

COP27 was a spectacular failure – boycotting future COP conferences, however, would only compound the problem

[Alan Thornett](#) offers his thoughts on a troubling end to COP27 in Sharm El-Sheikh.

COP27, the 27th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, held last month in Sharm El-Sheikh to confront the planetary emergency caused by climate change, failed spectacularly in the face of the most challenging set of circumstances a COP conference had faced since the Framework Convention was launched at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

It faced a critical situation from the outset, both in terms of the global geopolitical situation today arising from Putin's invasion of Ukraine and the stage that has been reached in the implementation of the UN COP process itself.

Only a last-minute agreement to establish a "loss and damage" (or "reparations") fund into which the rich countries, which are the most responsible for climate change, would subscribe to help the poor countries, which are the least responsible for global warming, minimise and mitigate the impact of climate change and transition to renewable energy saved COP27 from total ignominy.

Prior to the COP, UN Secretary General António Guterres had argued strongly for such an agreement, warning that unless there is what he called an "historic pact" between the rich and poor countries on this issue, the planet could already be

doomed.

The creation of such a fund had been scandalously kept off the agenda by the rich countries for 30 years and was only forced onto it this year after heavy pressure from the developing countries. There was no agreement, however, as to how much money should be paid into it, who should pay it, or on what basis. It was still a step forward, but it was the only one that could be claimed at this conference.

Arguments will continue about the size of the fund and which countries will benefit, and there is a proposal to ask the International Panel on Climate Change (the IPCC) to prepare a recommendation for the COP28 next year in Dubai in the UAE.

When it came to carbon emissions reduction, however, COP27 was an unmitigated disaster.

The UN carbon emissions reduction plan—the so-called “ratcheting up” process adopted at COP21 in Paris in 2015—which required *each member state to determine its own carbon reduction target—or* “Nationally Determined Contributions”—and then enhance them annually at implementation conferences that would be held for that purpose—had fallen apart before the conference was open.

Exactly what happened is not clear. What is clear is that the pledges made in Sharm El-Sheikh, far from building on those made in Glasgow, were well behind those made there, and that the process had suffered a disastrous retreat.

The energy debate

The general debate on energy was also a disaster. Not only had the Egyptian Presidency produced a draft text that blatantly favoured the oil and gas petro-states and the fossil fuel industries in the region, but it had also opened the door to the biggest contingent of fossil fuel lobbyists that a COP

conference had ever seen. All the world's biggest oil and gas producers were there in force, and they used it to the full. Saudi Arabia (no less) ran an event to promote the "circular carbon economy," under which carbon capture, hydrogen, and other bogus technologies were scandalously presented as clean.

A major target for them was the 1.5°C maximum temperature increase that had also been agreed in Paris. The session dealing with this became so heated that the EU threatened to walk out at one point if the 1.5°C maximum was not protected. Although a reference to 1.5 °C has remained in the final text, the language is ambiguous and widely regarded as unreliable.

The agreement in Glasgow, which for the first time named (and shamed) coal, gas, and oil as major threats to the future of the planet and additionally, in the case of coal, fixed a date for ending its use altogether, was also under attack. In the end, Saudi Arabia and other petro-states, along with China, Russia, and Brazil, who had been campaigning for their removal, were able to get rid of it. Fossil fuels that had been declared obsolete or obsolescent in Glasgow had been rehabilitated in Sharm el-Sheikh. To add insult to injury, the conference agreed to define natural gas as a renewable energy source.

Alok Sharma, no less, the UK's (Boris Johnson appointed) president of COP26, recently sacked from the cabinet by Sunak—but who appears to have become more strongly committed to the cause having been appointed as a stop-gap—was visibly outraged by what had happened to the energy text and lambasted the conference in the closing session:

"Those of us who came to Egypt to keep 1.5C alive, and to respect what every single one of us agreed to in Glasgow, have had to fight relentlessly here to hold the line. We have had to battle to build on one of the key achievements of Glasgow, including the call on parties to revisit and strengthen their "Nationally Determined Contributions."

Repeatedly banging the table, he said:

“We joined with many parties to propose a number of measures that would have contributed to this. Emissions peaking before 2025, as the science tells us is necessary – NOT IN THIS TEXT. A clear follow-through on the phase down of coal – NOT IN THIS TEXT. A commitment to phase out all fossil fuels – NOT IN THIS TEXT. The energy text, he said had been weakened in the final minutes of the conference to endorse “low-emissions energy”, which can be interpreted as a reference to natural gas.

The result is a disaster and will directly lead to more death, destruction, poverty, and people having to leave their homes. Climate events become ever more severe as constraints on carbon emissions are lifted. It will speed up the arrival of tipping points that can take climate chaos out of control—possibly disastrously so. It will also give succour to the climate deniers and offset the defeats they suffered in Paris and Glasgow.

It’s true that this COP27 faced very difficult conditions. Putin’s war triggered an obscene scramble back to fossil energy when it is abundantly clear the only answer to either the economic or the environmental crisis is a rapid transition to renewable energy, which is getting cheaper all the time. The UK government immediately issued 90 new gas and oil extraction licences for the North Sea and is seeking an agreement to import large quantities of fracked natural gas from the USA.

Putin’s war, however, was there long before COP27, and the Egyptian organisers did nothing to counter it. In fact, they cynically exploited it for their own ends in order to get emissions restrictions lifted or watered down.

So where do we (and the movement) go from here?

One thing that must be avoided as a result of all of this is a boycott of future COP conferences or the entire COP process by either the radical left or the wider movement. It would simply compound the problem. It was being discussed widely before Sharm El-Sheikh, and it has continued since, both within the radical left and in the broader movement. Greta Thunberg called for it before Sharm El-Sheikh, and George Monbiot advocates it in his November 24 Guardian article.

A boycott by the radical left would primarily be an act of self-harm (or self-isolation), whereas a boycott by the wider movement would demobilise the climate struggle at a critical juncture. Most climate campaigns and NGOs would refuse to follow such a call anyway. The front-line countries certainly would do so because they see the COP process, with all its problems, as their only chance of survival. That is why they mount such ferocious battles at every COP conference.

There has also been a major change in the climate struggle since the 2015 Paris Accords. This is because the job of the UN COP process has changed from agreeing on a plan to cut carbon emissions (the Paris Accords) to convincing 190 countries with different political systems and vested interests to accept their responsibilities and carry them out. This is a huge task, not least given adverse global geopolitical conditions.

It is clear that the UN has failed to do this, and it is a big unresolved problem. It is important that the left and the climate movement recognise this reality. It is pointless to pretend that this problem does not exist. That they are simply refusing to act when all they would have to do if they wanted to resolve climate change is snap their fingers—which is exactly what George Monbiot argues in his Guardian article. He

puts it this way:

“So what do we do now? After 27 summits and no effective action, it seems that the real purpose was to keep us talking. If governments were serious about preventing climate breakdown, there would have been no Cops 2-27. The major issues would have been resolved at Cop1, as the ozone depletion crisis was at a single summit in Montreal”.

(He is referring to the 1987 UN Montreal Protocol which banned the use of ozone depleting substances in order to protect the ozone layer that was threatening the future of the planet.)

This is glib in the extreme since there is absolutely no comparison between banning a substance that was easy to replace with no major consequence to anyone involved and abolishing fossil fuels, to which the planet has been addicted for 100 years and has massive vested interests behind it. If you misunderstand (or misrepresent) the scale of the problem, it is hard to contribute to its solution.

The key strategic dilemma

What we actually face is some hard strategic choices. The problem, as I [argued in my first article](#), is that only governments—and ultimately governments prepared to go on a war footing to do so—can implement the structural changes necessary to abolish carbon emissions and transition to renewable energy in the few years that science is giving us. The radical left can't do it, the wider movement can't do it, and a mass movement can't do it—other than by forcing governments to act.

We are facing a planetary emergency. And under these conditions, it is only the UN Framework Convention—or something with a similar global reach and authority —organised on a transnational basis that is capable of

addressing the 190 individual countries that will need to be involved and convinced if it is to be effective.

In terms of the climate justice movement, it is also the only forum through which the climate movement can place pressure and demands on the global elites and around which we can build the kind of mass movement that can force them to take effective action.

A socialist revolution (unfortunately) is not just around the corner, but the task we face is time-limited. We have less than ten years to stop global warming; remember, an ecosocialist society can't build on a dead planet.

The task we face, therefore, whether it fits our plans or not or whether we like it or not, is to force the global elites (however reluctantly) to introduce the structural changes necessary to halt climate change within the timescale science is giving us, and we can't do that by turning our backs on the COP process; we can only do that by engaging with it more effectively and building a mass movement to force it to act against the logic of the capitalist system that they embrace.

What kind of mass movement?

Everyone in this debate argues that a powerful mass movement will be needed to force the change that is necessary in this struggle—including George Monbiot. It is an aspiration, however, that begs many questions. What kind of mass movement do we need? It would have to be the largest coalition of progressive forces ever assembled (because we have to save the planet), so it would not be socialist at first, a movement capable of confronting the kinds of societal breakdowns that are likely as climate impacts worsen. But how would it come to be, and how would its future path be decided?

Such a movement must include those defending the ecology and climate of the planet in any number of ways. It must include

the indigenous peoples who have been the backbone of so many of these struggles, along with the young school strikers who have been so inspirational over the past two years. And it should include the activists of XR who have brought new energy into the movement in the form of non-violent direct action.

Movements that emerge spontaneously are more likely to move to the right than to the left, depending on the experiences gained by the forces during their formation and the balance of political forces within them; the strength of the socialist (or indeed ecosocialist) forces within such a movement will be determined, at least in part, by the role such forces have played in the movement's development and the political legacy they have been able to establish. It must also have a progressive political and environmental driving force within it that fights for an environmentally progressive direction of travel.

Forcing major structural change against the will of the ruling elites will not only need a powerful mass movement behind it but also an environmental action programme behind it such as abolishing fossil fuels, making a rapid transition to renewables, ensuring a socially just transition, making the polluters pay, and retrofitting homes that can command mass support, not just amongst socialists and environmental activists but amongst the wider populations as they are impacted by the ecological crisis itself.

The key to this is to make fossil fuels far more expensive than renewables by means that are socially just, that redistribute wealth from the rich to the poor, that can bring about a big reduction in emissions in the time available, and (crucially) are capable of commanding popular support. This means heavily taxing the polluters to both cut emissions and ensure that they fund the transition to renewables.

As long as fossil fuel remains the cheapest way to generate energy, it is going to be used. An important mechanism,

therefore, for bringing about big reductions in carbon emissions in a short period of time must be carbon pricing—making the polluters pay. This means levying heavy taxes or fees on carbon emissions as a part of a strongly progressive and redistributive taxation system that can win mass popular support.

One proposal on the table in this regard is James Hansen's fee and dividend proposition. It provides the framework for very big emissions reductions, here and now while capitalism exists, and on the basis of a major transfer of wealth from the rich to the poor (as argued above) in order to drive it forward.

As he recognises, it would need to go along with a crash programme of renewable energy production to meet the demand that his incentives would create. It would also need a major programme of energy conservation, a big reduction in the use of the internal combustion engine, the abolition of factory farming, and a big reduction in meat consumption.

Conclusion

The UN has made a unique contribution to the struggle against climate change, a capitalist institution as it inevitably is, having identified the problem soon after it entered public consciousness 32 years ago. It has confronted opposition from many of its member states, and it has been successful, along with its specialist divisions such as the IPCC, in winning the war both against the climate deniers—who were massively backed by the fossil fuel producers for many years—and in winning the scientific community very strongly over to the climate struggle, without which we would not be where we are today.

It has also been key—along with relentless pressure from the ecological crisis itself—in transforming global awareness of climate change to a level without which the options we are discussing today would not exist.

Today, however, the UN faces a pivotal moment. Its carbon reduction strategy has fallen apart, thanks to the Paris Accords and the Glasgow Agreements. Unless this is addressed urgently, it could paralyse the UN's environmental work for many years. It could weaken the global justice movement and open the door to increasingly disastrous climate events, leading directly to tipping points that could take climate chaos out of control.

Unless drastic changes are made, not only the Paris Accords and the Glasgow Agreements will be rendered obsolete, but also the entire approach to climate change adopted in 1992 under the UN Framework Agreement on Climate Change; the 1997 Kyoto Agreement.

The UN must stop handing COP conferences over to countries that cannot:

- Support the project the UN is collectively seeking to promote
- Ensure the basic right to campaign and protest
- Support the project the UN is collectively seeking to promote
- Drastically limit fossil fuel lobbies the kind of access to its conferences
- Seek to ensure that the UN's carbon reduction project is a success.

A very good start would be to accept Lula's offer to hold the 2025 COP in the Amazon rain forest, which would be a huge boost to the movement.

Guterres told us in his opening speech in Sharm El-Sheikh that "the clock is ticking." We are in the fight of our lives, and we are losing. Greenhouse gas emissions keep growing. Global temperatures keep rising, 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 still on the

accelerator.

In his closing speech, he told us that:

“Our planet is still in the emergency room. We need to drastically reduce emissions now – and this is an issue this COP did not address. The world still needs a giant leap on climate ambition.”

He was absolutely right on both counts. His commitment and his passion for the cause have never been in doubt. His task now must be to make the necessary changes in order for his warnings to be translated into actions by making the UN COP carbon reduction process fit for purpose in terms of the challenges we face in the twenty-first century.

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COP27 (Climate) – Fossil victory in Sharm el-Sheikh: only the fight remains

Daniel Tanuro writes on the COP27.

A few days before the opening of COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, I wrote that this conference would be a “new height of greenwashing, green capitalism and repression”. It was a mistake. Greenwashing and repression were more than ever on the shores of the Red Sea, but green capitalism suffered a setback, and fossils won a clear victory.

In matters of climate, we can define green capitalism as the fraction of employers and their political representatives who claim that the disaster can be stopped by a market policy that encourages companies to adopt green or “low carbon” energy technologies, so that it would be possible to reconcile economic growth, growth in profits and rapid reduction in emissions, and even to achieve “net zero emissions” in 2050. This component, known as “mitigation” of climate change, is then supplemented by a so-called “adaptation” component to the now inevitable effects of global warming, and a “funding” component (mainly aimed at southern countries). On these two levels too, the proponents of green capitalism believe that the market can do the job – they even see an opportunity for capital.

From Copenhagen to Paris, from “top down” to “bottom-up”

The agreement reached in Paris at COP21 (2015) was typically a manifestation of this policy. It stipulated that the parties would commit to taking action to ensure that global warming “remains well below 2°C, while continuing efforts not to

exceed 1.5°C". It should be remembered that COP19 (Copenhagen, 2009) had buried the idea of a global distribution of the "2°C carbon budget" (the quantity of carbon that can still be sent into the atmosphere to have a reasonable probability of not exceeding 2°C during this century) according to the responsibilities and the differentiated capacities of the countries. Such a global distribution was (and remains) the most rational approach to combining climate efficacy and social justice, but this "top-down" approach involved settling the accounts of imperialism, which the United States and the European Union European did not want at any price. COP20 (Cancun, 2010) therefore adopted a "bottom-up" approach, more compatible with the neoliberal air of the time: each country would determine its "national contribution" to the climate effort, and we would see, in the course of the annual COP, 1°) if the sum of the efforts is sufficient; 2) if the distribution of efforts complies with the principle of "common but differentiated responsibility" which is enshrined in the Framework Convention on Climate (UN, Rio, 1992).

As a reminder, this Framework Convention affirmed the will of the parties to avoid "a dangerous anthropogenic disturbance of the climate system". Six years after Copenhagen, twenty-three years after Rio, Paris finally came to clarify a little what should be understood by this. This is the formula that we recalled above: "stay well below 2°C while continuing efforts not to exceed 1.5°C...". But one ambiguity hits you in the face: at the end of the day, where is the threshold of dangerousness? At 2°C or 1.5°C? Asked to shed light on the answer to be given to this question, the IPCC submitted a specific report from which it is very clear that half a degree more or less leads to enormous differences in terms of impact. In the process, COP26 (Glasgow, 2021) gave satisfaction to the representatives of the small island states who are sounding the alarm bell: we must stay below 1.5°C of warming.

But how to do it? The gap between the "national contributions"

of the countries and the path to follow to stay below 1.5°C (or to exceed this threshold only very slightly, with the possibility of going back below quite quickly) is an abyss: on the basis of the national contributions, warming will easily exceed the objective. The drafters of the Paris agreement were aware of this “emission gap”. They therefore decided that the parties’ climate commitments would be subject to an “ambition-raising” exercise every five years, in the hope of gradually bridging the gap between the commitments and the objective to be achieved. Problem: six years later, the objective to be reached (1.5°C maximum) has become much more restrictive, and the time available to reach it has become ever shorter.

From Paris to Glasgow: “raising ambitions”?

In Glasgow, the message from scientists was crystal clear: a) global emissions reductions must start now, b) the global peak must be reached no later than 2025, c) CO₂ emissions (and methane!) must decrease by 45 per cent globally by 2030, and d) climate justice implies that the richest one per cent divides its emissions by thirty while the poorest 50 per cent will multiply them by three. All this, without mentioning the gigantic efforts to be made in terms of adaptation and financing, particularly in poor countries...

In this context, Glasgow could only note the accelerated obsolescence of the five-year strategy of “enhancing ambitions” adopted in Paris: no one could seriously claim that a round table every five years would make it possible to fill the emissions gap. In a very tense context, the British Presidency then proposed that the “mitigation” component be subject to review every year during the “decisive decade” 2020-2030, and this procedure was adopted. The presidency also proposed to decide on the rapid elimination of coal but, on this point, it came up against a veto from India, so that the participants had to content themselves with deciding on a

reduction (“phasing down”) rather than an elimination (“phasing out”) of the use of this fuel.

In Sharm el-Sheikh: place your bets, there’s no more time left

At the end of COP27, the results are quite clear: there is almost nothing left of these commitments made in Glasgow.

The annual raising of ambitions has not taken place. All the countries should have updated their “national contributions”: only thirty complied with the exercise, and even then, very insufficiently (see my article preceding the COP). It is very likely that this attempt will be the last and that we will henceforth be content with the process of five-year reviews provided for by COP21... while hypocritically pretending to ignore the impossibility by this means of respecting the 1.5°C limit!

COP26 had adopted a “mitigation work programme” which COP27 was supposed to implement. It was content to decide that the process would be “non-prescriptive, non-punitive” and “would not lead to new objectives”. Moreover, the objective of the 1.5°C maximum, adopted in Glasgow, came very near to being explicitly called into question (it was explicitly called into question, outside the plenary session, by the representatives of Russia and Saudi Arabia, not to mention the trial balloons launched by China and India at certain G20 meetings).

Nothing was decided to materialize the “phasing down” of coal. The Indian delegation, cleverly, proposed a text on the eventual phasing out of all fossil fuels (not only coal, but also oil and gas). Surprise: eighty countries, “developed” and “developing”, supported it, but the Egyptian presidency did not even mention it. The final statement says nothing about it. The term “fossil fuels” appears only once in the text, which calls for “accelerating efforts to reduce (the use of) coal without abatement and the elimination of inefficient

subsidies to fossil fuels". The formula is strictly identical to that which was adopted in Glasgow... (the expression "coal without abatement" refers to combustion installations without CO2 capture for geological sequestration or industrial use...). According to some leaks from the debates between heads of delegations, the Saudis and the Russians opposed any further mention of fossil fuels in the text. The Russian representative is said to have even declared on this occasion: "It is unacceptable. We cannot make the energy situation worse" (*Carbon brief*, Key Outcomes of COP27). It's the pot calling the kettle black!

We thought we had seen everything in terms of greenwashing, but no: some decisions taken in Sharm -el-Sheikh open up the risk that pollution rights could be counted twice. Paris had decided on the principle of a "new market mechanism" to take over from the CDM (Clean Development Mechanism, set up by the Kyoto Protocol). From now on, the rights market will have two speeds: on the one hand a market for emission credits, on the other hand a free market for "mitigation contributions", on which nothing stands in the way of the so-called emission reductions being counted twice (once by the seller and once by the buyer!). In addition, countries that conclude bilateral emission reduction agreements will be free to decide that the means implemented are "confidential"... and therefore unverifiable!

The very fashionable theme of "carbon removal" from the atmosphere considerably increases the risks of greenwashing on the emission credits market. Several methods and technologies could theoretically be used, but there is a great danger that they will serve as a substitute for reducing emissions. So, things have to be very strictly defined and framed. Especially when they involve the use of land areas for energy purposes, because this use obviously risks coming into conflict with human food production and the protection of biodiversity. A previously designated technical body was to look into the

problem. It is faced with such a mass of proposals which are contested, or which have never been tested, that the worst is to be feared, pushed forward by an alliance between fossil fuels and agribusiness.

“Loss and damage”: the tree that hides the forest

The media made much of the decision to create a fund for “loss and damage”. This is a demand that poor countries and small island states have been putting forward for thirty years: the climatic disasters that they are experiencing are costing them dearly, whereas they are the product of the warming caused mainly by the developed capitalist countries; those responsible must therefore pay, through an ad hoc fund. The United States and the European Union have always opposed this demand, but in Sharm el-Sheikh, the pressure from “developing” countries was too strong, it was no longer possible to quibble: either a fund was created, or it was the end of the COP process and a deep split between North and South. You should know that this “South” includes countries as different as the oil monarchies, China, and the so-called “least developed” countries.... To prevent all this little world from forming a bloc supported by the “anti-Western” discourse of the Kremlin, Western imperialism could not afford to do nothing. The EU unblocked the situation by setting the following conditions: 1°) that the fund be supplemented by various sources of financing (including existing sources, and others, “innovative”); 2) that its interventions benefit only the most vulnerable countries; 3°) that the COP “enhances the ambitions” of mitigation. The first two points have been met, not the third.

The creation of the fund is undoubtedly a victory for the poorest countries, increasingly impacted by disasters such as the floods that recently hit Pakistan and Niger, or the typhoons that are increasingly ravaging the Philippines. But

it is a symbolic victory, because COP27 only took a vague decision of principle. Who will pay? When? How much? And above all: to whom will the funds go? To the victims on the ground, or to the corrupt intermediaries? On all these issues, we can expect tough battles. Saudi Arabia, the Emirates and Qatar will refuse to pay, citing the fact that the UN defines them as “developing countries”. China will most likely do the same, arguing that it is contributing through bilateral agreements, as part of its “New Silk Roads”. It is not tomorrow or the day after that capitalism will take its responsibilities in the face of the catastrophe for which it is responsible and which is destroying the existence of millions of men and women, in the South, but also in the North (even though the consequences there are, for the moment, less dramatic)...

The cries of victory over the “loss and damage” fund are all the less justified since the other promises in terms of financing are still not honoured by the rich countries: the hundred billion dollars a year are not paid into the Green Fund for the Climate, and the commitment to double the resources of the adaptation fund has not materialized.

A victory for fossils, acquired in the name of... the poorest!?

This is not the place to go into more detail, other publications have done it very well (*Carbon Brief*, *Home Climate News*, CLARA, among others). The conclusion that emerges is that the climate policy of green capitalism, with its three components (mitigation, adaptation, financing) suffered a failure in Sharm el-Sheikh. Champion of green capitalism, the European Union almost walked out and slammed the door behind it. On the other hand, COP27 ended in a victory for fossil capital.

This victory is first and foremost the result of the geopolitical context created by the exit (?) from the pandemic

and accentuated by the Russian war of aggression against the Ukrainian people. We have entered a conjuncture of growing inter-imperialist rivalries and all-out rearmament. The wars, so to speak, are still only local, and not all have yet been declared, but the possibility of a conflagration haunts all capitalist leaders. Even if they do not want it, they are preparing for it, and this preparation, paradoxically, implies both the acceleration of the development of renewable energies and the increased use of fossil fuels, and therefore a considerable expansion of the possibilities of profit for the big capitalist groups of coal, oil, gas... and the finance capital behind it. It is no coincidence that, a year after Glasgow, the balloon of Mark Carney 's GFANZ (Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero) is deflating: banks and pension funds are less willing than ever to comply with UN rules ("Race for Zero net") on the banning of fossil fuel investments...

Secondly, it is the result of the very nature of the COP process. From Paris onwards, the capitalist sponsorship of these summits has experienced explosive growth. In Sharm el-Sheikh, it seems that quantity has turned into quality. Of the twenty corporate sponsors of the event, only two were not directly or indirectly linked to the fossil fuel industry. The industrial coal, oil and gas lobbies had sent more than 600 delegates to the conference. To this must be added the "fossil moles" in the delegations of many countries (including representatives of the Russian oligarchs under sanctions!), not to mention the official delegations composed solely of these "moles", in particular those of the fossil monarchies of the Middle East. All this fossil scum seems to have changed tactics: rather than denying climate change, or its "anthropogenic" origin, or the role of CO₂, the emphasis is now on "clean fossils" and technologies of "carbon removal". The delegation of the Emirates (one thousand delegates!) thus organized a "side-event" (on the sidelines of the official programme) to attract partners to collaborate on a vast

project of “green oil” consisting (stupidly, because the technology is known) of injecting CO₂ into the oil deposits, to bring out more oil... the combustion of which will produce more CO₂. The *Financial Times*, which is, it will be agreed, above all suspicion of anti-capitalism, was not afraid to go to the heart of the problem: the grip of fossils on the negotiations has grown so much that COP27 was in fact a trade fair for investments, in particular in gas (“green energy”, according to the European Union!), but also in oil, and even in coal (*Financial Times*, 26/11/2022).

A third factor came into play: the role of the Egyptian presidency. During the final plenary, the representative of Saudi Arabia thanked it, on behalf of his country and the Arab League. The dictatorship of General Sissi has indeed achieved a double performance: establishing itself as a country to be visited despite the fierce repression of all opposition, on the one hand; and on the other portraying himself as the spokesperson for peoples thirsty for climate justice, especially on the world’s poorest continent...even when he was in fact acting in collusion with the most relentless of fossil exploiters, so wealthy that they no longer know what to do with their fortunes. In his final speech, the Saudi representative added: “We would like to emphasize that the Convention (the UN Framework Convention on Climate) must address the question of emissions, and not that of the origin of the emissions.” In other words: let us exploit and burn fossil fuels, no need to remove this energy source, let’s focus on how to remove CO₂ from the atmosphere, by “offsetting” the emissions (capture and geological sequestration, tree plantations, purchases of “rights to pollute, etc.).

Only the mass struggle remains

The Europeans, Frank Timmermans in the lead, are weeping and wailing: “the possibility of staying below 1.5°C is becoming

extremely low and is disappearing”, they say in substance. In effect. But whose fault is it? It would be too easy to unload the responsibility on others. In reality, these heralds of green capitalism are caught up in their own neoliberal logic: do they swear by the market? Well, fossils, which dominate the market, have dominated the COP... Time will tell if this is just a hiccup of history. COP28 will be chaired by the United Arab Emirates, so there is nothing to expect from that side. The answer, in fact, will depend on the evolution of the global geopolitical conjuncture, that is to say, ultimately, on social and ecological struggles. Either mass revolts will make the powerful tremble and force them to let go; in this case, whatever the source of the struggle (inflation? one assassination too many, as in Iran? a police confinement, as in China?), a space will open up to unite the social and the ecological, therefore also to impose measures in line with another climate policy. Or else the race to the abyss will continue.

Nobody, this time, dared to say, as usual, that this COP, “although disappointing”, nevertheless constituted “a step forward”. In fact, two things are now crystal clear: 1°) there will be no real “steps forward” without radical anti-capitalist and anti-productivist measures; 2°) they will not emerge from the COP, but from the struggles and their convergence.

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Rising Clyde 8: latest issue of Scottish Climate Show on “COP27”

The latest issue of Rising Clyde, the Scottish Climate Show hosted by Iain Bruce, is now available on YouTube via the Independence Live video service.

In this episode Iain is with Sabrina Fernandes in Rio and Nathan Thanki in Ibagué, Colombia, talking about the few signs of hope among the failures of COP27 – the agreement on Loss and Damage, the return of Lula, and the blistering critique from President Gustavo Petro. .

Watch the programme here:

Previous Issues

Previous Rising Clyde shows on Independence Live can be found here:

[\(1035\) SHOW: Rising Clyde – YouTube](#)