least 55 percent by 2030 compared to 1990 levels. There was some debate about whether a higher cap of [57 percent could be reached](#), which would have made the EU a global leader in combatting climate change. Instead, the 55 percent figure was retained. Even with this package in place, the EU '[notes with great concern](#) ... the 66% likelihood that the annual average near-surface global temperature between 2023 and 2027 will be more than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels for at least one year.'

French President Macron outlined in an October 2023 speech for French innovation in 2030 that he plans to "[reindustrialize France](#)" and make it a global leader in green hydrogen and small nuclear reactors. [France has stated that the EU should be clearer about a demand trajectory and exit date](#) for each fossil fuel (coal, oil, gas) which would put pressure on other EU states that are more reluctant to phase out their use.

But EU member states such as [Poland](#) have been particularly resistant to EU climate change policies given their relatively large emissions and lower economic capacity to fund a transition. An [Indian proposal](#) to phase down all fossil fuels was supported by the EU but not included in the final text of COP27 in Egypt. With science increasingly drawing attention to global warming that breaches 1.5°C, the pressure will be on at COP28 for a more ambitious and agreeable final text. It is debatable whether holding a COP in an oil exporting country will support or detract from the kind of deal civil society and many states deem necessary.

The Council calls for a tripling of renewable energy capacity and a doubling of energy efficiency by 2030. The EU places great emphasis on working with developing states to address the climate change challenge, a process complicated by the economic fallout from Covid-19 and the war in Ukraine. A [Global Stocktake](#) is expected at COP28 whereby everything related to where the world stands on climate action and support, identifying gaps, and working to accelerate climate action is included. After this, the EU will set its next climate target and, within 6 months, submit a new legislative proposal.

The onus in 2023-2024 will be on developed states that should have completed their greenhouse gas (GHG) inventories by December 2022 as part of the Enhanced Transparency Framework (ETF) in the [Paris Agreement](#). Developing countries will have until 31 December 2024 to submit their first biennial transparency report for International Consultation and Analysis (ICA) between 2024



and 2026. This work will take place alongside work on the [Mitigation Work Programme \(MWP\)](#), [Just Transition Work Programme](#), and the [Dialogue on the Global Goal on Adaptation](#), a component of the Paris Agreement that aims to enhance adaptive capacity and reduce vulnerability to climate change. Dialogues have so far included youth, the Glasgow-Sharm el Sheikh-Work Programme, the Global Stocktake's First Technical Dialogue on Adaptation, and The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) pre-COP28 Dialogue.

The EU is well placed to advance climate change policies through its large collective budget. It is spending [EUR118 billion or one-third of its cohesion budget](#) to support regions to reduce carbon emissions and adapt. But there is some disagreement between EU states and in different sectors as to whether fossil fuels can be eliminated entirely, with carbon capture included where it is difficult to abate completely. The EU as a whole represents [only 8 percent](#) of global emissions and this figure is falling, so it will be far more important for the EU to punch above its weight in persuading other polluters to change their behavior rather than exclusively pursue strident internal emissions cuts. Tensions between states on de-carbonising completely are likely to be even more pronounced at the global level. As the EU commissioner for climate matters stated: [“It takes 192 \[UN member countries\] to tango.”](#) The EU is clear that COP28 will be vital in getting states to mobilize finance from all sources to address loss and damage from the negative impacts of climate change, as well as support climate action.

The EU's work will focus on improving efficiency of the process and facilitating participation, advancing the [Glasgow work programme on action for climate empowerment](#), including a country-driven approach, cost-effectiveness, flexibility, a gender and intergenerational approach, and a phased, multi-stakeholder, and sustainable approach. The EU will further discuss the joint work programme on climate action in agriculture and food security.

Outside of the EU, the UK has outlined its COP28 strategy as keeping 1.5°C [“within reach.”](#) however, there appears to be no clear roadmap to achieving this outcome. Without much international movement, amid a cost of living crisis, and concerns about electoral defeat at the next general election, UK Prime Minister Sunak made a u-turn on green commitments in September 2023. Still committing to 2050 for net zero carbon emissions, the move was described by the prime minister as a [“more pragmatic, proportionate and realistic approach.”](#)

The decision was met with consternation from climate campaigners who are expected to challenge the decision in the UK courts. No UK Secretary of State is going to COP28 in the UAE, but [King Charles is to give the opening address](#). The King's Speech on 8 November 2023 included reference to the government's commitment to tackling climate change and biodiversity loss, but given the Prime Minister's recent announcement, failed to include mention of specific action to be taken. Despite approving a new coal mine in Cumbria in 2023, the first new UK coal mine in 30 years which will help in the production of British steel, the UK remains committed to the [Powering Past Coal Alliance](#) (China, India, Japan, and the US are the biggest steel producers and continue to use coal in their steel industries). In reality, with [GBP 20 billion being spent on carbon capture usage and storage](#), some emissions are set to occur up to and possibly beyond 2050.



Norway has perhaps made the most progress on electric vehicle use to the point that Norway's Foreign Minister and COP28 facilitator, Espen Barth Eide, said there is "[hardly anybody left](#)" who would buy a petrol or diesel model. More importantly, he also cited "[meager progress on emissions](#)" from COP27, but with different countries demanding different things, from financial support to adaptation, negotiations will be challenging. The year 2023 is shaping up to be the warmest on record amid a record number of refugees, [110 million](#), fleeing from conflict and the effects of climate change. Therefore, the stakes for many EU member states and other states at COP28, especially in achieving the 1.5°C target, could not be greater.

**Robert Mason is a non-resident fellow with the Gulf Research Center*

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