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THE CARMELITE NGO BULLETIN

2024 | Volume 17 | Number 5

English edition

Reporting on the Azerbaijan's Climate Summit

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The COP 29 venue in Baku, 12 - 22 Nov, 2024

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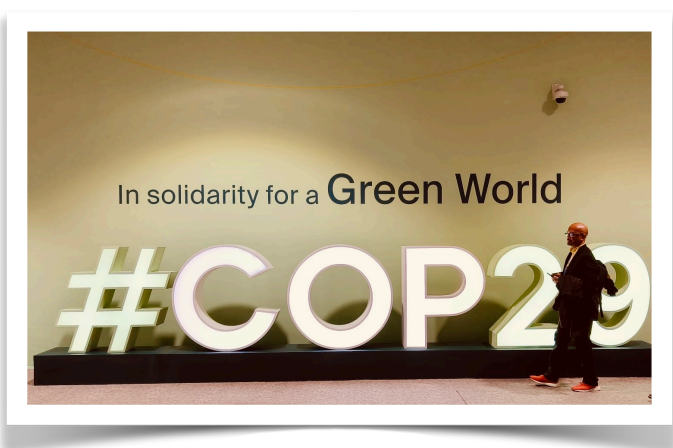
Reporting on the COP is becoming increasingly difficult because we are immersed in a narrative that demands a

clear verdict for every event: a success or a failure. However, at COPs, this is very rare either way. The COPs are instead a continuous pro-

cess. As strange as it may seem, as long as the COPs continue to exist, that alone is already a success because humans have historically been much more accustomed to waging wars than holding conferences.

Representation of Humanity

On the other hand, I fully understand the frustration of those watching COPs from home, those who see about 60, 70, or 80 thousand people converge in some random place in the world every year: they expect – at least – extraordinary results. It may sound strange, but understanding the COP is more accessible from the outside than from within, by participating. Inside the COPs, one experiences the rarest experience of *humanity as a whole*. Although 80 thousand people do not represent all of humanity, being in that place, usually a stadium or a conference center, and seeing 80 thousand people walking in every direction, speaking every language in the world, is a dizzying experience but a precious one. Considering the relevance that climate and energy have for all individual states and politics, and despite all its difficulties, the COP remains a masterpiece of civilization, the highest point we have ever reached as a species in the difficult task of living peacefully without waging war, even though we know (and even clearly tell ourselves) that resources are scarce.



Small Steps Forward on Two Points

The expectations for this COP were quite negative, partly because Azerbaijan was a host country with significant fossil fuel interests, thus not particularly proactive in the negotia-

tion process, and partly because there is great expectation for the next COP, which will be held 10 years after the Paris Agreements in 2025 in Brazil, most probably in Belém in the Amazon region. The current Brazilian government is one of the most proactive in the climate negotiation, representing a relatively developed country but still not a rich one, with many oil assets and hosting the planet's lungs, the Amazon rainforest. COP30 is, therefore, a candidate to play a hopefully crucial role in setting critical points on the path that should lead us to net zero carbon emissions by the middle of this century.

Thus, this COP29 was seen as a transitional step to COP30. Therefore, not much was expected in terms of success, especially considering a huge issue that perhaps was not discussed enough during the negotiations – I guess to avoid dampening morale: the election of Donald Trump, which will likely lead to the U.S. exiting the Paris Agreement again (as happened in 2016).

Despite these premises, at least two steps forward were made during this COP. The first breakthrough Baku achieved was the carbon credit market agreement. Based on Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, this market sets rules for buying and selling carbon credits, which represent verified reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. These credits can be generated through reforestation or renewable energy initiatives aiming to reduce global emissions.

The newly adopted rules focus on transparency and credibility, ensuring that carbon credits are genuine and do not lead to "greenwashing." A centralized UN registry system will track credits to prevent double-counting and misuse. Furthermore, these rules aim to make the carbon market inclusive, supporting human rights and sustainable development.

This market will facilitate cross-border cooperation, allowing countries to trade emissions reductions to meet their climate goals more efficiently. It is expected to help lower the costs of implementing the commitments outlined in the Paris Agreement by as much as

\$250 billion annually. The rules are set to take effect in 2025, marking a pivotal moment in international climate efforts by providing a trusted framework for climate action, promoting investment in green technologies, and ensuring that developing countries can participate in this global effort.

The second point of the Baku agreement concerns climate finance. In Baku, reaching a new agreement on the financial contributions that world countries would make to the energy transition was crucial. After two weeks of intense and serious discussions, in the early hours of Sunday morning (i.e., during the “overtime” of the conference, which was supposed to end on Friday), it was agreed that the so-called rich countries, i.e., those in the famous “Annex I” of the Kyoto Protocol, would commit to contributing up to 300 billion dollars per year—to be reached by 2035—to developing countries for both adaptation and mitigation projects.

Initial Target: 1300 Billion

During the COP, developing countries had requested a target of \$1.3 trillion per year, estimated by three renowned and experienced climate economists (Amar Bhattacharya, Vera Songwe, Nicholas Stern), who had identified this figure as necessary for the goal. After two weeks, an agreement was reached for about a quarter of this amount, which reflects the political climate in developed countries. These countries, as is well known, have seen a shift toward conservatism in recent years, focused on protecting their own well-being: such a shift not only opposes the desirable principle of wealth-sharing with the rest of the world but also makes solving global problems like climate change more difficult.

Reforming the COP

From a methodological point of view, it is interesting to note that in the first week of COP Baku, a letter was sent to the United Nations by representatives of the Club of Rome, a historic sustainability organization, proposing a review of the COP's functioning to make it more streamlined by shortening negotiation sessions and making it more efficient. The

proposal is structured in 7 points, including introducing stricter selection criteria for host countries, creating more frequent action-oriented meetings, and strengthening reporting mechanisms to ensure the implementation of commitments. It also calls for more rigorous monitoring of climate finance and a greater integration of authoritative science. Furthermore, the proposal emphasizes the importance of linking climate change to the fight against poverty and inequality, promoting fair and transparent representation in negotiations.



The debate on COP reform, particularly its methodology, is increasingly debated. The proposal made by the Club of Rome raises fundamental questions about how to make the process more agile and efficient. COPs are known for being long and complex events characterized by extended negotiation sessions and an increasing number of delegates. While this vastness reflects the global importance and scope of the process, it can also highlight the difficulty of reaching concrete agreements. Reducing the duration of negotiations and simplifying procedures is not just an organizational need but a response to maintaining high effectiveness and speed in decision-making. However, such a reform risks conflicting with the very nature of COPs: an inclusive process that tries to balance the interests of hundreds of actors, including states, international organizations, civil society, and industry. How can we maintain a balance between efficiency and inclusivity? This is one of the questions that will accompany us in the coming years as COPs continue to play a crucial role in determining the future of global cooperation on climate change.

What's at Stake

There are days when I wake up optimistic and think that the problem of climate change can be easily solved, mainly through technology. The central point is that we must convert our energy production systems from fossil fuels to renewable energy. So it would be “simply” a matter of finding financiers for the necessary investments in this transition while also fighting the fossil business lobbyists unwilling to reduce their interests.



On days when I wake up pessimistic, I think it's not a technological problem but one that concerns the entire competition between states. The point is that this competition is inextricable from human history. Period. Access to energy has always been closely tied to the level of development of nations, and the demand for developed states to limit their consumption and even allow less developed states some time to develop while consuming fossil fuels is a highly utopian chimera, born of the romantic approach of the United Nations. In years when the United States re-elects Trump or when Javier Milei withdraws the Argentine delegation on the second day of the Baku negotiations, it is not apparent to remain optimistic about the outcome of such a progressive stance.

The Morality and Position of the Church: Net Transfers, Choosing to Relinquish

What does the Church think? Since always - and especially in the past 10 years, with the publication of *Laudato Si'*, the Church's position has been highly forward-thinking, modern, based on the best available science. The Church is the only entity that explicitly raises the moral dimension of climate change, urging

humanity to consider economic interests, social justice, and future generations' well-being. While its stance may seem detached from the political and economic mechanisms, dominated by profit, it reminds us that there is an ethical dimension to action, a value rarely seen in today's debate, where market logic and national interests prevail. In a side event organized by the Carmelite NGO along with various Catholic associations present in Baku (SCIAF, Unanima, VIVAT, IYCS), titled *Faith and Justice in Ecological Transition*, the concept emerged in all contributions: climate finance is not just a charitable gift but a compensation for historically inflicted damage to the common good of the atmosphere.

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