

## What Exactly Is a COP Conference?

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COP28 – or the 28<sup>th</sup> session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, to give it its full title – is already in full swing. This year, the event kicked off on 30<sup>th</sup> November in Dubai and will continue for a fortnight until the 12<sup>th</sup> of December 2023.

Over 70,000 people from almost 200 countries around the globe are expected to attend the conference over its two-week duration. But what, exactly, is a COP Conference? How is it structured, who can attend and what are the expected outcomes of this annual climate extravaganza? We'll investigate these questions below.

### The hosts

After last year's COP27 was hosted in Sharm el-Sheikh in Egypt, the 2023 edition is being held in Expo City in Dubai in the UAE. The Emirati authorities have spent the best part of a year making the necessary logistical preparations to ensure that the event goes off without a hitch, with a veritable village of pop-ups, exhibition halls and other venues springing up across the city.

However, their role as host of this year's conference did not actually begin until the opening ceremony last Thursday. As one of the major players in the oil and gas industry, and as a significant investor in renewable energy technology in recent years, the UAE believe they are uniquely placed to drive the conference towards its goals this year.

### How is the conference laid out?

Generally speaking, COP28 is divided into two different zones. On the one hand, there is the Blue Zone, which is for the exclusive use of world leaders, national delegates and other accredited participants. This area is where the negotiations will take place, the drafts of the agreement will be drawn up and the documents will be eventually signed when the conference comes to a close on the 12<sup>th</sup> of December.

The Green Zone, on the other hand, is a gigantic warehouse-type venue, with open-plan exhibition booths representing the various interests of industry companies, environmental campaigners and non-profit organizations from all around the world. This section is much more like a standard trade fair than a world-leading political summit. Additionally, there is a third area dedicated to serving the needs of the global press.

### Which issues are on the table at COP28?

The biggest topic of discussion is, as it has always been, how to best go about preventing a global rise in temperatures of 1.5°C compared to pre-Industrial Revolution levels. Of course,

the lion's share of negotiations will be focused on the minutiae of how to achieve this ultimate objective, with a variety of issues subject to debate.

The phasing out of fossil fuels and a transition towards cleaner sources of power will be high on the conference agenda, while the delivery of funds to aid poorer nations with their energy transition (and to deal with the effects of climate change thus far) is also expected to be an important topic. Elsewhere, there is expected to be a concerted focus on making COP28 the most inclusive conference to date under the stewardship of the Emirati authorities.