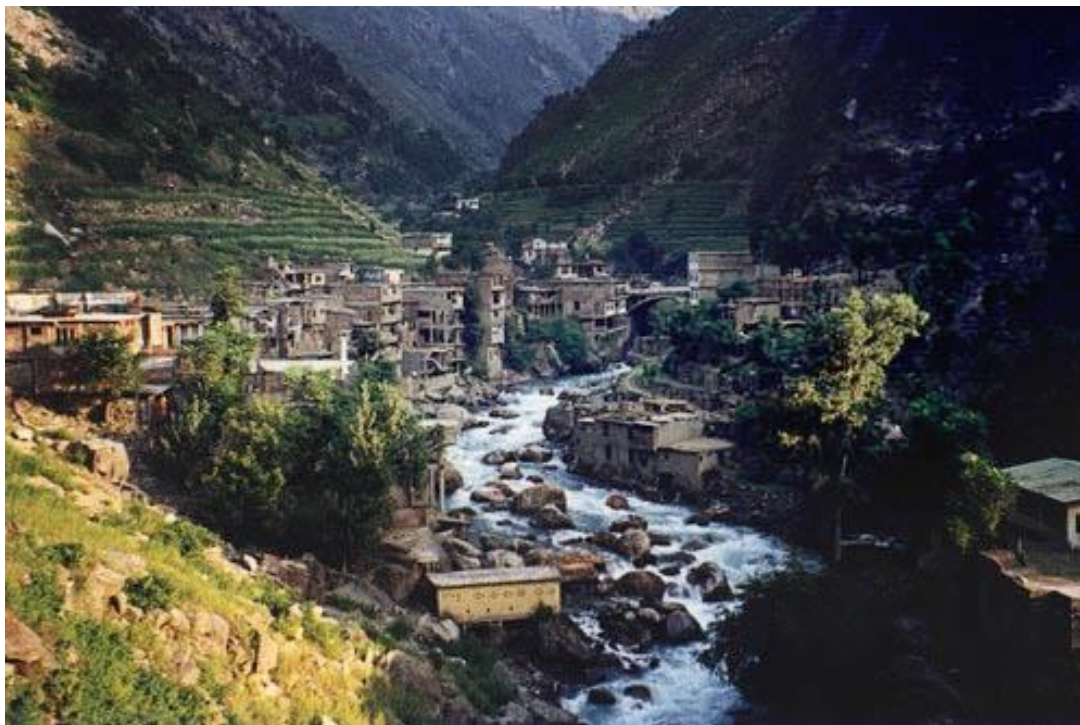


COP28: The Case for a Quantum Leap in Climate Action



A village in Kohistan, Pakistan circa 2010, before it was struck by extreme flooding that year. Pakistan is one of the most climate-vulnerable countries in the world and continues to deal with catastrophic flooding, most recently in 2022. [CRS Staff]

“ALTHOUGH THE MEASURES THAT WE CAN TAKE NOW ARE COSTLY, THE COST WILL BE ALL THE MORE BURDENSOME THE LONGER WE WAIT.”¹

As the world gears up for the 28th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP28) to the United Nations (UN) in Dubai, expectations regarding its positive outcomes are growing in proportion to the increasing awareness of the severity of the climate crisis and the urgent need for decisive action. Scientists are warning us that much more needs to be done and that the window for securing a livable and sustainable future may soon close.² As the official humanitarian and development organization of the US Catholic church, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) is prioritizing pushing governments to take the necessary and long overdue steps to deal with the climate change emergency. In the countries where we work, extreme weather events are already devastating vulnerable communities. CRS is responding to this widening crisis by working closely with affected communities and local organizations to help rebuild their lives and adapt to climate change. But these efforts cannot meet the increasing needs without significantly higher levels of assistance and a greater international commitment to help those who are suffering.

¹ Pope Francis. *Esortazione Apostolica Laudate Deum* [Apostolic Exhortation to All People of Goodwill on the Climate Crisis]. The Holy See. October 4, 2023, pg. 56. <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2023/10/04/0692/01509.html#inglese>.

² Lee, Hoesung, Katherine Calvin, Dipak Dasgupta, et al. *Synthesis Report of the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report (AR6)*. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. 2023. https://report.ipcc.ch/ar6syr/pdf/IPCC_AR6_SYR_SPM.pdf.

When Pope Francis released *Laudate Deum*, he emphasized the urgent need for action at COP28. In that appeal, he implores the global community “...to overcome the logic of appearing sensitive to the problem and at the same time not having the courage to make substantial changes”.³ Pope Francis’ words represent a strong challenge to world leaders to collaborate for the common good and to put the welfare of current and future generations ahead of selfish interests.

For leaders and climate negotiators, the central message of *Laudate Deum* is clear: they must come to COP28 prepared to make bold commitments and far-reaching decisions. The Pope’s words also echo the call to action of the Secretary General of the UN, António Guterres, who demands that we take a “quantum leap” to confront the climate crisis.⁴ The success of the UN climate summit will be measured according to the ability of countries to act on the first-ever Global Stocktake, to operationalize a Loss and Damage Fund and to deliver the climate finance that developing countries desperately need to adapt to climate change.

This policy brief outlines CRS’ expectations from COP28 with regards to priorities and necessary outcomes.

Global Stocktake (GST)

As part of the Paris Agreement, governments committed to conduct a review of their progress towards meeting the stated goals every five years. This process is known as the Global Stocktake (GST). In September 2023, the GST Technical Synthesis Report revealed that the world is falling short of achieving its goal of keeping global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.5 degrees Fahrenheit). The final phase of the GST takes place at COP28 where countries will be asked to ratchet up their emissions reduction targets as set out in their climate plans, their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). Developed countries will need to shoulder their fair share of the burden by aggressively reducing emissions and increasing funding for developing countries. The NDCs of the richest G20 countries are currently not sufficiently ambitious.⁵ They need to do much more to reduce their emissions.

CRS’ specific recommendations to promote more effective outcomes from the Global Stocktake include:

- Developed countries must enhance their mitigation goals in their NDCs.
- Developed countries must take the lead in providing public finance and support to assist in climate transitions, in light of their historical responsibility and respective capacities.
- Parties must recognize the importance of safeguarding nature, our common home.

Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA)

The Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) was established in 2015 under the Paris Agreement with the aim of “enhanced adaptive capacity, strengthened resilience, and reduced vulnerability to climate change”. The specific target of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius is useful, but adapting to climate change cannot be reduced to simple arithmetic. Since 2015, parties have worked to identify elements of the GGA and ways to assess progress in achieving this goal. At COP27, they initiated the development of a high-level framework. This should promote monitoring, evaluating, and learning which are integral components of creating agility and accountability in the fight against climate change. This framework should help to resolve the issue identified by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) that adaptation efforts remain “fragmented, small in scale, incremental”.⁶ Additionally, finance for climate adaptation receives far less attention than mitigation.⁷ Yet

³ Pope Francis. *Esortazione Apostolica Laudate Deum* [Apostolic Exhortation to All People of Goodwill on the Climate Crisis]. The Holy See. October 4, 2023, pg. 56. <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2023/10/04/0692/01509.html#inglese>.

⁴ Guterres, António. “Secretary-General Calls on States to Tackle Climate Change ‘Time-Bomb’ Through New Solidarity Pact, Acceleration Agenda, at Launch of Intergovernmental Panel Report.” Media Release. March 20, 2023. <https://press.un.org/en/2023/sgsm21730.doc.htm>.

⁵ Holz, Ceecee. *Are G20 Countries Doing Their Fair Share of Global Climate Mitigation?*. Oxfam. 2023. <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/are-g20-countries-doing-their-fair-share-of-global-climate-mitigation-comparing-621540/>.

⁶ Pörtner, Hans-O., Debra C. Roberts, Helen Adams, et al. *Summary for Policymakers*. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. 2023, pg. 20. https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGII_SummaryForPolicymakers.pdf.

⁷ Carty, Tracy, Jan Kowalzig, and Bertram Zagema. *Climate Finance Shadow Report 2020*. Oxfam. 2020. <https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/621066/bp-climate-finance-shadow-report-2020-201020-en.pdf>.

adaptation represents a key priority for developing countries. Therefore, a holistic framework with clear targets will assist in realizing these goals. But this framework must also improve the quality of adaptation actions, including integrating gender equality and inclusion. Any effective framework must also incentivize access to adaptation finance by local communities and organizations who are on the frontlines of the climate crisis.

CRS recommends the following on the GGA:

- Decide on a comprehensive framework for the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) with global mid- and long-term targets, metrics, and indicators.
- Agree on a roadmap for doubling adaptation financing.

Climate Finance

Finance plays a crucial role in achieving the shared goals of equity, justice, and fairness.

To effectively deal with the climate crisis, parties at COP28 will have to achieve positive outcomes in the following key areas:

- **Meet USD 100 billion for climate finance.** This goal, which was agreed in 2009, has not yet been achieved. Meeting this commitment is crucial for building trust in the negotiations. The gap between the agreed obligation of developed countries and the delivered amounts must be closed.
- **Contribute to the Green Climate Fund (GCF).** The GCF is the largest multilateral climate fund. Currently, the second replenishment round is underway. To date, 25 countries have pledged to the GCF, but the total is less than what was pledged in the last round in 2019.⁸ At COP28, developed countries that have not pledged funds to the GCF must do so.
- **Make progress on the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG)** – At COP28, Parties will continue negotiating a new collective financing target for the period after 2025. These negotiations will be finalized in 2024 at COP29. NCQG should consider the needs and priorities of developing countries when defining these financing levels. It is important that developed countries show strong leadership in providing financial assistance to developing countries for the preparation and implementation of their National Adaptation Plans (NAPs).

Loss and Damage

At COP27, governments reached an agreement to establish new funding arrangements and a fund to address losses and damages in developing countries. Vulnerable small island nations and low-income countries have advocated for such a fund for more than 30 years. The agreement therefore recognizes that adaptation and mitigation are proceeding at too slow a pace, and that climate change is already causing considerable losses and damages. The situation is particularly severe for poor communities in developing countries who have contributed the least to the climate crisis. As part of COP27, parties also agreed to create a Transitional Committee to develop the details of the Loss and Damage Fund, including its scope, operations, and sources of funding. The Transitional Committee has met five times this year and an agreement has been reached. This agreement will be discussed at COP28.

At COP28, Parties will also decide who will host the Santiago Network on Loss and Damage (SNLD). SNLD was established at COP25 in 2019 to assist developing countries in dealing with losses and damages caused by climate change.

⁸ “Will Climate Finance Make or Break COP28?.” Economist Impact. 2023. <https://impact.economist.com/sustainability/circular-economies/will-climate-finance-make-or-break-cop28>.

In this context, CRS recommends the following actions for Loss and Damage:

- Parties should agree to operationalize the Loss and Damage Fund with country ownership, inclusiveness, and human rights as governing principles of the Fund.
- Developed countries must demonstrate their support to the Loss and Damage Fund by making pledges.
- Loss and Damage finance needs to be a separate item in the NCQG.
- Parties should agree on a host for SNLD and on working in tandem with the Loss and Damage Fund to foster synergies and coherency.

Food Systems

COP28's United Arab Emirates (UAE) presidency recognizes the importance of food systems and has called for a Food Systems Declaration.⁹ According to António Guterres, the world's food systems are broken. Billions of people are now paying the price for this failure.¹⁰ The IPCC has also stated that the agreed target of limiting global warming to 1.5 Celsius cannot be achieved without addressing emissions from food systems. Food systems are critical to the livelihoods and economic development of billions of people, particularly in developing countries. Climate change and extreme weather events—such as droughts, floods, and heatwaves—destroy farmers' crops and livelihoods and further exacerbate pre-existing food insecurity. It is therefore essential to invest in agriculture and food systems to make them more resilient in the face of climate change. According to the Adaptation Gap Report (2023), investing USD 16 billion in agriculture per year would prevent 78 million people from going hungry.¹¹ At COP28, governments can address some of the climate risks that food systems face. Within the official negotiations, governments will agree on a work plan for the ***Sharm el-Sheikh Joint Work on implementation of climate action on agriculture and food security (SSJW)***. SSJW's work plan could provide important knowledge and technical expertise to facilitate the sharing of best practices to mobilize finance to support developing countries in building resilient food systems.



CRS works with families in Indonesia to train them in cyclone- and climate-resilient farming techniques. Kristina Uto, above, supports her family with a kitchen garden. [Benny Manser for CRS]

To advance responses that properly account for the interlinkages between food systems and climate, CRS recommends the following:

- In Dubai, Parties need to agree on a work plan for the SSJW, including a dedicated workshop on agroecology. The work plan must consider linkages across the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to ensure that food systems are addressed in countries' NDCs and NAPs. The SSJW should help to direct the necessary financing to agriculture, particularly for small-scale farmers most vulnerable to climate change.
- The UAE Food System Declaration must give priority to promoting regenerative sustainable agricultural practices that promote biological diversity, health, and equity.

⁹ "COP28 Calls on Governments to Ensure Food Systems and Agriculture are Central to Climate Action Efforts." PR Newswire. 2023.

<https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/cop28-calls-on-governments-to-ensure-food-systems-and-agriculture-are-central-to-climate-action-efforts-301884207.html>.

¹⁰ "The UN Secretary-General Convenes World Leaders and Key Actors for UN Food Systems Summit +2 Stocktaking Moment in Push to Transform Food Systems and Accelerate Action for the SDGs." Media Release. July 24, 2023. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2023/07/press-release-the-un-secretary-general-convenes-world-leaders-and-key-actors-for-un-food-systems-summit-2-stocktaking-moment-in-push-to-transform-food-systems-and-accelerate-action-for-the-sdgs/>.

¹¹ *Adaptation Gap Report 2023: Underfinanced. Underprepared. Inadequate Investment and Planning on Climate Adaptation Leaves World Exposed.* United Nations Environment Programme. 2023. <https://www.unep.org/resources/adaptation-gap-report-2023>.