**[COP26 & Pakistan](https://www.dawn.com/news/1659941/cop26-pakistan)**

[Maha Qasim](https://www.dawn.com/authors/5300/maha-qasim)Published November 24, 2021 - Updated a day ago

The writer is an environmental and social impact consultant.

THE 26th Conference of the Parties (COP26) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change took place in Glasgow from Oct 31 to Nov 13, 2021. The resulting policy document — the Glasgow Climate Pact — eroded the trust of developing countries and once again underscored the feeling among them that developed nations are not serious about their commitments.

Representation from the developing countries was limited due to Covid vaccine inequity and quarantine rules, prohibitive costs of travel and accommodation and lack of transparency around the participation process. The last-minute watering down of the agreement’s text due to pressure from a few countries put the interests of the majority of climate-vulnerable countries at risk.

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Progress on key issues for developing nations like climate finance, adaptation and loss and damage was limited. Wealthy nations have already failed to meet their previous climate finance pledges which aimed to mobilise $100 billion annually by 2020 to enable developing nations to transition towards sustainable development. The funding shortfall has fuelled mistrust among nations like Pakistan that have negligible historical emissions but are disproportionately vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change. Many developing nations have made their climate pledges contingent on receiving external support. While concurring with the observation that Pakistan’s Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC), with their “total target of a 50 per cent emissions reductions by 2030”, was ambitious, Minister for Climate Change Malik Amin Aslam stated that this was “conditional on getting $100 billion financing” to facilitate “a clean and just energy transition”.

**Read more:** [*‘We don’t believe in net-zero at the moment’ – Pakistan’s top climate official at COP26*](https://www.dawn.com/news/1655944)

Indonesia and Vietnam have committed to stopping the construction of new coal plants and phasing out existing plants by the 2040s but contingent on receiving international funding to help reduce their coal dependency. Dedicated climate finance would be used to pay debts, accelerate the retirement of existing coal plants and finance clean energy.

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Developed countries [agreed](https://www.dawn.com/news/1657985) to begin reducing coal-fired power and eliminating subsidies on other fossil fuels. However, following objections from China and India, the wording in earlier drafts of the text to “phase out” coal was changed to “phase down”. The biggest greenhouse gas emitters will therefore continue using coal power domestically. Pakistan too has decided to continue using domestic coal but will no longer develop imported coal projects.

Pakistan also signed the Global Methane Pledge, an initiative of over 100 countries to curb methane emissions, but says it does not “believe in the net-zero concept at the moment”. The US and EU have pledged to reach net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, China has pledged net-zero CO2 emissions by 2060, while India has pledged net-zero carbon emissions by 2070. The varying timelines and lag in translating policy action into law signals a lack of seriousness about the urgency of climate action. Only a few of the 74 countries with net-zero commitments have formalised them into law. How seriously these commitments should be taken or how likely they are to actually be achieved remains unclear.

Further, several fossil fuel-dependent countries argue in favour of emerging and currently expensive technologies to capture and permanently store carbon dioxide underground rather than emphasising behaviour change. Japan, Saudi Arabia, China and Australia, as well as the OPEC nations, all champion carbon capture and storage, claiming this could dramatically cut fossil fuel emissions from power plants and industry. But basing future policy targets on as yet unproven technologies only serves to highlight the ambiguity in countries’ commitment to tackling climate change.

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Based on these developments, COP26 has largely been perceived as kicking the can down the road. The Glasgow Climate Pact “requests” governments to revisit and strengthen their NDCs before the end of 2022 to bring these in line with the Paris Agreement’s temperature goal of 1.5 degrees Celsius ahead of COP27, which will take place in Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt, in 2022.

With warming already at 1.1°C above pre-industrial levels, the window of opportunity for avoiding the most disastrous climate impact is fast closing: to limit warming to 1.5°C, global emissions must be reduced by 45pc by 2030. Under existing emissions reduction pledges, by 2030 emissions will be nearly 14pc higher than in 2010.

Since Pakistan contributes less than 1pc of global greenhouse emissions, it would make more sense to focus the country’s limited resources on enhancing the adaptation capacity of vulnerable communities, building resilience to future climate shocks, climate-proofing our water, energy, healthcare and agriculture sectors and developing a robust emergency response and disaster management plan to prepare for the challenges ahead.

*The writer is an environmental and social impact consultant.*

[**maha.qasim@gmail.com**](http://mailto:maha.qasim@gmail.com)

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