



18 April 2024

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TEMPLARS ThoughtLab

Charting the Future: UAE Consensus in the Aftermath of COP28

Introduction

It has been four months since the world, (and co-author, Inna Ali) gathered in United Arab Emirates (UAE) for the 2023 UN Climate Change Conference which comprised, amongst others: **the 28th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP28)**.

One of the highlights of COP28 was the delivering of the UAE Consensus which has, at its heart, the first Global Stocktake (GST)¹, setting out the ambitious actions to hold global warming to an increase of 1.5 degrees.

For the finale of the three-part series of TEMPLARS ThoughtLab discussing Nigeria's Energy Transition plans and current global perspectives on climate change, we will be highlighting the impact of the COP28 in Nigeria.

The UAE Consensus

The UAE Consensus includes an unprecedented reference to transitioning away from all fossil fuels in energy systems, in a just, orderly, and equitable manner in this critical decade to enable the world to reach net zero emissions by 2050, in keeping with the science.

It is considered the most ambitious and comprehensive set of negotiated outcomes to come out of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process since COP21.

¹ London School of Economics Website: [https://www.lse.ac.uk/granthaminstitute/explainers/what-is-the-global-stocktake/#:-:text=The%20Global%20Stocktake%20\(GST\)%20is,rise%20to%201.5%C2%B0C.](https://www.lse.ac.uk/granthaminstitute/explainers/what-is-the-global-stocktake/#:-:text=The%20Global%20Stocktake%20(GST)%20is,rise%20to%201.5%C2%B0C.)

Highlights of the UAE Consensus include²:

- Tripling renewable energy capacity globally and doubling the global average annual rate of energy efficiency improvements by 2030.
- Rapidly phasing down unabated coal and limitations on permitting new and unabated coal power generation.
- Accelerating and substantially reducing non-CO₂ emissions, and in particular methane emissions globally by 2030.
- Accelerating emissions reductions from road transport through a range of pathways, including development of infrastructure and rapid deployment of zero and low emission vehicles.
- Accelerating the deployment of low-emission technologies, including nuclear energy, to help achieve rapid decarbonisation through low-carbon hydrogen.

Furthermore, a key component of the UAE Consensus is the decision on the GST to assess progress and put forward a plan to close implementation gaps by 2030.

The decision also recognises the need to peak global emissions by 2025, considering different national starting points, and encourages countries to submit economy wide Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). It also includes recognition of the crucial need to significantly scale up adaptation finance beyond doubling to meet urgent and evolving needs, and a clear call for countries to deliver National Adaptation Plans by 2025 and implement them by 2030.

Finally, recognising the crucial role finance must play in delivering ambition, the GST decision builds momentum behind a new global climate finance architecture in support of the post-2025 climate goal to be delivered at COP29³.

UAE Consensus: Post COP28

After the successful adaptation of the UAE Consensus at COP28, there have been conversations on its way forward and keeping the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5C within reach.

The focus has now moved to the even tougher part – how to curb emissions by nearly half in just six years, and to net zero by 2050.

In a world where oil, gas, and coal account for about 80 per cent of the energy⁴, natural gas – long considered a transitional fuel due to its lower emissions – could emerge with a bigger mandate as the industry pursues the road to net zero by 2050.

So far, just like Dr Sultan Al Jaber⁵ said in his closing speech at COP28, an agreement is only as good as its implementation. He highlighted some of his key takeaways from the global summit and the challenges ahead⁶. He also stated that they would be working extremely closely with both Azerbaijan and Brazil, the hosts of COP29 and COP30, to drive through the ambitious implementation of the UAE Consensus.

² Energy Connects Website: <https://www.energyconnects.com/opinion/features/2023/december/explained-what-happens-next-after-historic-uae-consensus-at-cop28/>

³ COP28 – The UAE Consensus Brochure: <https://www.cop28.com/UAEconsensus>

⁴ Environmental and Energy Study Institute (EESI) – <https://www.eesi.org/topics/fossil-fuels/description>

⁵ International Energy Agency: <https://www.iea.org/contributors/dr-sultan-al-jaber>

⁶National News: <https://www.thenationalnews.com/climate/cop28/2024/01/15/cop28-dr-sultan-al-jaber/>

To ensure that they do not lose momentum, the UAE Consensus included multiple actions that would be taken forward throughout the COP28 Presidency⁷:

- **GST** - First annual GST dialogue to be convened at the next UNFCCC meeting in June 2024, where countries will share best practice on using the GST outcome to inform their next Nationally Determined Contributions.
- **Emirates Framework for Global Climate Resilience** - A work programme to further strengthen the indicators at the heart of the new framework will kick off in 2024.
- **Just Transition Work Programme** - At least two dialogues to be convened before COP29 in a hybrid format to ensure inclusivity, and countries to provide further written evidence and inputs for the work programme by March 2024.
- **Mitigation Work Programme** - Two global dialogues to be held through 2024, with countries submitting proposals for the topics they address by February 2024.
- **Presidency Youth Climate Champion** - COP28 and COP29 Presidencies will appoint the first official Youth Climate Champions after the role was institutionalized at COP28.

UAE Consensus: is Nigeria Ready?

Nigeria participated in the conversation where the UAE Consensus came up. The delegation, led by Nigerian President Bola Ahmed Tinubu aired its opinion on the issue of climate change. On the one part, the President told stakeholders and investors at a high-level meeting on the Nigeria Carbon Market and Electric Buses Rollout Programme, held on the sidelines of COP28, that Nigeria is taking a significant step towards a sustainable and eco-friendly future by introducing a pioneering initiative to deploy a fleet of a minimum of 100 electric buses⁸.

The aim, the President noted, is to significantly reduce Nigeria's carbon footprint and modernise the country's transportation systems as part of a larger effort to position the country and Africa as the pioneering frontiers of green manufacturing and industrialization, with a focus on natural gas as a transition fuel alongside other renewable energy sources.

The perspectives above, though a way to reduce carbon in the country, seems extremely difficult, at best. For instance, Nigeria is a major hydrocarbon producer, though with ambitious plans to achieve net zero targets by 2060⁹. The country still has oil as its major source of revenue¹⁰, and has the lowest access to electricity globally, with about 92 million out of the country's more than 200 million population lacking stable access to power, according to the Energy Progress Report 2022 released by Tracking SDG 7¹¹.

⁷ COP28 - The UAE Consensus Brochure: <https://www.cop28.com/UAEconsensus>

⁸ The State House, Abuja Website: <https://statehouse.gov.ng/news/cop28-president-tinubu-unveils-bold-vision-for-a-greener-nigeria-with-rollout-of-100-electric-buses/>

⁹ Nigeria Energy Transition Plan website: <https://energytransition.gov.ng/>

¹⁰ GlobalEDGE Website:

<https://globaledge.msu.edu/countries/nigeria/economy#:~:text=The%20oil%20sector%20provides%20for,80%25%20of%20its%20budgetary%20revenue>

¹¹ The Africa Report: <https://www.theafricareport.com/322123/nigeria-suffers-total-blackout-as-power-grid-collapses/#:~:text=Overloaded,released%20by%20Tracking%20SDG%207>

Importantly, Nigeria and Africa are not a significant source of greenhouse gas emissions. Reports¹² have shown that Africa accounts for only 2–3% of the world's carbon dioxide emissions from energy and industrial sources. Nevertheless, African countries can and are pursuing win-win policies that can minimize their greenhouse emissions while tackling urban pollution (with its high health costs) and introducing solar energy and other innovative and cost-effective technologies.

The above notwithstanding, Nigeria must get actively involved in providing solutions as Africa is the continent most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Already experiencing temperature increases of approximately 0.7°C over much of the continent, and with predictions that temperatures will rise further, Africa is facing a wide range of impacts, including increased drought and floods. Soon, climate change will contribute to decreases in food production, floods and inundation of its coastal zones and deltas, spread of waterborne diseases and risk of malaria, and changes in natural ecosystems and loss of biodiversity.

On the positive side, Nigeria, amongst others, have benefited from the recently concluded COP28. For instance, Nigeria and Germany signed a performance agreement on the implementation of the Presidential Power Initiative (PPI) to improve Nigeria's electricity supply¹³. This Initiative when implemented would be a big win for the nation, especially in its drive to achieve net zero targets by 2060.

Another Nigeria's win at the COP28 was its formal interest to join the Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) Consortium, which would provide a roadmap to ultimately achieving 400 GW of renewable energy by 2030¹⁴. Furthermore, Nigeria signed an agreement with a Chinese company targeted at the development and establishment of a \$150million Lithium Battery Manufacturing and Processing Factory in Nigeria.¹⁵

Although challenges to implementation remain, Nigeria is taking active steps: Nigeria's Energy Transition Plan (ETP), the Climate Change Act, 2021 and other efforts by the government. For instance, in the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation Limited (NNPC Limited) January 2024 Update, NNPC Limited stated that the ability to meet the country's emissions reduction targets and net zero obligations will be evident from 2024¹⁶. Without jumping into a hasty conclusion, they seem to mean business considering the recent press release from NNPC Limited that the NNPC Limited/TotalEnergies Joint Venture has achieved zero routine gas flare in all its assets¹⁷.

Furthermore, another example of Nigeria's efforts in energy transition is the anticipated Final Investment Decision (FID) on the Nigeria Morocco Gas Pipeline (NMGP) Project slated to occur in December 2024¹⁸. This ambitious project seeks to create a pipeline passing through thirteen (13) African countries towards Europe that will serve as transition fuel to energy demands in that region and beyond.

¹² UN Fact Sheet on Climate Change: https://unfccc.int/files/press/backgrounders/application/pdf/factsheet_africa.pdf

¹³ The State House, Abuja Website: <https://statehouse.gov.ng/news/nigeria-and-germany-sign-agreement-to-accelerate-siemens-power-project-implementation/>

¹⁴ African Development Bank Group: <https://www.afdb.org/en/news-and-events/press-releases/cop28-african-countries-sign-join-pioneering-global-battery-energy-storage-consortium-66529>

¹⁵ NASENI Website: <https://naseni.gov.ng/news/building-the-new-naseni-the-journey-so-far-and-what-lies-ahead>

¹⁶ NNPC Limited Update, January 2024: https://cms1977.nnpcgroup.com/uploads/NNPC_Update_January_2024_71350eea05.pdf

¹⁷ NNPC Limited Website: <https://nnpcgroup.com/insights/climate-change-nnpc-ltd-total-energies-jv-achieves-zero-gas-flar>

¹⁸ NNPC Limited Website: <https://www.nnpcgroup.com/insights/kyari-calls-for-differentiated-energy-transition-for-africa-says-fid-on-nigeria-morocco-gas-pipeline-to-be-taken-in-december>

Conclusion

Accountability is key to any commitment and with accountability comes responsibility to ensure that initiatives launched at COP28 are implemented with the needed support mechanisms to ensure coordination and full implementation.¹⁹

Only a collective effort by the government, all relevant stakeholders is needed to achieve a goal as the UAE Consensus. Hence, we must be united in acting, to deliver.

¹⁹ COP 28 Website: <https://www.cop28.com/en/the-uae-consensus-looking-ahead>