

## PAKISTAN'S ROLE IN COP29: ADDRESSING CLIMATE VULNERABILITY AND ADVOCATING FOR GLOBAL CLIMATE ACTION

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*(Views expressed in the brief are those of the author, and do not represent those of ISSI)*



**COP29**  
Baku  
Azerbaijan  
UN CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE

### Introduction: A Critical Moment for Global Climate Action

The whole world is facing unparalleled environmental challenges arising due to climate change and global warming. Nations will, therefore, converge at the upcoming 29<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties (COP29), scheduled to take place in Baku, Azerbaijan, between November 11 and 22, 2024, to layout new policy implementations.<sup>1</sup> In the wake of increasing environmental degradation, this conference appears as an important turning point where humankind must act as a collective and address the climate change issues with a sense of urgency.

The key areas of focus for COP29, under the presidency of Azerbaijan, will include but are not limited to climate finance, adaptation, mitigation, and carbon markets.<sup>2</sup> The outcome of this conference will shape the course of how the world will take up the challenge of climate change for the coming ten years or so. Pakistan, in consultation with Azerbaijan, is striving to engage constructively to enhance climate action through responding to common vulnerabilities as well as exploring paths of collaboration in areas such as clean energy and environmental resilience.<sup>3</sup>

1 "What is COP29?" COP29, Accessed on September 20, 2024, <https://cop29.az/en/pages/what-is-cop29>

2 ibid

3 Saba Rehman, "Pakistan at COP29: Confronting Climate Change on the World Stage," CRSS, Accessed on September 20, 2024, <https://crss.pk/pakistan-at-cop29-confronting-climate-change-on-the-world-stage/>

## The 'COP29 Truce': A Symbol of Solidarity

The call for a 'COP29 Truce,' inspired by the Olympic Truce, therefore represents a critical appeal to the global community. This truce symbolizes human solidarity, urging nations to set aside political and ideological differences during COP29, thereby enabling participants to wholly concentrate on addressing climate change. It is not just a no-conflict agreement, but an agreement to commitment, a unified global response in saving humanity from the environmental crisis. Probably the clearest message would be that if humanity comes together, then we can save the planet. The truce hence calls for cooperation and collaboration throughout the event for meaningful outcomes.<sup>4</sup>

## Pakistan's Vulnerability and the Urgent Need for Action

Pakistan is one of the most climate-vulnerable countries on Earth, with temperatures rising, extreme weather events multiplying, and the glaciers melting away. The 2022 floods wreaked havoc across large swaths of the country and forced displacement of millions of people which shows starkly what's at stake.<sup>5</sup>

Climate change essentially threatens the national security, economic stability, and social fabric. The country has already witnessed an average increase in temperature by 0.6°C per year, which is further elevating heatwaves, food insecurity, and a shortage of water.<sup>6</sup> At COP29, Pakistan would be calling for enhanced climate finance and international cooperation as a means to addressing these challenges and underpinning the need for short and long-term solutions.

## Pakistan's Role and Challenges at COP29

Ms. Romina Khurshid Alam, Pakistan Prime Minister's Coordinator on Climate Change, considers COP29 a golden opportunity for marshalling international opinion for the country's specific climate-related challenges and needs. Pakistan contributes less than 1% toward world carbon emissions but stands out among the most severely affected countries due to climate change. This was evident in the floods of 2022, which resulted in losses totalling over PKR 24 billion.<sup>7</sup> During the COP29, Pakistan would reiterate and convey the urgency of increased support at the global level through climate

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<sup>4</sup> Zulfiqar Baig, "Call to embrace 'COP29 Truce'," Tribune, September 19, 2024, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2497076/call-to-embrace-cop29-truce>

<sup>5</sup> Mian Ahmad Naeem Salik, Mir Sher Baz Khetran, "Deadly Heatwaves in Pakistan and the Role of Urban Planning," ISSI, September 11, 2024, <https://issi.org.pk/issue-brief-on-deadly-heatwaves-in-pakistan-and-the-role-of-urban-planning/>

<sup>6</sup> Laiba Khan, "Loss and Damage: Pakistan's Fight for Survival At COP-29," Eurasia Review, August 7, 2024, <https://www.eurasiareview.com/07082024-loss-and-damage-pakistans-fight-for-survival-at-cop-29-oped/>

<sup>7</sup> Esraa Esmail, "Pakistan to showcase climate actions, solutions at COP29," Zawaya, September 19, 2024, <https://www.zawaya.com/en/world/indian-sub-continent/pakistan-to-showcase-climate-actions-solutions-at-cop29-o5e4bj47>

finance, technical support, and adaptation cooperation. Together with Azerbaijan, Pakistan is liaising for mutual climate interests that cement relationships through a vision to unveil long-term benefits for both countries in their fight against climate-induced crises through the launch of a joint climate transparency report at COP29.<sup>8</sup>

### **Climate Finance: The Road to a New Target**

One of the highly anticipated outcomes of COP29 is setting a new climate finance target to financially help low- and middle-income countries adapt themselves or mitigate the effects of climate change. In 2009, developed countries agreed that by 2020, they would collectively mobilize \$100 billion per year to support developing countries' climate action, which is yet to materialise. Furthermore, the establishment of the Loss and Damage Fund during COP27 to help vulnerable nations cope with the impacts of climate change, is still drastically underfunded.<sup>9</sup>

Pre-COP29 negotiations have been tough, with disagreement over how much will be needed and who should give it. It is not yet clear if the new target will include the recently established Loss and Damage Fund, which provides financial assistance to nations affected by climate-related crises. Regardless of the challenge, the COP29 presidency, under the leadership of Azerbaijan, remains hopeful of reaching a deal.<sup>10</sup>

Another facility is concurrently being proposed to address the existing deficit in climate finance: the Climate Finance Action Fund. This fund would collect voluntary contributions from fossil fuel-producing countries and companies, with Azerbaijan leading the charge as a petroleum-rich nation.<sup>11</sup> Pakistan will be advocating for this fund and other financial mechanisms to support its efforts in building resilience against future climate shocks.

### **Bridging the Financial Gap: The New Collective Quantified Goal**

Indeed, with the targets of reduction of emission, developing countries like Pakistan are being asked to switch off fossil fuels and embrace clean energy solutions. All along, they are short in financial

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<sup>8</sup> "Pakistan, Azerbaijan to launch joint climate transparency report," Dawn, May 12, 2024, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1832935>

<sup>9</sup> Lou Sherry, "Climate Justice and Loss and Damage: A Look at What COP28 Meant for Historical Responsibility in Climate Action," Earth.Org, March 28, 2024, <https://earth.org/climate-justice-and-loss-and-damage/>

<sup>10</sup> Sebastian Rodriguez, "Slow progress in Baku risks derailing talks on new climate finance goal at COP29," Climate Home News, September 13, 2024, <https://www.climatechangenews.com/2024/09/13/slow-progress-in-baku-risks-derailing-talks-on-new-finance-goal-at-cop29/>

<sup>11</sup> Amitabh Sinha, "COP29 in Baku: Azerbaijan to launch new climate fund at this year's conference," The Indian Express, September 18, 2024, <https://indianexpress.com/article/world/climate-change/cop29-in-baku-azerbaijan-to-launch-new-climate-fund-9572560/>

resources that would be required, and not as attractive to investors as more developed countries. That is where climate finance has proven to be important. The New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) on climate finance is one of the most important elements under the Paris Agreement that will set new financial targets to support countries in dealing with climate change. Still under negotiation, NCQG will be concluded by 2025 and will provide the determination of post-2025 financial support. The expected formalization of this goal is this year at COP29.<sup>12</sup>

### **Article 6: Improving Carbon Markets**

Another focus of COP29 will be on Article 6 of the Paris Agreement which deals with carbon market. Carbon markets are where countries and companies invest in green projects to offset their emissions. To date, carbon markets have been held up by accusations of greenwashing and a general lack of regulatory oversight.<sup>13</sup>

COP29 offers an opportunity to upgrade the standards of carbon markets, rendering them a more credible instrument in the quest for emissions reduction. Better-functioning carbon markets would provide Pakistan with opportunities for new avenues of finance for green projects without increasing national debt.

### **Adaptation: A Growing Priority**

While mitigation, reduction of emission, has conventionally been the prime focus of global climate efforts, adaptation is turning out to be even more important with worsening climate impacts. For countries like Pakistan, responding to the altering climate has become an urgent need. At COP29, Pakistan will advocate shifting more resources toward adaptation measures, including enhancement of water management, hardening agriculture against vulnerability, and construction of climate-resilient infrastructure. Without significant investment in adaptation, the disastrous brunt of climate-related events continues to be borne by Pakistan and other developing countries.<sup>14</sup>

### **Data Collection: A Fundamental Gap**

Data collection is one of the major barriers to effective climate action, especially in regions like Asia, which makes up almost 50% of global emissions. Most countries still lack capacity in collecting and

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<sup>12</sup> Laia Barbarà, Ameya Hadap, "The NCQG: What is it and why does it matter?" World Economic Forum, July 17, 2024, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2024/07/new-collective-quantified-goal-what-is-it-and-why-does-it-matter/>

<sup>13</sup> Laia Barbarà, Ameya Hadap, "With fewer than 100 days to COP29, what's on the agenda?" World Economic Forum, August 12, 2024, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2024/08/what-is-cop29-climate-change-summit-priorities/>

<sup>14</sup> ibid

analysing climate-related data. According to a report by the Asian Development Bank, only 17 of 49 member countries are active in gathering climate-related data.<sup>15</sup>

Without any real data, countries are flying almost blind as they try to mitigate and adapt to ongoing climate change. COP29 will address this problem right away by calling on countries to invest in those infrastructures necessary for the collection of such data; crucial for tracking progress and making informed decisions on climate action.

### **The Need for Equitable Climate Finance**

At COP29, Pakistan will press for a more just and equitable sharing of climate finance. Considering that developing nations contribute a minimum to global emissions, especially in the Global South, these are the same countries suffering from climate impacts. Pakistan will push for a multi-layered funding mechanism in which countries' contributions should be based on their historical emissions and economic capacities. Furthermore, Pakistan demands relief mechanisms of debt for vulnerable countries to free resources internally in their own countries for climate action.<sup>16</sup>

### **Conclusion: A Historic Opportunity for Unity**

COP29 is a moment in history when the world can come together to take meaningful action on climate change. To Pakistan, it offers an avenue to project its vulnerability, secure much-needed financial support, and advocate for a more equitable distribution of climate funds. As the world's leaders descend upon Baku, the hope perhaps is that each nation will embrace the spirit of the COP29 Truce— setting aside political differences to confront the greatest challenge of modern times—climate change. Giving priority to finance, adaptation, and enhancement of carbon markets, COP29 may be able to provide the building blocks for a safe and sustainable future for all.

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<sup>15</sup> Adva Saldinger, "Can countries agree on a climate finance target by COP 29?" Devex, September 17, 2024, <https://www.devex.com/news/devex-invested-can-countries-agree-on-a-climate-finance-target-by-cop-29-108308>

<sup>16</sup> "Robust plan must to showcase Pakistan's resilience-building initiatives at COP29," News, July 30, 2024, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1214841-robust-plan-must-to-showcase-pakistan-s-resilience-building-initiatives-at-cop29>