



Article Type: Short Communication

Received: 29/11/2021

Published: 09/12/2021

DOI: 10.46718/JBGSR.2021.10.000246

What was and was not agreed at COP26 In Glasgow, UK in November 2021

Keith Openshaw*

Retired World Bank Staff member, Virginia, USA.

*Corresponding author: Keith Openshaw, MA Political Economy, Retired World Bank Staff member, St. Vienna, Virginia 22180, USA

Short Communication

The latest Climate Action Tracker lists only one country – The Gambia - to be on target to limit global temperature increase to 1.50C from the pre-industrial level by 2100, with another 7 countries out of a total of 167 almost there ((CAT Nov. 2021). With current policies, the world as a whole is proceeding towards an increase of 2.90C above pre-industrial levels, nearly twice the internationally agreed target figure. With Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), pledges and targets, presented at the UNFCCC Conference of Parties 26 (COP26), held in Glasgow, UK in early November 2021, it reduced this figure to 2.40C. But even this lower number is likely to have a dramatic effect on the environment, especially for Homo sapiens. Whether countries, private finance and world bodies can agree to and achieve the 1.50C target seems doubtful. Pressure is to be put on all the 197 countries who signed the Paris Agreement (COP21) in December 2015 to come up with more realistic figures by COP27, to be held in Egypt in November 2020. It will be the young and future generations who will suffer the consequences of slow actions taken by the present (senior) generations, who amble towards 'doomsday'.

Most of the land-use and energy goals to achieve only a 1.50C target increase are well known, namely reversing deforestation through improved management and by planting more trees, increasing agriculture and silviculture productivity, restoring, protecting and expanding wetlands and safeguarding fragile areas, significantly reducing fossil fuel consumption, improving energy efficiency at all levels, promoting carbon capture and storage (CCS) and dramatically expanding the use of renewable energy namely. wind, water (hydro and wave), solar and biomass power.

In addition, what is rarely discussed is tempering population increase, which is estimated to increase by

3 billion in 2100 from 2020. This is especially so in Sub-Saharan Africa which is forecast to increase by 2.681 billion in 2100 compared to 2020. In Asia population is estimated to increase by 79 million, principally because China's population is forecast to decrease by 369 million in 2100 compared to 2020. (Source Population Pyramid 2021). Also, the human diet may have to change, by eating less meat and obtaining more proteins from plants!

What was and was not agreed at COP26?

The following is a summary by The US Council on Foreign Relations: COP26. Nov. 15 2021.

1. Phase down (not eliminate) unabated coal power by 2030 for developed countries and 2040 (or 2050) for other countries.
2. New rules for trading carbon credits.
3. Call for nations to return to COP27 in 2022 (and not COP31 in 2026) with more ambitious and realistic targets to curb Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions [1].
4. Request for yearly NDC reports of nations annual commitments to reduce GHG emissions.

In addition:

- a. The USA and China agree to work together to reduce global warming increase.
- b. Over 100 nations pledge to cut 30% of methane (CH₃) emissions by 2030.
- c. More than 130 nations, together possessing 90% of the world's forests agree to half and then reverse (commercial) deforestation by 2030 [2].
- d. Over 450 financial institutions overseeing \$130

trillion (1012) assets promise to align their portfolios with the goals of achieving Net Zero Emissions (NZE) by 2050.

e. Many nations pledge to increase tree planting.

There were notable failures.

1 The COP26 President Alok Sharma urged negotiators to consign coal to history by 2030. This did not happen.

2 Failure to make significant progress on climate finance. The UN Environmental Program (UNEP), estimate that developing countries need US\$70 billion (109) per year for adaption and this could double by 2030. But present pledges are below this figure.

3 Poorer nations renewed their call for financial help to adapt to the effects of climate change and establish a loss

and damage fund. But COP26 did not resolve the funding challenge.

If governments are serious about the Paris agreement's temperature limits and their own net-zero goals, they need to translate those long-term goals into net-zero aligned ambitious 2030 targets and implement the necessary policies today. Developed countries will also significantly increase the climate finance available to support the transition. Until this happens, there is no cause for celebration. (Climate Action Tracker November 2021: Glasgow Creditability Gap).

The UN's Secretary General Antonio Guterres recognized what he called the climate action army. Guterres acknowledged the power of activists to propel governments and companies beyond words and into action. He urged them "Never give up. Never retreat. Keep pushing forward".