

COP27 summit does nothing to address climate change

Bryan Dyne

22 November 2022

This year's United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP27) has ended, and the world's major capitalist powers, banks and corporations that gathered in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt have again pledged to do essentially nothing to stop and reverse the ongoing climate crisis.

The agreement drafted by the delegates has many similarities to the one made in Glasgow, Scotland last year. The most pressing need—to end the use of fossil fuels and stop the emission of the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide into Earth's atmosphere—was relegated to a call for a limited reduction of coal power plants and to “phase-out ... inefficient fossil fuel subsidies,” a phrase which can be interpreted in many ways and is thus virtually meaningless.

Even those who have previously played major roles in crafting nonbinding agreements were forced to comment negatively on what was produced at COP27. Laurence Tubiana, who was one of the main architects of the lauded but ultimately toothless 2015 Paris Accords noted, “The influence of the fossil fuel industry was found across the board.” He continued, “The Egyptian presidency has produced a text that clearly protects oil and gas petro-states and the fossil fuel industry.”

One can only imagine what next year's COP28 will yield, being held in the United Arab Emirates, which has an estimated 10 percent of the world's oil reserves, 20 percent of the world's natural gas reserves and where oil exports make up 30 percent of the country's gross domestic product.

Even the call to limit global warming to less than 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels was almost abandoned. The limit is widely regarded by climate scientists as the “point of no return” in regards to the impact of climate change, beyond which the damage

caused by extreme weather, rising oceans, the destruction of habitats and the myriad of other dangers becomes qualitatively harder to reverse.

The call was kept only as a result of what CNN was forced to admit was a “carefully choreographed news conference” by officials from the European Union that threatened to walk out. The press conference was led by EU Climate Chief Frans Timmermans, who claimed, “We do not want 1.5 Celsius to die here and today. That to us is completely unacceptable.”

In reality, the European powers have nothing to offer the working class. The conference was wholly overshadowed by the war in Ukraine between the US and NATO on one side and Russia on the other. The United States has been pushing for Europe, particularly Germany, to shift away from its reliance on Russian natural gas in recent years, most openly in 2018 when then-President Donald Trump sanctioned Germany for not shutting down the Russia-Germany natural gas pipeline Nord Stream 2.

This pressure was amplified by the bombing of the Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines in September. The criminal destruction of tens of billions of dollars in infrastructure has forced Europe to become more reliant on US natural gas imports. Documents from the Department of Energy and US natural gas lobbyists show that the US government and corporations were already fast-tracking the infrastructure needed to increase liquefied natural gas exports to the EU and had been since at least the start of the Ukraine war in February.

Germany, for its part, has turned to revitalizing its coal industry. In April, for example, Vice Chancellor Robert Habeck of the Green Party authorized the destruction of the town of Lützerath and the relocation of its inhabitants to allow the company RWE to mine

280 million tons of coal. Habeck justified this by claiming, “Putin’s war of aggression is forcing us to temporarily make greater use of lignite so that we save gas in electricity generation. This is painful but necessary.”

The supposed highlight of COP27 was that a “loss and damage” fund was setup to channel funds primarily from the United States and European Union to poorer countries that have been most impacted already by climate change. It was hailed by Molwyn Joseph, chair of the Alliance of Small Island States, as “a win for our entire world,” and a show of “respect” to small nations.

The new fund is a token gesture at best. It is limited only to rebuilding after disasters strike and has been carefully crafted to not imply fault against those nations which output the most greenhouse gases, the US being among highest producers of emissions. There is also no clear understanding of how money will be distributed or whether it will even reach those in need.

Put another way, among the 35,000 attendees at the conference, there were reportedly more than 600 lobbyists from the fossil fuel industry present, up 25 percent from last year and more than all the delegates from Pacific Island nations combined. Whatever measures that have been taken have no doubt been carefully vetted by capitalist interests and made to ensure that profits from burning and poisoning Earth continue to climb.

Moreover, even if the “loss and damage” fund was given adequate resources and correct management to provide for those impacted by climate change, it does not actually address the crisis itself. It promotes the delusion, no doubt held by many of the world leaders at COP27, that climate change can be resolved simply by throwing some change at those who have lost their livelihoods and loved ones as a result of climate-induced devastation.

It at the same time pretends that increasingly catastrophic events can be dealt with in the same way. The logic is that, even when the worst effects of global warming emerge and drown the world’s coastlines, destroy habitats and ultimately kill billions of people, more money is the solution.

The overarching danger of climate change is that at some point, perhaps when global temperatures have risen past 1.5 degrees Celsius, perhaps after, *or perhaps before*, Earth’s climate will become decoupled from

human industrial activity and evolve into a runaway process that cannot be contained by current technology and could possibly end human civilization. But what does that matter when there is coal, oil and natural gas money to be made?

The real lesson from COP27 is that the capitalist class, divided into rival nation-states, has no solution to global warming. Climate scientists have warned governments and corporations for decades that continued carbon emissions into the atmosphere will eventually, and likely more rapidly than expected, produce cataclysmic convulsions that pose an existential threat to humans.

In that time, these warnings have been ignored and the working class in every country has suffered as climate change causes worse hurricanes, monsoons, wildfires, polar vortexes, crop destruction and numerous other disasters around the world every year. The only solution is a fight by the working class, an inherently international class, to abolish capitalism and establish production on a scientific, global and socialist basis.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact