**[Climate action](https://www.dawn.com/news/1797192/climate-action)**

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CONTRARY to initial doubts, apprehensions, and explicit criticism from activists and environmentalists, COP28, set to conclude today, seems to have proved itself productive and on point.

Before the start of COP28, there was intel­­le­ctual chaos across sectors and reg­ions. Some organisations even boycotted the event, protesting the appointment of Dr Sultan Al Jaber, the CEO of UAE’s national oil company ADNOC as the president of COP28. Critics were sceptical about holding the summit in one of the world’s top 10 oil-producing countries, fearing bias towards the fossil fuel industry. Controversy escalated when Dr Al Jaber was quoted as saying that there was “no science” indicating that a phase-out of fossil fuels is needed to stop global warming, later clarifying that he was misquoted.

Despite the early scepticism, progress and commitments at the event have made it unique. COP28 has seen unprecedented momentum, inclusivity, and a willingness to adapt. There was optimism for groundbreaking developments, with early consensus reached on the loss and damage issue, setting a positive tone for the remaining agenda items.

Furthermore, the summit has given rise to uncommon occurrences in the UAE, such as protests. Despite the country being seen as an autocracy where political parties and labour unions are prohibited, COP28 has compelled the rulers to allow the entry of human rights researchers from organisations normally frowned upon by the state. Activists argue that the UAE government’s motive is to enhance its international image, but they emphasise that only limited protests are permitted, subject to prior approval.

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One notable instance involved protesters gathering in solidarity with the Palestin­ians. Another noteworthy procession took place a few days ago, demanding the release of pro-democracy activists imprisoned in the UAE and Egypt. Described as “historic” by Saudi and UAE human rights researchers, this protest stood out for its audacity and significance.

Almost near to the conclusion of the summit, Dr Al Jaber talked about the historic progress made at the summit, emphasising its uniqueness. He said, “We can all agree COP28 has been different, and I am sure we will agree that COP28 has already made history.”

The COP28 president has actively engaged with all participating parties, stakeholders, NGOs, civil society, observers, businesses, and industry to advocate for unprecedented ambition in COP history.

This approach challenges the conventional belief that climate diplomacy and environmental conservation should solely rely on traditional UN bureaucracy and less action-oriented NGOs and government depar­­tments. Some argue that, for-profit and innovative tech companies can handle climate challenges more efficiently. The COP leadership, historically held by government officials and diplomats, is now witnessing a shift.

Amid COP28, significant progress has been achieved, including the establishment of a Loss and Damage Fund, launching a $30 billion private market climate vehicle, and commitments from 51 oil companies and 119 countries to decarbonise and triple renewable energy, respectively. This progress raises questions about whether climate diplomacy is increasingly led by the polluting industry and for-profit tech businesses.

The UAE is positioning itself as a frontrunner in climate innovation by making substantial investments in decarbonisation. In September, a significant carbon capture and storage project was introduced, designed to eliminate greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to those produced annually by half a million petrol-powered cars. ADNOC accelerated its net-zero greenhouse gas target for operational activities, now aiming to achieve this goal by 2045, five years earlier than initially planned. The company has ceased routine methane venting and flaring, seen as a demonstration of a commitment to emissions reduction ahead of its industry counterparts.

Dubai is striving to attain 75 per cent of its total power generation from clean energy sources by 2050 — a potentially transformative move. How did this massive green initiative come about in a region abundant with oil wealth? And that also nearly two decades ago, back in 2006? An approach, predating the widespread adoption of solar technology and climate innovation has the potential to reshape the climate discourse and translate into concrete actions on the ground.

This paradigm shift in the climate narrative brings to mind the expression ‘Moses in the house of pharaoh’, symbolising a transformative force emerging from an unexpected place.

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