

World is on ‘highway to climate hell’, UN chief warns at Cop27 summit

António Guterres tells leaders ‘global climate fight will be won or lost in this crucial decade – on our watch’

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'We are in the fight of our lives,' says UN chief at Cop27 climate summit – video

Fiona Harvey and Damian Carrington in Sharm el-Sheikh

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Humanity is on a “highway to climate hell”, the UN secretary general has warned, saying the fight for a liveable planet will be won or lost in this decade.

António Guterres told world leaders at the opening of the Cop27 UN climate summit in **Egypt** on Monday: “We are in the fight of our lives and we are losing ... And our planet is fast approaching tipping points that will make climate chaos irreversible.

“We are on a highway to climate hell with our foot on the accelerator.”

He said the world faced a stark choice over the next fortnight of talks: either developed and developing countries working together to make a “historic pact”

that would reduce greenhouse gas emissions and set the world on a low-carbon path – or failure, which would bring climate breakdown and catastrophe.

“We can sign a climate solidarity pact, or a collective suicide pact,” he added.

He said the world had the tools it needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, in clean energy and low-carbon technology.

“A window of opportunity remains open, but only a narrow shaft of light remains,” he said. “The global climate fight will be won or lost in this crucial decade – on our watch. One thing is certain: those that give up are sure to lose.”



Revealed: US and UK fall billions short of 'fair share' of climate funding

Abdel Fatah al-Sisi, the president of Egypt, said in his opening address to the summit that poor and vulnerable people around the world were already experiencing the effects of extreme weather: “The intensity and frequency of climate disasters have never been higher, in all four corners of the world, bringing wave after wave of suffering for billions of people. Is it not high time today to put an end to this suffering?”

More than 100 heads of state and government from around the world gathered in the Egyptian resort of Sharm el-Sheikh on Monday for two days of closed-door meetings and public events to discuss the climate crisis.

Rishi Sunak, the British prime minister, will attend for one day, along with Olaf Scholz of Germany, Emanuel Macron of France, and Ursula von der Leyen, the president of the European Commission. Joe Biden, the US president, will come later in the week, after the US midterm elections.

Mia Mottley, the prime minister of Barbados, will set out a new initiative on climate finance for the developing world, and African leaders including William Ruto of Kenya, Macky Sall of Senegal, and George Weah, the president of Liberia, are at the talks. The crown prince of Saudi Arabia, Mohammed bin Salman, is also at the meeting.

From Wednesday, the world leaders will hand over to officials and ministers for the rest of the fortnight of talks. However, the summit promises to be a fraught and difficult one, with little chance of a breakthrough.

Countries are meeting in the shadow of the war in Ukraine, a worldwide energy and cost of living crisis, and rising global tensions. Rich and poor countries are at loggerheads as big economies have failed to cut greenhouse gas emissions quickly enough, and the poorer countries bearing the brunt of the climate crisis are receiving little of the financial assistance they need and that has been promised.

The **Cop27** conference got off to a slow start, with negotiators spending more than 40 hours over the weekend wrangling over what would be on the agenda. In the end, it was agreed that the vexed issue of loss and damage – which refers to the worst impacts of the climate crisis, which are too severe for countries to adapt to – would be discussed.

Poor countries suffering loss and damage want a financial mechanism that will give them access to funding when disasters such as hurricanes, floods and droughts strike, destroying their infrastructure and tearing apart their social fabric.

It is not likely that these talks will provide a final settlement on loss and damage, but countries are hoping for progress on ways of raising and disbursing finance.

At most UN climate summits, activists and protesters play a key role. However, Egypt clamps down on dissent and its jails are full of political prisoners. Sisi's government has promised that climate activist voices will be heard, but their activities have been curtailed, with protesters kept at a separate site and required to register in advance to be granted permission for even minor demonstrations.

Barbados PM launches blistering attack on rich nations at Cop27 climate talks

Mia Mottley warns of a billion refugees by the middle of the century unless governments act now to tackle crisis



'We have the collective capacity to transform,' says Mia Mottley at Cop27 – video

[Patrick Greenfield](#), [Fiona Harvey](#), [Nina Lakhani](#) and [Damian Carrington](#)

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Mia Mottley, prime minister of Barbados, has criticised industrialised nations for failing the developing world on the climate crisis, in a blistering attack at the [Cop27 UN climate talks](#).

She said the prosperity – and high carbon emissions – of the rich world had been achieved at the expense of the poor in times past, and now the poor were being forced to pay again, as victims of climate breakdown that they did not cause.

“We were the ones whose blood, sweat and tears financed the industrial revolution,” she said. “Are we now to face double jeopardy by having to pay the cost as a result of those greenhouse gases from the industrial revolution? That is fundamentally unfair.”

She warned of a billion climate refugees around the world by the middle of the century if governments failed to tackle the climate crisis.

[One of the biggest issues at the talks is climate justice](#) – the fact that poor people are bearing the brunt of the damage to the climate, in the form of extreme weather, while rich countries have failed to live up to their promises to cut emissions and to provide finance to help the poor with climate breakdown.

Mottley, who was speaking at an event organised by Scotland’s first minister, Nicola Sturgeon, was scathing about the World Bank, which many countries think has not done enough to focus on the climate, and on countries that offer loans instead of grants.

“We need to have a different approach, to allow grant-funded reconstruction grants going forward, in those countries that suffer from disaster. Unless that happens, we are going to see an increase in climate refugees. We know that by 2050, the world’s 21 million climate refugees today will become 1 billion.”

Mottley is working with the French president, [Emmanuel Macron](#), on an initiative to provide new means of finance to the developing world.

Macron used his speech to the Cop27 conference to insist that the war in Ukraine would not cause **France** to backslide on commitments to tackle the climate crisis.

More than 100 world leaders attended the conference on Monday, greeted by António Guterres, the UN secretary-general, **warning that the world was on a “highway to hell”**. He called on rich and poor governments to make a “historic pact” to help each other through the climate crisis, instead of being at loggerheads.

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He said the world faced a stark choice over the next fortnight of talks: either developed and developing countries working together to make a “historic pact” that would reduce greenhouse gas emissions and set the world on a low-carbon path – or failure, which would bring climate breakdown and catastrophe.

“We can sign a climate solidarity pact, or a collective suicide pact,” he added.

He said the world had the tools it needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, in clean energy and low-carbon technology.

“A window of opportunity remains open, but only a narrow shaft of light remains,” he said. “The global climate fight will be won or lost in this crucial decade – on our watch. One thing is certain: those that give up are sure to lose.”



Abdel Fatah al-Sisi speaks at Cop27. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Abdel Fatah al-Sisi, the president of **Egypt**, said in his opening address to the summit that poor and vulnerable people around the world were already experiencing the effects of extreme weather. “The intensity and frequency of climate disasters have never been higher, in all four corners of the world, bringing wave after wave of suffering for billions of people. Is it not high time today to put an end to this suffering?”

Elsewhere at the conference, **Boris Johnson, the former UK prime minister**, said he embodied “the spirit of Glasgow”, referring to the Cop26 conference hosted by the UK last year that produced an agreement to limit global temperatures to 1.5C.

Rishi Sunak, the current UK prime minister, refused to answer a question from the Guardian on whether the £11.6bn of UK overseas aid earmarked for climate finance in developing countries would be spent within the five-year timeframe originally promised. Some fear that he could try to reduce the budget by stretching the spending over a longer period.

Sunak also announced the [extension of a global initiative to reverse deforestation by 2030](#), originally set up at the Cop26 summit in Glasgow.



Rishi Sunak with Emmanuel Macron at Cop27. Photograph: Reuters

Cop27 is likely to be a fraught and difficult fortnight of negotiations. Countries are meeting in the shadow of the war in Ukraine, a worldwide energy and cost of living crisis, and rising global tensions.

The talks got off to a slow start, with negotiators spending more than 40 hours over the weekend **wrangling over what would be on the agenda**. In the end, it was agreed that the vexed issue of “loss and damage”, which refers to the worst impacts of the climate crisis that are too severe for countries to adapt to – would be discussed.

Poor countries suffering loss and damage want a financial mechanism that will give them access to funding when disasters such as hurricanes, floods and droughts strike, destroying their infrastructure and tearing apart their social fabric.

It is not likely that these talks will provide a final settlement on loss and damage, but countries are hoping for progress on ways of raising and disbursing finance.

Nabeel Munir, chief negotiator for the G77 plus China negotiating block, said loss and damage was one of the **principle demands for almost all developing and climate** vulnerable nations.

“This is the beginning of what will be a slow and painful process, for developed and developing countries, and it wasn’t easy to get it on the agenda, but it’s there and it’s a beginning, and we wanted that to happen at a Cop hosted by a developing country,” Munir said. “It’s a big achievement that the other side is beginning to accept that what we’re saying is fair. Loss and damage is not charity, it’s climate justice.”

At most UN climate summits, activists and protesters play a key role. However, Egypt clamps down on dissent and its jails are full of political prisoners. Sisi’s government has promised that climate activist voices will be heard, but their activities have been curtailed, with protesters kept at a separate site and required to register in advance to be granted permission for even minor demonstrations.

Developing countries ‘will need \$2tn a year in climate funding by 2030’

Report co-written by Nicholas Stern says figure required to switch away from fossil fuels and cope with extreme weather impacts

- [**Cop27 live – latest news updates**](#)



The Cerro Dominador solar plant in the Atacama desert, Chile. The report says the funding figure would enable a global transition to green energy. Photograph: John Moore/Getty Images

Fiona Harvey in Sharm el-Sheikh

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About \$2tn (£1.75tn) will be needed each year by 2030 to help developing countries cut their greenhouse gas emissions and cope with the effects of climate breakdown, new data suggests.

The cash will be needed so that poor countries can switch away from fossil fuels, invest in renewable energy and other low-carbon technology, and cope with the impacts of extreme weather, according to a report that was commissioned jointly by the UK and Egyptian governments, and presented at the **Cop27 UN climate summit**.

The figures, which would cover the needs of all of the world's developing economies except China, are far higher than any climate finance that has yet been forthcoming to help poor countries.

“Around half of the required financing can be reasonably expected to come from local sources, from strengthening domestic public finance and domestic capital markets, including tapping into large pools of local finance that national development banks are able to mobilise,” the report says.

However, external finance, as well as the World Bank and other multilateral development banks, must also play a key role.

Nicholas Stern, the climate economist who wrote a landmark 2006 review of the economics of climate change, was a lead author of the report. He said: “Rich countries should recognise that it is in their vital self-interest, as well as a matter of justice given the severe impacts caused by their high levels of current and past emissions, to invest in climate action in emerging market and developing countries.

“Most of the growth in energy infrastructure and consumption projected to occur over the next decade will be in emerging market and developing countries, and if they lock in dependence on fossil fuels and emissions, the world will not be able to avoid dangerous climate change, damaging and destroying billions of lives and livelihoods in both rich and poor countries.”

Funding low-carbon economic growth in poor countries would help to lift billions of people out of poverty, create jobs and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The money is also needed to help poor countries adapt to the effects of the climate crisis, for instance by building more robust infrastructure, and protections such as seawalls and early warning systems. For the most severe impacts of climate breakdown, which countries cannot adapt to, known as **loss and damage**, the money would help to rescue those at risk, repair vital infrastructure and help to heal the social fabric – services such as health and education – of countries torn apart by extreme weather, such as devastating floods, droughts, storms and heatwaves, that is likely to worsen as a result of climate breakdown.

Loss and damage is one of the [main priorities for discussion at the Cop27 summit in Sharm el-Sheikh](#), which started on Sunday and will continue for a fortnight.

Poor countries have been promised since 2009 that by 2020 they would receive at least \$100bn a year to help them cut emissions and cope with the impacts of extreme weather. But that target has repeatedly been missed, and is not likely to be fulfilled until next year.

Lord Stern said: “Given the pressure on public budgets in all countries, the role of the multilateral development banks, including the World Bank, will be critical in increasing the scale of external finance for emerging market and developing countries, and bringing down the cost of capital for investors. The flow of finance from these institutions should triple from about \$60bn a year today to around \$180bn a year within the next five years. This requires a strong sense of direction and support from the country shareholders, and real leadership from the top of these institutions.”

The World Bank has come under increasing criticism in recent months for its perceived failures to direct sufficient funds towards the climate crisis. The Bank will engage in discussions at **Cop27**.