

## COP28 President Dr. Sultan Al Jaber's Opening Plenary Speech

**Dubai, 30 November 2023:** Excellencies, friends, colleagues, members of every delegation — it's an honor to be with you today. And I'm so glad that this day has finally arrived.

As my first official act as COP President, I would like to express my gratitude to my dear friend Sameh Shoukry. Your Excellency, you have led this Conference with vision, purpose and integrity. We are indebted to you for your service, your accomplishments, and your commitment to climate progress.

And allow me also to extend my gratitude to every person in this room. We come from different nations, different backgrounds, and different generations. Yet we share something vital. At some point in each of our lives, we all made a choice. A choice to help carry the burden of a great responsibility to raise our hands and bear some portion of the weight on our shoulders. That choice is why we're all here in the United Arab Emirates today.

The UAE is deeply proud and humbled, to be hosting COP28 at a pivotal time in this critical decade for climate action. We know, as you know, the gravity of this moment. We feel, as you feel, the urgency of this work. And we see, as you see, that the world has reached a crossroads. And yes, since Paris, we have made some progress. But we also know that the road we have been on will not get us to our destination in time. The science has spoken. It has confirmed that the moment is now to find a new road, a road wide enough for all of us, free of the obstacles and detours of the past. That new road starts with a decision on the Global Stocktake, a decision that is ambitious, corrects course and accelerates action to 2030.

Through the Global Stocktake, we have a chance to unite the three core elements of the climate agenda. We can finally bring mitigation, adaptation, and means of implementation, which includes finance, under one umbrella: united around higher ambition; giving clear direction on Nationally Determined Contributions; and connecting everything we agree here to practical action in the real world.

Every nation, every sector, and every one of us has an urgent role to play. For my part, I pledge that I will run an inclusive and transparent process, one that encourages free and open discussion between all parties. I ask you to start this COP with a different mindset. I ask you to adopt a different way of thinking. I ask you to be flexible. We must ensure that this COP delivers the most ambitious Global Stocktake possible. So, let's work efficiently, agree on the agenda, and move to text — quickly, please!

Friends, I believe that the United Arab Emirates reflects the spirit we need at this COP. My country is only two years older than me. And that makes it a young country, in fact, a very young country. It is a nation that rose up from the desert through the vision and foresight of our late founding father, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, and the conviction and aspiration he passed on to the generations that followed. And now, 52 years later, just look around. We may be a young nation — but we have big ambitions, and hold fast to principles like collaboration,



optimism, true partnership, determination, and commitment. These are the ingredients that make up the DNA of the UAE. And it's these core values of trust, purpose, partnership, and pragmatism that I believe must define COP28.

That means it is essential that no issue is left off the table. And yes, as I have been saying, that includes the role of fossil fuels. I know there are strong views about the idea of including language on fossil fuels and renewables in the negotiated text. We have the power to do something unprecedented. I ask you to work together. Be flexible, find common ground, come forward with solutions and achieve consensus. And never lose sight of our North Star of 1.5C, because that is what I am going to stay laser focused on.

Excellencies, we all know that a key success factor across the climate agenda is finance. For too long, finance has not been available, accessible, or affordable. This Presidency is committed to unlocking finance to ensure that the global south does not have to choose between development and climate action. Let this be the year that climate finance meets the magnitude of the moment. Let this be the COP where we deliver on our promises, from the 100 billion to loss-and-damage. And on loss and damage I know how important this issue is to the parties, particularly the most vulnerable. What began in Sharm el Sheikh, and was given critical momentum in Abu Dhabi earlier this month, must now be delivered and actioned in Dubai. And allow me here to pause for a moment to honor the memory of our distinguished colleague and my dear friend Saleem ul Huq. He devoted his entire career to the cause of finding a way to address loss and damage. And I personally benefited from his advice, particularly on the imperative to shift the world's focus to the needs of adaptation.

Excellencies, adaptation must be at the heart of our action. We must bridge the finance gap... and agree on a robust framework for the Global Goal. Let's put nature, lives, and livelihoods at the core of our national plans. Let's finally face the issues that are critical to adaptation like water, food, agriculture, and health. And that is why I am proud that this COP will be the first to host a climate health ministerial.

Excellencies, I want this COP to be the COP that maximizes momentum on mitigation. Today countries representing more than 85 percent of the world's economy are behind COP28's goal of tripling renewable energy capacity by 2030. And we are reaching critical mass on the goal to double energy efficiency by 2030. This is how we will transition away from unabated coal. Let me also encourage countries to establish near zero methane emission targets, as part of the next round of NDCs. Zeroing out methane emissions can make a huge impact in the shortest time frame.

Colleagues, let history reflect the fact that this is the Presidency that made a bold choice to proactively engage with oil and gas companies. We had many hard discussions. Let me tell you, it wasn't easy. But now, many of these companies are committing to zeroing out methane emissions by 2030 for the first time. And many national oil companies have adopted net zero 2050 targets for the first time. I am grateful that they have stepped up to join this game-changing journey. But, I must say, it is not enough, and I know that they can do more. They can lead the way, and others must catch up. At the same time, as part of this presidency's action agenda, we are engaging with other high-emitting sectors like heavy transportation, aluminum, steel, and cement to accelerate decarbonization at scale. I'm calling on all industries to innovate, modernize and invest in clean technologies.



My friends, the next two weeks will not be easy. Let's remember, our task is not only about negotiating text or putting words on paper, it's about improving lives. It's about people. From the students I met in Bangladesh, to the young entrepreneurs of Nairobi, to indigenous communities I visited in the Amazon basin. All of us want and need the same things: clean air; clean water; healthy food; economic opportunities for ourselves and our families; a safe and secure future.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, colleagues and friends, we all made a choice to be here at this time. We understand the gravity of the situation and we respect the science. Today we need to follow through, take that new road, let's bring everyone with us. If we want to accelerate progress across the climate agenda, we must apply a positive can-do vision to get a GST decision with the highest ambition. We must translate the negotiated outcomes into real results in the real world. And we must use the next two weeks wisely. Take a no-nonsense approach with no delays. Let's restore faith in multilateralism and let's deliver some good news to a world that really needs it. And friends, I'll be right there at your side every step of the way. I will roll up my sleeves alongside you. Let's rise above our differences to make the difference for future generations. Right now, here in the UAE, let's unite, act, and deliver.

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**Notes to Editors COP28 UAE:**

- COP28 UAE is taking place at Expo City Dubai from November 30-December 12, 2023. The Conference is expected to convene over 70,000 participants, including heads of state, government officials, international industry leaders, private sector representatives, academics, experts, youth, and non-state actors.
- As mandated by the Paris Climate Agreement, COP28 UAE is delivering the first ever Global Stocktake – a comprehensive evaluation of progress against climate goals.
- The UAE is leading a process for all parties to agree upon a clear roadmap to accelerate progress through a pragmatic global energy transition and a “leave no one behind” approach to inclusive climate action.