

# A 2022 Climate Analysis Hindsight

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**BIC STORIES FROM THE FIELD, SERIES – ANALYSIS**

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The advent of 2023 gives an opportunity to conduct a review of the global events that marked the past year and to question “what was 2022 made of?”. It does not only provide a chance to remember the key events that shaped 2022, but it also gives some room to conduct hindsight of the political analysis made throughout the year. This commentary will review the key 2022 topics related to climate change and will identify the main events to monitor in 2023.

This climate review must unfortunately start with an annual stocktaking of the climate catastrophes that occurred in the precedent year<sup>1</sup>. Climate change made the year 2022 busy as no continent has been spared by natural disasters last year, with some of them broke records given their vast impacts. They are more frequent - their occurrence has multiplied by five in the last 50 years<sup>2</sup> - more intense, and less and less from natural causes: 71% of them were more likely to occur or to be more severe because of man-made climate change<sup>3</sup>.

Hurricane Ian, which formed in September 2022 and hit Cuba and the United States, is one of the deadliest hurricanes recorded in the U.S. in the last two decades<sup>4</sup>, and as well is the costliest disaster of the year with several damages reaching more than 100 billion US\$<sup>5</sup>. On the other side of the Atlantic Ocean during summer, European

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<sup>1</sup> Christian Aid, *Counting the Cost 2022, A year of climate Breakdown*, December 2022

<sup>2</sup> World Meteorological Organization, « Weather-related disasters increase over past 50 years, causing more damage but fewer deaths », 31/08/2021

<sup>3</sup> Carbon Brief, « Mapped: How climate change affects extreme weather around the world », 04/08/2022

<sup>4</sup> J. Schuppe and all, "Ian was one of the most lethal hurricanes in decades. Many of the deaths were preventable. », NBC News, 22/11/2022

<sup>5</sup> O. Rosane, « 10 costliest climate disasters of 2022 », World Economic Forum, 05/01/2023

countries faced compounding droughts, heatwaves, and devastating wildfires, destroying a size equivalent to Azerbaijan<sup>6</sup>. But the wide-ranging catastrophe that made the global news headlines was undoubtedly the floods that hit Pakistan during summer. This event, described as the worst in the history of the country<sup>7</sup>, killed more than 1700 people and impacted 33 million<sup>8</sup> - roughly 14% of the Pakistani population - destroyed 13115 km of road infrastructures, and left a third of the country underwater by September<sup>9</sup>.

This trend will not stop: the more global temperatures will increase in the coming decades, the more this situation will get worst. Regardless of the climate change scenario, hot extremes, heavy precipitations, agriculture and ecological droughts, tropical cyclones, compounded heatwaves and droughts, marine heatwaves, and extreme sea levels are projected to increase both in occurrence and intensity<sup>10</sup>. The sample of extreme weather events 2022 displayed is a reminder that increasing capacities for disaster preparedness will be crucial to climate-proof our societies in the future.

Regarding the political and international agenda, Egypt welcomed COP27 in Sharm El-Sheikh in November 2022. The Egyptian presidency settled goals on four climate domains: collaboration, mitigation, adaptation, and finance, the latter being one of the presidency's priorities<sup>11</sup>.

With the Summit taking place in Africa, the continent with the least number of cumulative emissions in history<sup>12</sup>, the Global south placed the question of climate justice and historical responsibility at the centre of the discussions. Indeed, despite being less responsible for human-caused climate change than developed countries, developing countries are the most vulnerable: they are more prone to climate extreme weather events, but they are less prepared and have more difficulties to

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<sup>6</sup> J. O'Driscoll, « The deadliest and most extreme weather events of 2022 », *The Week*, 30/12/2022

<sup>7</sup> Barron's, « Pakistan Floods 'Worst In Country's History', Says PM Sharif », 30/08/2022

<sup>8</sup> Islamic Relief, « Pakistan Moosoon Floods 2022, Islamic Relief Pakistan (12 October, 2022) », 13/10/2022

<sup>9</sup> « The deadliest and most extreme weather events of 2022 », op.cit.

<sup>10</sup> V. Masson-Delmotte and P. Zhai, « Regional trends in extreme events in the IPCC 2021 report », *the World Meteorological Organization Bulletin*, vol. 71 (1), 2022

<sup>11</sup> 'Vision and Mission', COP27 Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt 2022 website

<sup>12</sup> "Africa, What share of global CO2 emissions are emitted?" from Global Carbon Project data, 2022

recover<sup>13</sup>. This argument has been addressed for decades in climate fora to advance their cause, but it was particularly prominent this year: “Pakistan is victim of something with which we had nothing to do ... a man-made disaster”<sup>14</sup>. Developing countries particularly raised the need for the creation of a dedicated fund for loss and damage<sup>15</sup> and the necessity to heighten climate finance pledges from developed countries, given the failure to deliver a promised 100 billion US\$ per year by 2020<sup>16</sup>.

Against all odds, the final text concluded the negotiation with the creation of a special fund for loss and damage. The modalities are to be agreed at COP28 in 2023, the arrangement has not determined yet who will be the contributors and the recipients<sup>17</sup>. In the field of green finance, developed countries however did not re-engage to at least double their financial aids for adaptation in the developing world as they did the year before at COP26<sup>18</sup>. One key achievement of the COP however was the call to multilateral development banks to reform access to green financing for low and middle economies<sup>19</sup>.

The harsh climate conditions of summer 2022 provided tangible evidence of the urgency to step up political action to address the root-causes of climate change. However, the outcomes of the COP ended on disappointing results on decarbonation. Parties did not reach an agreement to phase-out the use of all fossil-

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<sup>13</sup> OECD, « Managing Climate Risks, facing up to Losses and Damages », 01/11/2021 ; “Regions and people with considerable development constraints have high vulnerability to climatic hazards. [...] vulnerability is high in locations with poverty, governance challenges and limited access to basic services and resources, violent conflict and high levels of climate-sensitive livelihoods”, IPCC, “Summary for policy makers” in Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability, 2022

<sup>14</sup> L. O'Donnell, « Pakistan Leads Charge for Climate Justice at COP27 », *Foreign Policy*, 09/11/2022

<sup>15</sup> « Human-induced climate change, including more frequent and intense extreme events, has caused widespread adverse impacts and related losses and damages to nature and people beyond natural climate variability. Some development and adaptation efforts have reduced vulnerability, but the rise in weather and climate extremes has led to some irreversible impacts as natural and human systems are pushed beyond their ability to adapt. » UNFCCC, “Introduction to loss and damage”, 2022

<sup>16</sup> N. Jeffs, R. Townend, « From words to deeds: what next for climate action? », Chatham House, February 2022

<sup>17</sup> UNFCCC, *Funding arrangements for responding to loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change, including a focus on addressing loss and damage*, FCCC/CP/2022/L.18--FCCC/PA/CMA/2022/L.20, 19/11/2022

<sup>18</sup> UNFCCC, *Sharm el-Sheikh Implementation Plan*, FCCC/CP/2022/L.19, 20/11/2022

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

fuel energies, but only coal<sup>20</sup>. The COP failed to address strong actions on mitigation and adaptation, which are two sides of the same coin: it is now too late to count only on mitigating climate change to counter its adverse effects, therefore multiplying adaptation initiatives is essential. But failing to invest enough in mitigation actions means increasing the severity of climate change and its correlated effects and would only increase the need to invest more in adaptation measures.

Undeniably, COP28 in the United Arab Emirates will be the key climate event in 2023. The Summit will take place between the 30th of November and the 12th of December in Dubai Expo.

For the moment, we know few about the objectives and priorities that will be addressed by the Emirati Presidency. What we know for sure however is that COP28 will take over on what has not been agreed at COP27. The framework on the global goal for adaptation is to be negotiated at COP28, as well as the settings for the loss and damage fund<sup>21</sup>. Another crucial moment for climate action at COP28 will also be the process of the Global Stocktake of the Paris Agreement, mandated every five years. This will aim to assess the progress made by the international community towards the Paris goals to contain climate change way below the +2 °C threshold<sup>22</sup>.

Regarding the trajectory of climate change, it is projected that global temperature will increase by 2.4 °C by the end of the century if we meet all current commitments. This means that current climate pledges are extremely insufficient. To contain the rise to +1.5 °C in 2100, emissions will have to decrease by 43% by 2030 compared to the 2019-level<sup>23</sup>. The deadline is therefore approaching, meaning that significant climate action must be enhanced at COP28 by finally addressing the root-causes of climate change, the overwhelming use of fossil-fuel energy. Between 2011 and 2020, fossil fuel subsidies from 51 economies, including countries from the G20 were higher than global climate finance investments<sup>24</sup>. A shift in this trend must be

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid

<sup>21</sup> UN Foundation Climate and Environment Experts, "CLIMATE ISSUES TO WATCH IN 2023: TOWARD COP 28 AND FASTER, MORE URGENT CLIMATE ACTION », 12/12/2022

<sup>22</sup> UNFCCC, « Global Stocktake »

<sup>23</sup> *Sharm el-Sheikh Implementation Plan*, op.cit.

<sup>24</sup> B. Naran and all, « Global Landscape of Climate Finance, a decade of data: 2011-2020 », *Climate Policy Initiative*, 2022

initiated in the 2020s to move away from this blind reliance on fossil fuel energy that is impeding global climate action.

COP28 preliminaries provoked a public outcry following the nomination of Dr Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber as president. Not only the chairman of the Masdar UAE's renewable energy company, but he is also the Chief Executive Officer of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company, ranked in 2018 the world's 12th most important oil company by production<sup>25</sup>. At COP27, among the 1070 participants of the UAE delegation, 70 were closely linked with fossil fuels<sup>26</sup>. With these elements, the COP is once again accused of greenwashing<sup>27</sup>, with growing fears that the results will be as disappointing as last year, especially on the issue of mitigation<sup>28</sup>.

In addition to COP28, another key event to follow in 2023 will be the release of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 5th Synthesis Report, expected to be published in March. The new report will complete the Sixth Assessment report and synthesizes the three reports of the three Working Groups of the IPCC on the physical science basis, mitigation and adaptation, and the three Special Reports on *Global Warming of 1.5 °C*<sup>29</sup>, *Climate Change and Land*<sup>30</sup>, and the *Ocean and the Cryosphere in a Changing Climate*<sup>31</sup>. It will share new science and knowledge on climate change and will provide the baseline for the Global Stocktake at COP28<sup>32</sup>. The 7th assessment cycle of the IPCC will start in July 2023 and will last five to seven

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<sup>25</sup> M. McGrath, « Climate change: UAE names oil chief to lead COP28 talks », BBC News, 12/01/2023 ; The National, "Adnoc among top 10 oil and gas firms worldwide, new ranking finds », 05/01/2019

<sup>26</sup> R. Michaelson, « 'Explosion' in number of fossil fuel lobbyists at Cop27 climate summit », The Guardian, 10/11/2022 ; « Climate change: UAE names oil chief to lead COP28 talks », op.cit.

<sup>27</sup> H. Kodmani, "COP 28 et géant pétrolier : cherchez l'erreur », Libération, 12/01/2023

<sup>28</sup> F. Harvey, R. Michaelson, "Fears over oil producers' influence with UAE as next host of Cop climate talks », The Guardian, 22/11/2022 ; N. Singh Khadka, « COP28: Why has an oil boss been chosen to head climate summit? », BBC, 13/01/2022

<sup>29</sup> IPCC, *Global Warming of 1.5 °C. An IPCC Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and New-York, 2018

<sup>30</sup> IPCC, *Climate Change and Land: an IPCC special report on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems*, 2019

<sup>31</sup> IPCC, *IPCC Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and New-York, 2019

<sup>32</sup> « CLIMATE ISSUES TO WATCH IN 2023: TOWARD COP 28 AND FASTER, MORE URGENT CLIMATE ACTION », op.cit.

years, to support the next Global Stocktake in 2028<sup>33</sup>. One of the special topics of the next cycle will be cities and urban areas<sup>34</sup>.

Looking particularly at the climate agenda in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), the first MENA Climate week organised by the UNFCCC was held between the 28th and 31st of March 2022. The event aimed at gathering regional climate stakeholders to discuss common climate threats and prospects of cooperation.

The establishment of a regional climate week for the MENA region came rather late compared to the founding in 2017 of a week dedicated to Africa, Latin America, and the Asia-Pacific. This was explained by the MENA perception of climate change being a distant threat or at conflicting with some economic interests from oil and gas producing countries<sup>35</sup>. There is a growing institutional awareness however that on the one hand, climate change effects on societies will be too damaging to be denied, and on the other hand, that the region has a profitable interest in exploiting its solar potential to develop green energies.

Because it is already hot, dry, water scarce, the MENA region is particularly vulnerable to the domino effects of climate change on water, agriculture, and habitat<sup>36</sup>. Enhancing intra-regional cooperation could be part of the solution, by promoting knowledge exchanges in the field of water management, waste-water reuse, climate-smart agriculture, sustainable cooling solutions in urban areas, and the protection of endangered littoral by sea-level rise. Promoting new bilateral or regional mutually beneficial sustainable agreements, such as the Israel-Jordan deal that sets exchanges of green energy against water<sup>37</sup>, or creating a joint research centre on climate change adaptation in the Middle East, are potential solutions. The Gulf States have promoted regional cooperation recently. Saudi Arabia launched for instance the Middle East Green initiative, with the objective to plant 50 billion trees

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<sup>33</sup> IISD SDG Knowledge Hub, « IPCC Prepares to Transition to Seventh Assessment Cycle », 05/10/2022

<sup>34</sup> « CLIMATE ISSUES TO WATCH IN 2023: TOWARD COP 28 AND FASTER, MORE URGENT CLIMATE ACTION », op.cit.

<sup>35</sup> M. Luomi 'Climate Change policy in the Arab region' in *Low Carbon Energy in the Middle East and North Africa*, eds Li-Chen Sims and Robin Mills, February 2021

<sup>36</sup> F. Wehrey, N. Fawal, « Cascading Climate Effects in the Middle East and North Africa: Adapting Through Inclusive Governance », Carnegie, 24/02/2022

<sup>37</sup> M. Mahmoud, 'Exploring the feasibility of the Jordan-Israel energy and water deal', Middle East Institute, 16/12/2021

across the region, while Masdar signed a memorandum of understanding with Jordan to explore grounds of cooperation in the field of renewables<sup>38</sup>.

Climate diplomacy in the region has not only been regional, but it has also been active with the rest of the world in 2022 and should tend to continue in 2023. The EU has tied new bounds with MENA countries. In May 2022, the EU adopted a communication on a “strategic partnership with the Gulf”,<sup>39</sup> enlightening the need to step-up cooperation with Gulf States on renewable energy and signed in November 2022, a joint statement on an EU-Egypt Renewable Hydrogen Partnership<sup>40</sup>. In June 2022, Germany as well launched the “Green Hydrogen for sustainable growth and a low-carbon economy in Tunisia” project<sup>41</sup>.

Other external actors rose cooperation in the field of climate change with the Middle East in 2022. In November 2022, the US and the UAE signed the ambitious US-UAE Partnership for Accelerating Clean Energy (PACE), aimed at enhancing 100 billion US\$ to deploy 100 gigawatts of clean energy by 2035<sup>42</sup> - the Emirati green energy capacity in 2020 was 2.54 gigawatts<sup>43</sup>. In December 2022, during Xi Jinping’s visit to Saudi Arabia, 34 agreements were signed, including on green hydrogen and solar energy<sup>44</sup>. Climate partnerships are becoming valuable diplomatic agreements, and the rest of the world is gaining interests in increasing climate diplomacy with the Middle East and North African States. Developments of new partnerships in the Middle East are therefore a trend to follow in 2023.

2022 was not the champion year of climate action, but the few actions that were achieved was definitely not in vain. A new study revealed that the increased use of renewable energies in 2022 prevented the generation of 230 million tons of CO2

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<sup>38</sup> S. Jain, « Masdar and Jordan’s Energy Ministry collaborate on renewable energy projects », The National News, 17/11/2022

<sup>39</sup> European Commission, *Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council, A strategic Partnership with the Gulf*, JOIN(2022)13, 18/05/2022

<sup>40</sup> European Commission, « Joint Statement on the EU-Egypt Renewable Hydrogen Partnership », 09/11/2022

<sup>41</sup> Renew Africa, « Germany, Tunisia launch green hydrogen project, H2Vert.TUN », 05/07/2022

<sup>42</sup> The White House, « U.S.-UAE Partnership to Accelerate Transition to Clean Energy (PACE) », 01/11/2022

<sup>43</sup> A. R. Cabral, « UAE records largest increase in renewable energy capacity globally in the past decade », The National News, 24/05/2022

<sup>44</sup> Al Monitor, « Saudi, Chinese companies sign investment deals on renewable energy, cloud services during Xi’s visit », 08/12/2022

emissions, the equivalent of 49 million petrol-fuelled cars<sup>45</sup>. There were many promising national initiatives promoted in 2022 around the world. One example is the ban of short-haul domestic flights that have a train alternative by France<sup>46</sup>. What should be improved in 2023 however is global climate cooperation and multilateralism.

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<sup>45</sup> R. Frost, « Renewables have saved 230 million tonnes of CO2 emissions so far in 2022 », Euro News, 10/10/2022

<sup>46</sup> L. Limb, « It's official: France bans short haul domestic flights in favour of train travel », Euro News, 05/12/2022



## About the BIC

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