



## BEYOND COP28: CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUTH

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**UNA SCOTLAND**

**BEYOND COP**



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# PREFACE

Welcome to United Nations Association Scotland (UNAS) BEYOND COP28: CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUTH. As a member of UNA-UK, UNAS brings together civil society to strengthen grassroots engagement with the UN Sustainable Development Goals and fosters collaboration in the form of a number of projects. The organisation is a member of the World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA).

This virtual event aimed to review and reflect on COP28, especially in relation to the goal of keeping 1.5°C alive, the disproportionate effects of climate change and ensuring that marginalised voices and communities are included in climate change discussions. The program was hosted virtually, on Zoom, permitting for the participation of panellists and participants from around the world; culminating in an extended question-and-answer section ex post the session. Accordingly, we have compiled the forthcoming report from the outcomes and views of those participants present at our event; which we hope to be one of many dialogue sessions that we, at UNAS, will host on this important and timely topic.

The Beyond COP Team would also like to extend our thanks to our colleagues and panellists for their invaluable consultations and subsequent contributions. Without the tireless efforts of our interns and partners alike, we would be unable to meaningfully engage with these sessions, and actively ensure that the voices of civil society are heard and truly represented. To find out more, or if you want to get involved with future collaborative events, please contact us at: [beyond.cop@unascotland.org.uk](mailto:beyond.cop@unascotland.org.uk).

We would like to acknowledge the following people as key supporters and friends of the team. Without them, we would not have been able to welcome the panellists: Dr Gari Donn, Dr Dorothea Christiana, Dr Teta Banks, Fionn McArdle, Azadeh Sobout, Professor David Anderson, Freddie Huppé, Taylor Behn-Tsakoza, Professor Azin Haghighi, and Armin Behbahanian who interpreted between Farsi and English. Finally, we would like to thank Fatima Iftikhar for moderating the event.

With many thanks,

The Beyond COP Team

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27 February 2024  
time: 1pm GMT

# Beyond COP28 Conversations with Youth



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Watch the event on YouTube by scanning this code or at the following link: <https://youtu.be/K85gMaHxD6c>



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# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

COP28 was held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates between 30 November and 13 December 2023. As a follow up, on Tuesday 27th February, the UNA Scotland Beyond COP team hosted our third COP event, titled '*Beyond COP: Conversations with Youth*'. This virtual event aimed to engage all citizens of the globe to reflect on the outcomes of COP28, and to collaboratively discuss solutions for climate issues and the best ways to advance the green transition. The program was hosted virtually on Zoom, permitting for a panel discussion from our speakers consisting of three main questions, culminating in an extended question-and-answer section *ex post* the session. The speakers were made up of people from different academic, political and legal backgrounds, all offering insightful analysis of action points and community driven initiatives to foster the goals and objectives of COP28.

With over +40 people in attendance, the program began with the first question of the afternoon, where speakers were asked about the most important developments to strive for in order to keep the goal of 1.5 degrees alive. This set the stage for various speeches on the importance of community empowerment, decreased over-consumerism, and continuing to hold public pressure on the main emitters of fossil fuels. Throughout the session, various solutions were mentioned in mitigating climate change and ensuring inclusivity, from making sure that all stakeholders are included in decision-making processes and youth are given a formal platform to speak, to ensuring accountability, connecting activists and civil societies, and adopting a more holistic perspective of climate, where the earth and its diversity is treated with respect.

This forthcoming report reflects the outcomes of this Beyond COP28 session. In turn, the publication of these dialogues and recommendations by UNAS neither constitutes organisational nor personal endorsement of the issues, or opinions, presented throughout. Instead, they are purely, and unbiasedly, reflective of the dialogue session which took place on the 27th of February (2023). Nonetheless, UNAS would like to extend our thanks to all of our guests, speakers and contributors at our event(s) for their invaluable contributions we received at our

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virtual event, and welcome all future collaborations as we actively work to ensure that the voices of civil society are heard and truly represented.

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## 2. KEY BACKGROUND CONCEPTS

Prior to the commencement of this report, it is vital that you, the reader, have a working pool of acronyms and key concepts, to draw upon, as we unpack the outcomes of our dialogue session(s). Indeed, while the outcomes of COP28 and the subsequent recommendations that our speakers proposed to ensure the successful delivery of COP29 will be explored, we believe it to be necessary that you have the opportunity to briefly explore the outcomes from previous COP(s), as well as understand the overarching governing structure of these events:

### **The United Nations Framework Convention of Climate Change (UNFCCC):**

The United Nations Framework Convention of Climate Change (UNFCCC) is the parent treaty to the 1997 Kyoto Protocol and the 2015 Paris agreement. It has near universal membership with 197 Parties to the Convention, meaning these 197 parties have ratified the Convention (UNFCCC, 2022a). The UNFCCC entered into force in 1994 and it recognises that climate change is a common concern for humankind and that the Parties are to “protect the climate system for the benefit of present and future generations of humankind.” (UN and Canada, 1992, p. 1, 4; UNFCCC, 2022a). The overarching objective of the UNFCCC is to stabilise atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations at a level which prevents “dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system,” within a timeframe which allows ecosystems to ‘adapt naturally’ to climate change’ and ensures that food production is not threatened while also enabling sustainable economic development (UN and Canada, 1992, p. 4). The Convention obliges industrialised countries and transitioning economies (labeled *Annex I* countries under the Convention) to adopt policies and measures on mitigation and to report periodically. Industrialised countries are also to support climate change mitigation in developing countries by providing financial support and sharing technology (UNFCCC, 2022a). Non-Annex I Parties (Parties which were considered developing countries at the time of the Convention), are to implement national, (or ‘where appropriate’ regional) programmes for climate change mitigation measures since all Parties are required to do so, however, this is to be done while taking into account ‘common but differentiated responsibilities’ and ‘specific national and regional development priorities, objectives and circumstances’ (UN and Canada, 1992, p. 5). Non-Annex I



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Parties are also to report on their actions for addressing climate change and their mitigation efforts, but not as often as Annex I countries (UNFCCC, 2022a). Moreover, this reporting is contingent on them receiving funding for preparing such reports (ibid.).

### **The Kyoto Protocol:**

The 1997 Kyoto Protocol to the UNFCCC operationalised the UNFCCC as it assigned binding reduction targets of greenhouse gas emissions for industrialised countries and economies in transition (the Annex I Parties under the Convention). Non-Annex I countries did not face binding commitments under the Kyoto Protocol (Bortscheller, 2010; UNFCCC 2022b). Specifically, the Kyoto Protocol set limits and reduction commitments on carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons and sulfur hexafluoride (UNFCCC, 1997, pp. 2, 19). The protocol also set out obligations for establishing national systems for measuring and monitoring as well as obligations for reporting emissions and reductions of greenhouse gasses (UNFCCC, 1997, pp. 6-8). There are 192 Parties to the Kyoto Protocol. Notably this does not include the US, the second largest emitter of greenhouse gasses globally after China (United Nations Treaty Collection, 2022; World Population Review, 2022).

### **The Paris Agreement:**

The Paris Agreement was adopted in 2015 and entered into force in November 2016. It is a legally binding international treaty with the goal of limiting global warming well below 2 degrees Celsius compared to pre-industrial levels, and preferably limiting it to 1.5 degrees Celsius (UNFCCC, 2022c). Notably, the Paris Agreement extended obligations to all countries, not just developed (Annex I) countries, to contribute ‘their best efforts’ and report regularly on both emissions and implementations efforts, (UNFCCC, 2022d; Thompson, 2020, p. 63). However, the agreement does include a framework for financial and technical obligations, as well as capacity building support for those needing it, reaffirming that “developed countries should take the lead in providing financial assistance to countries that are less endowed and more vulnerable.” (UNFCCC, 2022c). There are 195 Parties to the Paris Agreement and The Parties are to submit Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) in which they state the actions they will take to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions in order to achieve the goal of the treaty and the actions

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they will take to build resilience to global warming (UNFCCC, 2022e; UNFCCC, 2022c). These NDCs are to be renewed every five years (UN, n.d.). Parties are also encouraged to submit long-term strategies for climate action, however these are not mandatory (ibid.).

**Conference of the Parties (COP):**

The Conference of the Parties or “COP”, is the highest decision making body of the UNFCCC. All Parties to the Convention are represented and the COP meets every year (unless otherwise decided by the Parties) (UNFCCC, 2022f). At the time of a COP, the Parties review the implementation of the Convention as well as other legal instruments adopted by the previous session. The national communications and emissions inventories submitted by the Parties are also reviewed at the conference (ibid.). There have been 28 COPs so far, with the first one being held in 1995 and the most recent one in 2023 (ibid.).

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### 3. COP28 OUTCOMES

At COP28, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) released two reports: The State of the Global Climate 2023 report and a report covering the climate (and climate change) between 2011-2020 titled 'The Global Climate 2011-2020: A decade of acceleration' (Chandrasekhar et al, 2023). The state of the climate report confirmed 2023 to be the warmest year in the 174 years data has been recorded by the WMO, surpassing 2016 as the warmest year so far (WMO, 2023a, p. 1). The report covering the climate between 2011-2020 states that this decade was the warmest ever recorded, and perhaps more concerning that the concentrations of the three major greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide) in the atmosphere has 'continued to increase during the decade' (WMO, 2023b, p. 2). It is stressed that in order to prevent additional warming, 'emissions must be greatly and sustainably reduced' (ibid.). This is in line with the IPCC's 2023 report on climate change which states that 'limiting warming to 2°C involves rapid, deep and in most cases immediate greenhouse gas emission reductions' (IPCC, 2023, p. 22). Together these highlight the need to transition away from fossil fuels, a topic that was widely discussed prior to the COP28 proceedings, especially in light of the COP28 president Sultan Al Jaber also being chief executive of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (Adnoc) (Carrington, 2023).

#### **Fossil Fuels**

Despite the criticism regarding the presidency's potentially conflicting interests, the UAE Consensus, containing the main decisions of COP28 including the first global stocktake, calls on Parties to contribute to the 'transitioning away from fossil fuels in energy systems' (UNFCCC, 2023a, p. 5). This is noteworthy as it is the first time that a transition away from all fossil fuels has been agreed upon in the COP proceedings (Morton et al, 2023). Additionally, the text also calls for Parties to contribute to 'accelerating and substantially reducing non-carbon-dioxide emissions' including methane by 2030, by phasing out 'inefficient fossil fuel subsidies, as soon as possible' and 'accelerating efforts towards the phase-out of unabated coal power' (UNFCCC, 2023a p. 5). These are all important in fighting climate change and retaining hope of keeping

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global warming below 1.5 degrees, and the agreement was called ‘the beginning of the end’ for fossil fuels by UN Climate Change Executive Secretary Simon Stiell (UNFCCC, 2023b)

However, the agreement has been criticised for not going far enough as ‘transitioning away’ is weaker than ‘phasing out’ (Retallack and Foster, 2023), something that sparked criticism already during the proceedings from a range of countries including EU and Small Island States (Chandrasekhar et al, 2023). It is also worth noting that ‘transitioning away from fossil fuels’ only refers to fossil fuels in energy systems. While other areas are mentioned, for example as Parties are called upon to accelerate ‘the reduction of emissions from road transport’ and as mentioned above to ‘accelerat[e] and substantially reduc[e] non-carbon-dioxide emissions’, these are not stated to require the transitioning away from fossil fuels. The mentioning of phasing out unabated coal power, first mentioned in COP proceedings at COP26 in Glasgow, was reiterated in the UAE Consensus. However, this only refers to coal power where the resulting GHG emissions are released directly into the atmosphere (i.e. unabated) and no capture and storage is occurring. Moreover, as highlighted by Carbon Brief, issues persist when it comes to determining what proportion of GHG emissions needs to be captured for it to count as ‘abated’ (Lempriere and Evans, 2023).

A final point to note in relation to fossil fuel discussions at COP28 was that a record number of fossil fuel lobbyists were present at the Conference, exceeding the number attending COP27 in 2022 which had a record high number of fossil fuel lobbyists attending (Lakhani, 2023). While other lobbyists from, for example, agribusiness, transportation and finance also attend COP proceedings (ibid.), the record number of fossil fuel lobbyists attending COP28 is nonetheless noteworthy, perhaps especially in light of COP28 being run by the chief executive of a major oil company.

### **First Global Stock Take**

The abovementioned agreement to transition away from fossil fuels in energy systems was part of the broader text on the first global stocktake since the Paris Agreement. The global stocktake will take place every five years, starting at COP28, and it evaluates the process being made

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towards meeting the goals of the Paris Agreement and thus serves to inform the NDCs (UNFCCC, n.d.a). It was noted that the Parties 'are not yet collectively on track' to achieve the goals and purpose of the Paris Agreement, including the goal to limit the global average temperature increase 'well below 2°C' and 'pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C'. Additionally, 'serious concern' was expressed that 2023 was set to be the warmest year to date and that the impacts of climate change are 'rapidly accelerating' (UNFCCC, 2023a, p. 2). As such, it emphasised the need for 'urgent action' to keep the 1.5°C goal alive and to 'address the climate crisis in this critical decade' (ibid.). Further, while acknowledging the progress made towards achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement including the fact that all Parties have communicated NDCs, it is noted that there is still a significant gap between the current pledges and the required emissions reductions and that there is a gap between the NDCs and actual policy implementation efforts (UNFCCC, 2023a, p. 4).

Besides calling for a transition away from fossil fuels, a phase out of fossil fuel subsidies and an acceleration of efforts to phase out unabated coal power as discussed earlier, there is a call on Parties to 'contribute to (...) 'tripling renewable energy capacity globally and doubling the global average annual rate of energy efficiency improvements by 2030' and 'accelerating zero- and low-emission technologies' (UNFCCC, 2023a, p. 5). It is also acknowledged that there is a need for 'enhanced financial resources, technology transfer and technical cooperation, and capacity building' for achieving the necessary emissions reductions and for protecting and restoring ecosystems, including halting and reversing deforestation (UNFCCC, 2023a, pp. 4-6). In relation to this, the text also 'recalls' the obligation of so-called developed country Parties to 'provide financial resources to assist developing country Parties with respect to both mitigation and adaptation' and 'notes with concern' that the adaptation finance gap is growing (UNFCCC, 2023a, p. 11-12). It also notes that there are 'significant gaps, including finance' in relation to responding to loss and damage arising from climate change (UNFCCC, 2023a, p. 17). This will be discussed further in the next section. Lastly, the text reaffirms the 'commitment to multilateralism' and recognises the 'importance of international corporation' for addressing climate change as well as reiterating the obligations related to the NDCs and 'encourag[ing]' Parties to submit their next NDCs in 2025 (UNFCCC, 2023a, pp. 20, 23).

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## **Loss and damage**

The decision to set up a loss and damage fund from COP27 was followed up at COP28 with the fund being formally launched. The fund is to be housed in the World Bank for at least four years and it will have a board of 26 persons with the majority coming from developing countries (Chandrasekhar et al, 2023). While the issue of a loss and damage fund is still a contentious issue and there is no firm obligation for developed countries to pay into it, the fact that the fund has been formally launched is a positive development and several nations including the UAE, Germany, the UK, Japan, and the EU pledged to pay into the fund during COP28 (ibid.). By the end of COP28 the total funding in the loss and damage fund amounted to \$770.6 million (ibid.).

## **Adaptation Framework**

Following on from the establishment of a global goal on adaptation (GGA) in the Paris Agreement and the Glasgow-Sharm el-Sheikh (GlaSS) work program on the GGA, the Parties at COP28 adopted the UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience (UNFCCC, n.d.b). The framework is guided by the well-being of people and the planet, and it sets out a broad range of targets to be achieved by 2030 (and beyond), including targets relating to water scarcity, agriculture, health impacts of climate change as well as biodiversity and climate change impacts on ecosystems (UNFCCC, 2023a, p. 10; United Nations Foundation, n.d.). It also tasks the Parties with conducting risk assessments and have 'country-driven, gender-responsive, participatory and fully transparent' national adaptation plans as well as policy instruments and planning processes in place by 2030 (UNFCCC, 2023a, p. 10).

## **Other developments around the COP28 proceedings**

Developments also occurred around the formal COP28 proceedings. In terms of the transition away from fossil fuels, 9 countries signed up to the Powering Past Coal Alliance namely USA, Malta, UAE, Norway, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Kosovo, Iceland and the Dominican Republic, while 3 countries signed up to the Beyond Oil and Gas Alliance: Spain, Kenya and Samoa (Chandrasekhar et al, 2023). Colombia signed up to the Fossil Fuels Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative as the first major oil exporter while 5 countries (Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kenya,

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Romania, and Angola) signed up to the Global Methane Pledge (Chandrasekhar et al, 2023; US Department of State, 2023). Additionally, Australia and Norway joined the Clean Energy Transition Partnership, and 12 countries (The Netherlands, Antigua and Barbuda, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Costa Rica, Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, Luxembourg and Spain) released a joint statement calling for the phasing out of fossil fuel subsidies and stressed the need for greater transparency, the removal of international barriers for example in maritime and air transport, as well as the need for setting up an international dialogue in this regard (Chandrasekhar et al, 2023; Government of the Netherlands, 2023). The Oil & Gas Decarbonization Charter was launched by Saudi Arabia which was joined by 50 oil companies including BP, Exxonmobil, Shell and Adnoc, who pledged to ‘zero-out methane emissions’, eliminate routine flaring by 2030’, ‘to continue working towards industry best practices in emission reduction’ and ‘align with net zero by or before 2050’ (UNFCCC, 2023c). The charter has however been critiqued for focusing solely on emissions arising from operations and not from burning fossil fuels, which is where the majority of emissions come from (Chandrasekhar et al, 2023).

Perhaps more positively, a Global Pledge on Renewables and Energy Efficiency was launched by EU president Ursula von der Leyen and the COP28 presidency and includes 130 countries who ‘commit to work together to triple the world’s installed renewable energy generation capacity to at least 11,000 GW by 2030’ and ‘to collectively double the global average annual rate of energy efficiency improvements from around 2% to over 4% every year until 2030’ (UNFCCC, 2023d; UNFCCC 2023e). Moreover, a Joint Statement on Climate, Nature and People was released by the UAE COP28 presidency and the China COP15 presidency which recognises that ‘the growing and projected impacts of climate change critically threaten biodiversity and the billions of livelihoods dependant on high-integrity ecosystem’, and China joined the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People which is a coalition of 188 countries who have pledged to protect 30% of the Earth by 2030 (UNFCCC, 2023f; Chandrasekhar et al, 2023).

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## 4. SUMMARY OF PANEL DISCUSSION

### **Question 1: What do you think is the most important development to strive for after COP28 for keeping the 1.5 degrees alive?**

Josh kicked off the discussion by mentioning some of the great outcomes from COP28, such as the doubling of annual average efficiency and tripling of renewal capacity. It seems that it is becoming recognised that energy plays a large part in reducing the impact of climate change. However, a really substantial outcome from COP28 which seems to have gone under the radar was the launch of the Just Transition Work programme, which brings into account countries from advanced, developing and emerging economies, to include them in the dialogue and enable for knowledge-exchange and how best to deliver on the programme. Thus, to really see a tangible effect on keeping the 1.5 degrees alive, we need to follow through on commitments, ensuring that peoples' places and lived experiences have the opportunity to be platformed and have access to spaces of inclusion to talk through their issues and reflect on their own learnings.

Erfan brought in a wider perspective, arguing that perhaps we should avoid looking at climate change with a states-centred perspective, but rather analyse constructs such as capitalism, which promotes unlimited consumerism and destruction of nature, along with the collectives.

Other speakers such as Janet echoed the sentiment that, although an important event, the steps taken at COP28 were not enough. Regions such as the Pacifics have been at the forefront of experiencing the effects of climate change for decades now, from sea-level rises to relocation and increased natural disasters such as cyclones. We need to aim bigger in order to bring about drastic changes even sooner, such as a complete phase-out of fossil fuels. Small island nations are running out of time, and it is not enough to rely on little changes or focus on individual action such as encouraging populations to recycle. We need to go a step further and perhaps focus on the top 100 companies who are the biggest emitters of fossil fuels. If we hold continuous public pressure on such companies and continue talking about these issues, it will help create this



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meaningful change.

**Question 2: How can we better balance the gap between countries that have been heavily impacted by the effects of climate change and those currently less affected?**

Mohamed started off by suggesting that, moving forward, all stakeholders must be involved in order to properly address the disparity between countries. It is now being acknowledged globally that in some countries this is not the case at all, despite needing governments, non-governmental organisations and local communities to all be included if we are to achieve balanced solutions. Only by doing this can we acknowledge the difficulties faced by countries heavily impacted by climate change. For example, in the Republic of Guinea, while also being the primary water source of many countries across (West) Africa, 68% of its farming practices are rooted in tradition. Guinea also has millions of hectares of arable land. Despite that, they are often left behind in sustainability discussions. Promoting sustainable development practices can therefore aid vulnerable countries in increasing resilience to climate change, such as through investing in renewable energy sources, promoting sustainable agriculture, and implementing measures to protect ecosystems and biodiversity. However, if we want to put all of this into action, we need to start looking at bottom-up approaches, where decision-making is inclusive and involves the stakeholders who face these challenges in their day-to-day lives.

Leading on from this, Josh emphasised the importance of including people-centred transitions, where we humanise and move beyond jobs and skills in order to ensure everyone is included in these discussions. This includes elevating young people in formal positions of policy-making so that they can get their voices included in political processes and have a meaningful impact. COP28 was the largest event held to date, and although there was a record number of young people there, they were consistently excluded from decision-making processes; and where they were included, there was still no formal recognition of their role in these processes. There are so many grassroots youth organisations out there who campaign and can make an impact, but it is difficult to involve them when there is a lack of inclusive platforms in the first place.

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On a larger scale, it is also important to recognise that everyone is facing climate change to various degrees throughout the world, and in order to close the gap, we must make space to help the countries who are affected more. For example, Janet showed how if you look within the South Pacific, Fiji has historically opened their shores to neighbouring migrants, who have been displaced due to rising sea levels. This gesture needs to be echoed on a larger scale, where there is also more accountability. We need to keep in mind that the countries with the largest emissions have historically not often been facing the effects of climate change, but rather it was the other countries such as the small island nations who were faced with these challenges to a disproportionate level. Ensuring accountability through making space for adaptation for countries, along with ensuring steps are taken to cleaner sources of energy, is the only way to closing this gap.

**Question 3: How do we ensure that climate change solutions are intersectional, so that marginalised individuals and societies are included in the climate discussion?**

Ensuring that indigenous voices are represented at events is a significant step towards making marginalised voices heard. Maria noted, however, how it's also worth thinking of this from a different perspective. Climate discussions and proposed solutions for climate change are often described as 'green', but some populations such as the indigenous Sami people tend to experience these solutions as 'green colonialism', where human rights are violated or the natural way of life for reindeers is destroyed. The definition of green colonialism in Sweden is the 'exploitation of land and natural resources to promote sustainability objectives elsewhere', and it is often seen as a label to legitimately colonise the land and water in Sweden. Thus, we need to talk about who is paying the price, and why it is important to take this into account when trying to find different strategies. It's also important to listen to how indigenous people live their lives, as even this understanding can ensure inclusivity and help lead to actual green initiatives, for example, learning to not leave footprints behind in nature, or never taking more than what is needed, and saying thank you for what you are taking. These kinds of behaviours are so

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important in ensuring a balanced circle of life, and is something the Sami population already incorporates in their daily lives. The impact of climate change is seen every day in the Arctic, and changing the thought pattern to think that everything has a soul can ensure that greater meaning is placed upon nature and its animals. Doing this will ensure a move away from more westernised climate discussions and towards genuine inclusivity.

Working at the grassroots level is also highly important. For example, Souksaveoy started the first youth climate group in Laos in 2021, which prompted hundreds of young people throughout the country to take action. Since then, over 550 schools have been engaged and Zero Waste has now become one of the first youth-led organisations to trigger big actions in South East Asia. Working at a grassroots and community level and increasing awareness there can be crucial, and can also lead to greater change at a policy-making level. No matter the policy, it is all about the action. However, Souksaveoy concluded, it is also important to take into account the context of each country and its policies, in order to not expend too much energy and manage expectations on what you *\*can\** do rather than what you *\*want\** to do.

Similarly, having inclusive decision-making and taking context into account is very important. For example, Mohammed noticed how in Guinea, there are several ethnic groups who would benefit from being included at a grassroots level, as the climate adaptation strategies could be tailored to address their specific needs. However, it is not enough to merely go to indigenous people and come up with solutions which do not take into account their specific contexts. Generally, indigenous peoples are not included in most decision-making processes in Guinea, both in terms of economic functions and social aspects. Ensuring that funds are therefore allocated to such populations where young people can also be included could be crucial in seeing more social change and impacts in these communities. Small actions can lead to great actions. Even if the level of impact is relatively small, it can still lead to great things.

Lastly, we also need to promote social justice. Climate change solutions should address social justice issues, such as poverty and inequality, often seen in African countries, through examining vulnerabilities in marginalised communities. In Guinea, policies which address economic

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empowerment and access to essential services can help increase resilience to climate change amongst communities. At the end of the day, it is these communities who are often more vulnerable to climate change but are practising sustainable agricultural practices. A lack of social justice can inhibit the acceleration of such sustainable practices which in turn can then affect things at the national level, including the national economy. Thus, we need to focus on this inclusion of marginalised communities to ensure there is growth in all aspects of development. Education is crucial in this, as you can only create change when people are educated about the impacts they are having on their communities. Thus, creating initiatives which include people in decision-making processes will lead to more intersectional policy-making which could lead to better environmental practices.

Lastly, accountability and supporting each other can be crucial in ensuring that policies are inclusive and impactful. For example, Erfan referenced the large ecocide currently occurring in the Middle East, where nation states are activating destructive machines of development. Various projects such as the DAP and GAP have led to the destruction of marshes and rivers, as well as underground water reserves, while others have led to the destruction of land and forests. Extensive dam constructions have also led to the forced migrations of hundreds to the outskirts of cities. This begs the question of whether a 'green transition' is possible in the first place. In recent years, the relationship between governments, public institutions and environmental activists has been strained, with environmental action often being restricted or banned. Thus, in order to ensure their voices are heard and the success of programmes, it is necessary to connect environmental institutions with civil institutions. We need a fundamental change based on ecological concepts and a democratic society, rather than focusing on the advancement of individual power.

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## 5. SUMMARY OF GENERAL DISCUSSION

### **Short Presentation by Tanmay Nag, Co-Founder and CEO of Enveave**

As Co-Founder and CEO of Enveave, Tanmay brought in his views on environmental action in India. He highlighted the use of Enveave as a community platform supporting grassroots environmental actions and building a Google Maps-like feature for environmental action. His goal is to try to build the digital infrastructure necessary to track climate initiatives.

Tanmay also highlighted the influence of leaders, politicians and CEOs on youth as politicians of today. Their importance, he argued, reflected the need for governments and leadership around the world to acknowledge climate as the first step before developing solutions and acting on them. He stressed honesty and trust as necessary to build the capacity of youth to take forward action at grassroots levels.

### **KEY POINTS FROM THE GENERAL DISCUSSION**

#### **Three key actions to help youth:**

1. Moving beyond advocacy

Youth need the support of the public in supporting and enlarging their platform. They would also benefit from guidance on how to move beyond advocacy into action. People all over the world need to support one another in developing skills to address grassroots problems and to implement effective solutions in energy, water waste and forestry.

2. Development of skills

There is a need to give youth the opportunities to develop practical skills that are more hands-on such as problem solving and community engagement. It is empowering to see young climate activists tackle this problem and take action and initiative despite the odds they are facing.

3. Platform for collective global action

It is critical to establish such platforms which could connect and share problems and enable further understanding of the different regional grassroots challenges. These platforms would

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facilitate learning from global experiences and enable youth to implement solutions at grassroots levels. It was noted that cross collaboration already happens at a certain level but that more advantage should be taken of it.

### **Framework**

It was suggested that a good way forward would be to find or establish a framework with which we can implement these ideas. One starting point could be to create a database where each idea and practical tip would be listed and action points shared.

The framework would enhance cooperation between masses and between societies rather than just through states. It was argued that states may not be effective agents of change regarding climate change.

The importance of a target was highlighted as well. It was noted that some activists do not have a framework per se but a target: for example, how many people needed to plan and to engage and within what time period. Attempts are then made to stick to these targets and goals and to come up with relevant priorities. Such an alternative was suggested as it was recognised that it is not easy to set up a framework partially due to funding. This would be a challenge but as long as there is a target, a start can be made to build the capacity for a framework.

Establishing a framework can also help in creating solutions that address specific problems. For example, it was found that certain types of food production practices were unsustainable in meeting certain demands. This led to the collection of data which formulated different perspectives on how to address these issues. The data resulted in the building of a framework which focused on making necessary change by going deeper into different perspectives. This was ultimately beneficial for both individuals and the community.

However, while a framework is beneficial, there is also a need to think about the ways in which quantifiable practices can be implemented to work towards meaningful change. It is critical that there is action and not just talk.

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Following on from such discussions, it was posited that a simple framework for change called the 'Six Friends' could be implemented: why, what, where, how and who. If considered at the same time when planning change, the 'Six Friends' could make progress.

### **Inclusivity**

Community participation is vital to the decision-making process. There are already many projects focused on trying to engage communities in decision-making processes to ensure inclusivity . However, other forms and levels of power are often not considered, such as those already at the highest or even the lowest level. While these initiatives try to be democratic, some of them have the tendency to ignore important factors such as land ownership patterns. As a result, indigenous people are largely left out of these conversations. It is critical therefore that engagement needs to be fair and to keep this in mind when creating projects.

### **Community**

There is currently a much greater awareness of climate change and its urgency compared to previous decades. Despite this, there is still a tendency for governments around the world to be concerned with immediate problems as opposed to the climate. As a result, there is sometimes a disparity between leadership and the people. It was suggested that one of the ways in which there can be change is for every community to set up their own local action groups to effectively put pressure on their leadership. Depending on the needs of the community and the government, these action groups may differ between communities and regions.

It was also noted that there is great strength in numbers and networking. By working together and listening and learning from each other, there can be a further shift in awareness. As the climate crisis worsens, people become more afraid and there arises a sense of needing to fight for survival. Despite this, there is hope that this fear can be turned into power and action can be taken to come together and find a way.

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Therefore, one of the key takeaways here besides community engagement is to acknowledge the importance of networking. It is important to make space for youth to gain connections and make networks necessary to implement the change they want to see.

### **A Global View**

While many – particularly those involved in large climate change conferences and events – live in countries where free speech and democracy are the key tenets of the political world, it is also important to recognise that there are also countries where this is not the case. Climate activists in some of these countries experience censorship and repression. It is therefore critical for international organisations to support these activists and engage with them to fight climate issues in their countries. People may be less aware that in these countries, the freedom to fight climate change is lacking.

There is a big discrepancy between how certain less developed countries experience climate change as opposed to how the public in other more developed countries experience it. While there may be a tendency to only focus on the climate, there must also be an element of realism here. How each country experiences the effects of climate change and their own separate crises – which may potentially be bigger and more immediate – is important. Resources are an important factor to consider as well as varying degrees of awareness depending on the political climate. More vulnerable nations need more support, especially when they are not the largest cause of the climate issue.

### **Adapting**

It follows that people who live in more rural areas tend to be closer to nature and can therefore see the immediate impacts of nature. As a result, people in urban rural areas have created their own solutions to the destruction of nature, such as artificial nests for birds. These nests help them to migrate, thus boosting a rapidly declining bird population. The building of the nests has created an eco-tourism in the region where people come to see the interesting creation of the nests, while also boosting the economy.



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### **Public Awareness**

It was argued that there has to be larger mass public awareness. Although more activists are coming together and trying to fight, it has to be recognised that this is not something that can be done individually without large public support.

### **Learning from the Past**

Finally, it was noted that there is something to be learned from the past. Large activist movements have continuously placed pressure on organisations and top stakeholders leading to fundamental and long-lasting change. The AIDS epidemic was cited as an example of this. The protests and activism surrounding the epidemic led to a change in perceptions around people with AIDS further leading to general awareness and better treatment. Now, people do not consider AIDS as such a severe thing as it was in the 80s. By looking to past experiences to inform our actions in the future, there is hope for change.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS: TOWARDS COP29

In closing this instalment of UNAS’s COP28 legacy session, our panellists took a brief moment to reflect upon the shortcomings of COP28, and the potential for future civil-society engagement at COP29 (below).

Goals going into COP28	(Relative) Success/Failure
<p>1. <i>Global net zero emissions reductions by 2050, while keeping the 1.5 degree goal alive</i></p>	<p>Both</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fossil fuels were acknowledged as the root cause of climate change for the first time ever, with countries agreeing to transition away from them in a just manner</li> <li>- 118 countries agreed to triple renewable energy capacity and double the global rate of energy efficiency by 2030</li> <li>- Industries also pledged to increase zero-emissions fuel from hydrogen to 11 million tonnes by 2030</li> <li>- A new decarbonisation charter was signed by over 50 oil companies to reduce methane leakage, burning of excess gas and achieve net zero emissions by 2050, however, it has however been criticised for focusing solely on emissions arising from operations and not from burning fossil fuels.</li> <li>- The ‘Global Stocktake’ showed how far away we are from achieving the 1.5 degree goal</li> <li>- COP28 marks the beginning of the Global Stocktake process which will occur every 5 years. It evaluates the progress being made by the Parties towards meeting the goals of the Paris Agreement and is therefore important in the fight against climate change and for informing future decisions. However, the first global stocktake showed just how big the gap is between current action and achieving the 1.5 degree goal.</li> </ul>
<p>2. <i>Protecting and promoting adaptation for communities and natural habitats in light of pre-existing climate impacts</i></p>	<p>Both</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Over £314 million was announced to the UNFCCC Loss &amp; Damage Fund on the first day to help vulnerable countries cope with climate disasters</li> <li>- However, it is acknowledged that around £300-400 billion is needed to help developing countries</li> <li>- Also unsure of whether the scheme will be community or state driven so not sure of the impacts of corruption on this</li> <li>- Despite opposition, the World Bank was given charge of the fund, with a fee of 24%, which further reduces the amount reaching the vulnerable countries</li> </ul>
<p>3. <i>Universal collaboration and inclusivity</i></p>	<p>Both</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Parties agreed on targets for the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) and its framework</li> <li>- Over 100 countries signed onto the UAE Climate and Health Declaration with an initial investment of USD 1 billion.</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Over 100 heads of state and governments committed to transforming food systems</li><li>- Over 85,000 participants attended, formed of Heads of States, governments, national delegations, civil society, business, Indigenous Peoples, youth, philanthropy, and international organisations, making it the largest COP in history</li><li>- However, over 2,000 were connected to the coal, oil and gas industries, leading to concerns of lobbying and corruption</li></ul>
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In response to the notable shortcomings, the Beyond COP Team and the panellists from across the session devised a series of diverse recommendations, all of which we firmly believe could be proactive and impactful in rectifying the deficiencies of COP28:

### **Recommended Actions for Governments and Communities:**

1. Introduce a framework to mobilise action and enhance cooperation between masses and societies, including a database where ideas and practical tips could be listed and action points shared
2. Focus on youth
  - a. support their actions
  - b. aid in the development of their skills
  - c. provide them with opportunities to network
3. Democratic decision-making and community participation, where communities are given power to make decisions for their own
  - a. Encourage more assemblies of communities coming together
4. Community support and networking
  - a. Support each other in learning more about the climate crisis and ensuring people in your community can access information about this.
5. Encourage international organisations to support climate activists in restricted countries.

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We hope that you have found the content and outputs from our dialogue sessions insightful and thought provoking. Without the tireless efforts of our interns and partners alike, we would be unable to meaningfully engage with these sessions, and actively ensure that the voices of civil society are heard and truly represented. In response to this, the Beyond COP Team has every intention of hosting yet another collaborative dialogue session at COP29, given the pertinence of subject matter. To find out more, or if you want to get involved with future collaborative events, please contact us at: [beyond.cop@unascotland.org.uk](mailto:beyond.cop@unascotland.org.uk).

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## 7. RESOURCES

If you would like to find out more about COP28 and the ambitions that the Beyond COP Team have planned for the future, we highly recommend the following resources kindly provided by our partners and interns:

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