**Climate summit prospects**

[**Shafqat Kakakhel**](https://www.dawn.com/news/1652317/shafqat-kakakhel)

[Shafqat Kakakhel](https://www.dawn.com/authors/4981/shafqat-kakakhel)Published October 16, 2021 - Updated 2 days ago

THE annual UN climate summit — COP26 — to be held in Glasgow is the most significant international meeting on climate change since the adoption of the Paris Agreement in 2015. The conference will test the robustness of the multilateral system for promoting cooperation to address global threats. Specifically, it will indicate the international community’s ability to take actions to counter the increase in temperature caused by the huge concentration of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases caused by burning fossil fuels since the Industrial Revolution and avert a planet wide catastrophe.

The Glasgow Conference is taking place against a sobering backdrop shaped by the deadly Covid-19 pandemic that has claimed five million human lives, wrought colossal material destruction, and upended all kinds of human activities since March 2020. The rich countries’ indifference towards the vaccination of the most vulnerable groups in poor countries may have undermined the spirit of solidarity conducive for compromises on contentious issues.

Covid-19 was preceded by worldwide angry protests inspired by youth leaders like Greta Thunberg and triggered by the blunt warnings of climate scientists that unless global carbon emissions are reduced sharply the world is headed for an increase in temperature of two degrees Celsius or higher which will threaten human life and other species with extinction. Youth groups seem poised to resort to disruptive protests if Glasgow fails to deliver.

COP26 has to achieve consensus on several issues.

The losses inflicted by Covid-19 were compounded by an unprecedented spike in climate-induced extreme weather events such as cyclones, typhoons and hurricanes, heavy floods and flash floods, droughts, heatwaves and forest fires alongside accelerated melting of ice and snow in the Arctic. In July 2021 alone, over 50 extreme events took place in 32 countries.

COP26 has to achieve consensus on several substantial and procedural issues holding up full implementation of the mechanisms of climate action outlined in the Paris Agreement. Failure to find compromises concerning ‘Rule Book’ issues as well as adaptation and finance had led to the collapse of COP25 held in Madrid in 2019 causing widespread disappointment. The UK presidency has made untiring efforts to forge consensus on the pending issues in order to ensure the success of COP26. The contentious issues include:

1. Climate ambition (a euphemism for deeper emissions cuts and other mitigation measures): Under the Paris Agreement, all countries were required to submit more ambitious plans for mitigation in their revised Nationally Determined Contributions by 2020. Until July 30, 2021, revised NDCs were received from 95 countries, including the US which has committed to slashing its emissions by 50 to 52 per cent compared to the 2005 level. Large emitters China, India, Russia and Australia have not announced their latest commitments. According to the synthesis report issued by the UN Environment Programme scrutinising the revised NDCs, the mitigation pledges represent a 12pc increase over previous commitments but are likely to cause a temperature increase of 2.7°C, not 1.5°C, the global climate goal!
2. Climate finance: Under the Paris Agreement, developed countries had pledged to collectively mobilise $100 billion annually from public and private sources by 2020 for supporting the mitigation and adaptation initiatives of developing countries. However, the highest amount provided by the developed countries through various channels in recent years was around $78bn in 2018. This figure is cited by representatives of developing countries as evidence of their rich partners’ unwillingness to fulfil financial commitments. The Global South has also de­­m­anded that all funds provided to them should be in the form of grants, not loans or investments, and they must come from public sources.
3. Adaptation: Dev­eloping countries, including those that are insignificant carbon emitters, demand a better balance between allocations for mitigation and adaptation whilst the developed countries have preferred mitigation highlighting their emphasis on reducing emissions, not building resilience in developing countries.
4. Loss and damage: COP19 held in Warsaw had responded to persistent demands of developing countries by establishing the Warsaw International Mechanism on Loss and Damage to assist developing countries hit hardest by climate-induced disasters but did not provide funds. Developed countries have thus far stubbornly refused to give money for L&D.
5. Article 6 and other issues: Article 6 of the Paris Agreement providing for continuation of the clean development mechanisms established under the Kyoto Protocol and other cooperation processes has turned into a conundrum. Differences also exist over the transparency framework aimed at making mitigation foolproof and common time frames for the NDCs (five or 10 years).

*The writer is a retired ambassador and former UN assistant secretary general.*

*Published in Dawn, October 16th, 2021*