



## COP26—A Steep Climb but Forward

Zuzanna Nowak

COP26, the 26<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), was held in Glasgow between 31 October and 13 November. Its aim was to increase global ambitions in the area of climate change mitigation, adaptation to these changes, as well as financing the fight against climate change. Expectations for the summit were very high, but the agreements that were reached and the new Climate Pact signed by 196 countries and the EU fell short. This does not mean, however, that the summit was a failure. The upcoming months will show the extent to which the new arrangements will translate into real measures to protect the climate.

### What is in the Glasgow Climate Pact?

The pact emphasizes the need to “accelerate efforts towards the phase-out of unabated coal power and inefficient fossil fuel subsidies” while considering the fairness of this transition (climate justice). It also urges all countries to present their long-term strategies towards a “just transition” to net-zero emissions by or around 2050 as well as calls for an ambitious revision of nationally determined contributions (NDCs) up to 2030 by the end of 2022. The document emphasises the failure to date of climate finance activities and expresses the “deep regret” of the parties that developed countries have not fulfilled their COP15 promise to allocate \$100 billion per year by 2020 for climate change mitigation. It also calls on developed countries to “at least double” the funding for developing countries’ efforts to adapt to climate change and to define a new climate financing framework. However, the pact is not legally binding.

### What can be considered a success of COP26?

COP26 was the first climate summit in which the parties agreed in the final document to explicitly mention the need for a reduction of emissions from coal, the fuel that contributes most to the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Also, progress was achieved in terms of addressing the climate justice issue, with an announcement of an increase in funding for developing countries and by establishing direct links between climate, biodiversity, and environmental protection. After six years of discussions, the

Paris Rulebook was also finalised and the main idea of the Paris Agreement of coordinated action to keep the global average temperature increase below 1.5°C was confirmed. Additional agreements were also reached during the summit, including one to end deforestation by 2030, which, importantly, was also signed by Brazil, another on reducing methane emissions by 30% by 2030, initiated by the EU and the U.S., and a third on the need to abandon coal-based energy, which was also signed by Poland. A bilateral China-U.S. agreement on strengthening climate cooperation turned out to be a positive surprise of this COP.

### What went wrong at COP26?

The signed agreements do not guarantee the achievement of the 1.5°C target. The issue of limiting losses and repairing existing damage related to climate change, especially in developing countries also remains unresolved, particularly due to strong opposition from the EU and the U.S. to the establishment of the financial framework. Although a mention of coal was included in the Climate Pact, this was a softer version negotiated until the last minute under the strong influence of India and China. During official discussions at COP26, the issue of the harmful effects of the use of oil and gas was treated marginally—lobbyists from the fossil fuel sector constituted the largest group of conference participants. The role of nuclear energy in solving climate problems was also not a significant subject of important discussions. Activists accused many countries of hypocrisy, including the U.S., which recently called on OPEC countries to increase oil production, as well as absent

# PISM SPOTLIGHT

leaders, including those from Russia, Brazil, and Turkey, of ignoring their responsibility for climate problems.

## **What are the next steps in the global fight against climate change?**

The COP26 results are part of the long process of climate transformation, which in the global framework is more often based on declarations than on committed joint action. But this time, the combination of the scientific evidence presented by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), pressure from the strengthening EU and U.S. climate leadership, and emotional exhortations

from climate-affected nations and young activists, herald an acceleration of global climate cooperation. It can therefore be expected that COP27, which will take place in Egypt in November 2022, will adopt a plan to implement concrete steps by 2030. The necessity to revise the NDCs by the end of 2022 (preferably before the commencement of COP27) provided for in the Climate Pact means that the European Commission will attach great importance to increasing the ambitions of the “Fit for 55” package currently discussed in the EU. It also must keep the justice of the transformation in the foreground, as emphasised during COP26 and important for Poland.