**What did Baku deliver?**

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COP29, widely referred to as the Finance COP, concluded with an agreement on a $300 billion annual climate finance package under the much-anticipated New Collective Quantified Goals (NCQGs).

After two weeks of contentious and, at times, openly confrontational negotiations, delegates from both developing and developed countries secured a deal that could influence global climate action for years to come. However, this commitment to mobilise $300 billion annually by 2035 for developing nations is neither legally binding nor sufficient, as independent experts estimate the actual need at $1.3 trillion per year.

The Group of 77 (G77) and China – a coalition of low- and middle-income nations including Pakistan – had been advocating for $500 billion annually, while other vulnerable and developing nations called for $1 trillion. The agreement establishes a baseline for wealthy nations to lead the effort in mobilising $300 billion, with an aspirational target of reaching $1.3 trillion annually by 2035.

The negotiations surrounding the NCQG remained continuously fraught with political tensions, with an exclusionary decision-making process, and imbalanced power dynamics between developed and developing nations. The rushed nature of the talks sidelined critical voices and concerns, exacerbating dissatisfaction. The COP29 presidency appeared overwhelmed, pushing the agreement forward despite objections and dissatisfaction from developing nations, who accused the presidency of forcing the deal through without proper consensus following chaotic, last-minute negotiations.

As anticipated, the Azerbaijan COP29 presidency canceled the planned launch of a new climate fund, intended to collect contributions from fossil fuel producers, due to concerns that it could disrupt ongoing negotiations on the post-2025 climate finance goal.

Besides NCQGs, COP29 advanced critical discussions, but meaningful action remains elusive. Progress on carbon markets under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement stood out, with finalised guidance for Article 6.2 clarifying the use of internationally transferred mitigation outcomes (ITMOs) and preventing double-counting of emissions reductions. Delegates also agreed on implementing Article 6.4, establishing a “rulebook on carbon markets”, as the EU described it, to rebuild trust in the system.

A UN-backed framework aligned with the best available science was created, offering a stronger foundation for future carbon trading. The adoption of these rules late on the first day of the talks in Baku was a significant ‘breakthrough’ that ended a years-long deadlock and paved the way to raise hundreds of billions of dollars for climate action.

Likewise, progress was made on operationalising the Loss and Damage Fund, with initial disbursements anticipated by mid-2025. Established at COP28 to aid vulnerable nations, the fund remains underfunded as the NCQG excludes provisions for it, raising concerns about resource adequacy. Even UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres was heard criticising current commitments as insufficient to address the injustices faced by the most vulnerable as loss and damage funding pledges remain woefully inadequate.

As always, the progress on the fossil fuel transition again witnessed stalemate situation, narrowing the window for a stable future for vulnerable nations and increasing the future costs of the climate crisis. While draft texts included stronger language on phasing out fossil fuels, the final agreement remained largely unchanged from COP28, reiterating the “phase-down of unabated coal power” and “inefficient fossil fuel subsidies”. Activists and vulnerable nations expressed outrage at the lack of stronger commitments, highlighting the continued absence of meaningful fossil fuel references despite their role as the primary driver of global emissions. This failure reflects the disconnect between the urgency of the crisis and the slow pace of COP negotiations.

Surprisingly enough the agenda of adaptation has found significant traction, with efforts centered on operationalising the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) to protect people and ecosystems from climate impacts. Building on COP28’s UAE-Belem framework, the conference advanced its two-year work programme, which includes thematic targets like water security and cultural heritage preservation, along with a mandate to develop indicators for tracking adaptation progress.

In a positive move, transparent climate reporting made big strides forward in Baku. It advanced transparency with strengthened reporting on emissions, climate finance, and adaptation progress. Many nations submitted their first Biennial Transparency Reports (BTRs), providing detailed insights into emissions trends and progress toward their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement.

Similarly, parties agreed a decision on gender and climate change, extending the enhanced Lima Work Programme on Gender and Climate Change for another 10 years, reaffirming the importance of gender equality and advancing gender mainstreaming throughout the convention. They also agreed to develop a new gender action plan for adoption at COP30, which will set the direction for concrete implementation. However, despite first-ever dedicated space for meaningful participation of children within the Youth-led Climate Forum, the participation of children and strong wording on their vulnerabilities and finance needs remained an illusion.

Breaking the norm set through previous COPs, Pakistan’s delegation, led by the Prime Minister’s Coordinator on Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam, made notable progress at COP29. The Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination (MoCC&EC) deserves recognition for hosting impactful events at Pakistan’s Pavilion, drawing key global stakeholders. To build on this momentum, the ministry must continue fostering international collaborations and addressing climate challenges. The Pavilion’s success highlights Pakistan’s proactive role in promoting sustainability and environmental resilience.

Likewise, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif’s impactful participation at COP29 drew significant attention by world leaders and climate enthusiasts. In his addresses, he highlighted Pakistan’s vulnerability to climate change, referencing the devastating 2022 floods that caused over $30 billion in losses. Sharif urged developed nations to honor their financial commitments, advocating for grant-based climate financing to support mitigation and adaptation without increasing debt burdens.

Now, the government needs to – at all levels – adopt a multi-faceted approach combining strong domestic policies, credible data, and effective international advocacy. By leveraging comprehensive assessments and real-time data, the country can quantify the economic and human costs of climate impacts, such as the 2022 floods, and present a transparent case for funding. Establishing a centralised data repository will support evidence-based policymaking and enhance Pakistan’s credibility globally.

Domestically, aligning sectoral policies with international frameworks like the Paris Agreement, focusing on low-carbon development, and creating a National Climate Resilience Plan will demonstrate Pakistan’s commitment to sustainability. Prioritizing renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and disaster-resilient infrastructure will position the country as a responsible climate partner.

Internationally, we need to intensify climate diplomacy for grant-based financing to avoid increasing debt burdens. Building alliances with other developing nations and engaging actively in global forums like COP will help push for equitable climate finance, operationalisation of loss-and-damage funds, and greater access to resources.

As we witness, with each passing COP, calls for climate crisis reparations are intensifying as the credibility of developed nations weakens due to unmet climate finance promises. Developing nations, long overdue for reparations, face growing frustration. Without adequate, accessible, and transparent funding, COP29 risks being another unfulfilled commitment. The future of global climate justice hinges on developed countries taking responsibility, as their inaction will exacerbate the climate crisis.

Now, the road to COP30 in Belem, Brazil, will be crucial for turning COP29 commitments into action. The focus will center on updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), with most nations, including Pakistan, expected to submit their targets in the coming months. For the developed, COP30 will be a vital opportunity to bridge the gap between ambition and action, ensuring the $300 billion NCQG supports tangible progress on adaptation, mitigation, and loss and damage to advance the goals of the Paris Agreement.

Will Belem, unlike its predecessors, bring more than just gusts of ambition? As the stage shifts to COP30, the coming year will be critical for translating commitments made at COP29 into action.

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