

COP26 - Where to Go From Here

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Like so many others in the wake of the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties (or COP26 as we know it), I'm doing my best to digest the outcomes.

The *'should haves'* and *'could haves'* need to be put on hold for now, in favour of facing the future head-on and focusing on what we can do to mitigate further damage to the planet.

I attended COP26 in the first week with other Acre representatives and was honoured to be present at something so monumental and potentially transformative. But now in the aftermath, my feelings are mixed.

On the one hand, I'm wondering if reversibility is even a realistic goal. On the other, can we adopt a robust adaptability approach in time?

The largest political gathering ever held in the UK overran, as predicted, until an agreement was finally thrashed out on the table.

The new Glasgow Climate Pact is born out of the COP26 climate summit, a universal agreement that while 1.5C is the required goal, reaching it will vary in importance from nation to nation.

Still, it did not come without controversy. China and India's decision to wade in at the last second, watering down the term *'phase-outs'* to a weaker sounding and more ambiguous *'phase down'* when talking about *'unabated'* coal, left most feeling discouraged.

And somehow, animal agriculture wasn't given a high status as a topic for discussion despite the global food system being responsible for nearly a third of emissions.

But it isn't all doom and gloom. Even in the face of China and India's request for a last-minute change and lack of solid progress surrounding climate finance and adaptation, loss and damage, 190 nations have supported the Glasgow Climate Pact.

Moreover, we should be immensely proud of what has been achieved by Alok Sharma (COP26 president) and his team.

Sharma had to put his tears, frustrations and deep sorrow by the wayside over the negotiation outcome for the unfortunate new phrasing for coal power, to ensure the deal was protected with the developing countries and vulnerable island nations in mind.

The new pact requests that countries update their current national plans to slash greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, known as the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), to the Paris Agreement by COP27, hosted in Egypt next year. Only India managed to produce a new NDC at the talks, but a new roadmap was designed for NDC revisions which I hope will hasten the pace somewhat. Time will tell.

The Glasgow Climate Pact has called for countries to at least double their collective provision of climate finance to developing nations. This is a historic commitment, but countries now need to delve deeper into their pockets to support the climate crisis already devastating many countries.

Adaptation strategies to reduce the negative impact of climate change, whether they are reactive or anticipatory, will need to ensure nobody is abandoned and everyone will benefit from a climate-resilient future.

We must not lose momentum; we cannot get complacent. Developing countries need extra investment and advisory support to help them adapt to the extreme weather conditions they face and the subsequent fallout.

So now, we must all collectively work towards the future and remain optimistic. Progress is being made - albeit slowly - towards COP27, which I hope will bring a little less drama and a lot more stability.

Greg Brittian leads senior searches for Acre across Health, Safety, Environment and Sustainability.

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