



## The Global Stocktake: A critical update on climate action, or lack of it

COP27, held in Egypt in November 2022, boasted a few notable successes, in particular the establishment of a Loss and Damage Fund to compensate developing countries for the impact of climate change. However, one of the most obvious deficiencies was the lack of significant progress on setting and implementing more ambitious emissions reduction targets. Prior to the conference a series of IPCC reports had highlighted that the world is not on target to meet its 1.5° warming target and during the event itself the NGO Climate Tracker highlighted that on the basis of current policy implementation the world will warm by 2.7° by 2100.<sup>1</sup> To mitigate this, countries had agreed at COP26 in 2021 to update their national plans (or nationally determined contributions, NDCs) during 2022 with more ambitious targets, but only 20 of the 193 parties had done this by November.<sup>2</sup> As a result, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres felt compelled to warn, ‘we are on a highway to climate hell with our foot still on the accelerator’.<sup>3</sup>

This situation has highlighted the importance of a process established under Article 14 of the Paris Agreement known as the Global Stocktake (GST). Its purpose is to assess progress on ‘mitigation, adaptation, and the means of implementation and support, and in the light of equity and the best available science’.<sup>4</sup> In other words how are countries doing in their efforts to bring down emissions, how prepared are they to adapt to a changing environment, and what progress is being made to provide help to poorer countries, especially with climate finance. The GST takes place once every five years in tandem with the setting of new NDCs, as shown in the chart below. In the current cycle, progress on implementing the NDC targets set in 2020/21 (a process that was delayed by COVID 19) is being reviewed in 2022/23 ahead of the presentation of new NDCs in 2025. These will then be reviewed in 2027/28 ahead of a further set of new NDC targets in 2030, as part of the ratcheting process established in the Paris Agreement.

COP27 marked the end of the second of three phases in the current cycle. Phase 1, which began at COP26, has involved the gathering of information, while phase 2 has been the technical assessment of that data and a review process which commenced at COP27. The Sharm El Sheikh Implementation Plan, published at the end of the conference,<sup>5</sup> noted the importance of this periodic review and it is significant that the discussions around the GST took place at numerous roundtables that involved participants from a wide range of affiliations, underlining the intended inclusive and collaborative nature of the process.

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<sup>1</sup> Bloomberg, 10 November 2022, “Climate Projections Again Point to Dangerous 2.7C Rise by 2100”

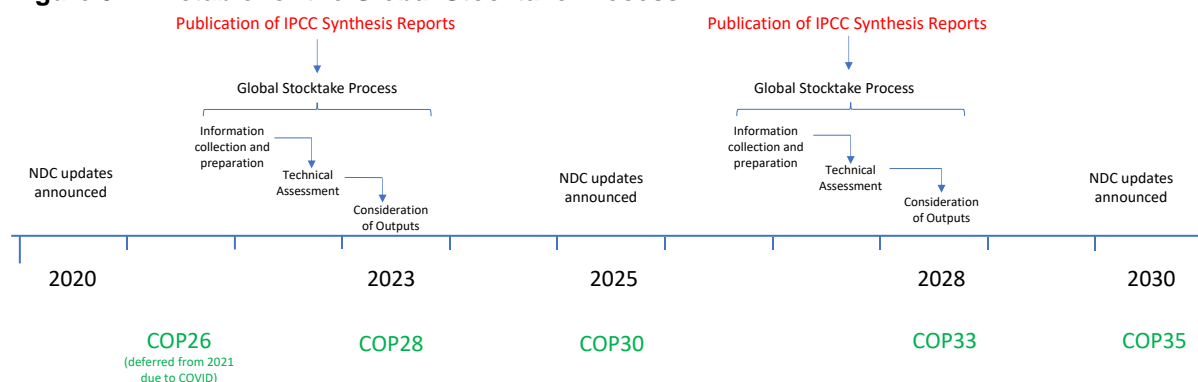
<sup>2</sup> See Climate Action Tracker at <https://climateactiontracker.org/climate-target-update-tracker-2022/>

<sup>3</sup> IISD Daily Report from COP27, Monday 7 November

<sup>4</sup> [https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english\\_paris\\_agreement.pdf](https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Sharm El Sheikh Implementation Plan, Section XII, UNFCCC, at <https://unfccc.int/documents/624444>

**Figure 5: Timetable for the Global Stocktake Process**



Source: Author

However, although the COP27 discussions on the GST were positive, despite some complaints about the presence of oil and gas industry lobbyists,<sup>6</sup> the real test of the process will come in 2023 when the results are made public and the political negotiations about how to respond to them begin. One major issue will be the pledge by developed countries to provide USD 100 billion of climate finance for the developed world by 2020. This goal has already been missed, but a new promise to achieve it by 2023 will be reviewed in the GST and the outcome will no doubt be highlighted. Furthermore, although the performance of individual countries will not be a focus, in order to avoid excessive finger-pointing, it should also become abundantly clear whether the world as a whole is implementing emissions reduction plans and is on target to meet its climate objectives. As this is unlikely to be the case, controversial questions about why not and what can be done will no doubt be raised and vociferously debated.

The first sign of results from the GST process should start to emerge in February 2023 when the 193 parties in the UNFCCC process, as well as interested non-parties (such as NGOs) have been invited to offer thoughts on how the outputs should be considered. A more specific consultation process is then planned for April before an in-person workshop in October, ahead of COP28 which is due to take place in the UAE from 30 November to 12 December. To further emphasize the importance of the GST, the UN Secretary-General has invited all parties to a 'climate ambition summit' ahead of the conclusion of the GST to ensure that the outputs are fully understood and that resulting plans of action are considered. As a result, although the GST has been described as something of a 'sleeper issue' its importance is set to become very clear in 2023 as it takes centre stage in the debate about the world's progress, or lack of it, towards meeting climate goals and about the plans that need to be put in place to close any gaps. This could therefore be the moment when the reality of the climate emergency is laid bare and could act as an important catalyst for policy-makers to start to make more concrete plans to rectify the situation, with significant implications for countries and companies alike.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.carbonbrief.org/cop27-key-outcomes-agreed-at-the-un-climate-talks-in-sharm-el-sheikh/#:~:text=Back%20to%20top-,Sharm%20el%2DSheikh%20implementation%20plan,last%20year's%20Glasgow%20Climate%20Pact.>