

Environmental summary 2023



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A weak but explicit commitment to end the use of fossil fuels by 2050 was perhaps the most significant outcome of the 28th United Nations Climate Change Conference, known as COP 28.

The meeting brought together delegations from nearly 200 countries in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, paradoxically the sixth largest country in the world.

The United Arab Emirates, paradoxically the sixth largest producer of crude oil in the world and the fourth largest producer of products derived from this hydrocarbon.

However, COP 28 was undoubtedly the most transcendental event of 2023 in environmental matters, since it reached an agreement between multiple and diverse interests regarding the use of fossil fuels, which cause climate change. A phenomenon that affects the rest of the natural processes and endangers the life of all living beings on the planet.

The COP 28 outcome document recognizes the need for deep, rapid and sustained reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and calls on Parties to take into account the 2015 Paris Agreement and their different national circumstances, pathways and approaches. This sends a clear signal to industry and investors that time is running out for oil, gas and coal.

Another important agreement from the conference is the establishment of a fund to pay for damages and losses from climate-related storms and droughts.

Several industrialized countries announced immediate contributions adding \$400 million for the poorest nations suffering the effects of climate change. Environmental organizations said that this amount is totally insufficient to cover the cost of the devastation caused by climate change worldwide, which some sources put at 400 billion.

A Cuban delegation attended COP 28, led by the head of the Ministry of Science, Technology and the Environment, Elba Rosa Pérez Montoya. She recalled that on the island there is a clear perception of the effects of climate change and the political will of the Cuban state to confront it. Cuba is working intensively to minimize the effects of CC through the government program called Tarea Vida (Life Task), she said.

The minister noted the need to change the current unfair financial architecture and for developed countries to meet their commitments, with a view to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Also speaking at COP 28 was Head of State Miguel Diaz-Canel Bermudez, in his capacity as President pro tempore of the Group of 77 and China. He recalled that although Cuba contributes less than 0.1% of global greenhouse gas emissions, it reaffirms its commitment to make a nationally determined contribution and to advance an energy transition strategy towards a much more resilient and low-carbon development model.

The Cuban leader added that COP 28 is a unique opportunity to change the course of collective efforts in the fight against climate change. Count on the contribution of the Group of 77 and China, which Cuba has the honor of chairing, he concluded.

On the other hand, the year 2023 continues to drag the harmful practices of land use, with the expansion of crops for pasture, various crops and the consequent loss of habitat for hundreds of animal species.

Thirty-three percent of the world's land surface is degraded, and about 47% of the world's degraded land is forest; cropland accounts for about 18% of the global total of degraded land, according to the FAO.

One phenomenon that has unfortunately increased over the past 12 months is plastic waste. It is estimated that between 19 and 23 million tons of plastic waste end up in lakes, rivers and oceans every year.

Microplastics, particles less than 5 mm in diameter, are also finding their way into food, water and even the air.

And if there is one environmental phenomenon that is on the rise, it is droughts. Over the past two decades, they have affected 1.4 billion people worldwide, increasing in number and duration by nearly 30% since 2000.

In 2023, Africa was the region that experienced the greatest increase in the severity and frequency of this phenomenon, although it has gradually spread to all continents, from Asia and the Pacific to Europe and Latin America.

It is estimated that by 2050, droughts could impact more than three quarters of the world's population, and 216 million people could be forced to emigrate.

2023 could be a trailer, that is, a preview of a future characterized by climate disruptions that would affect the very existence of life on Earth. Hence, the urgency to act now.

Fidel Castro's visionary prediction at the so-called Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 seems to be coming true. "Tomorrow will be too late to do what we should have done long ago."

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