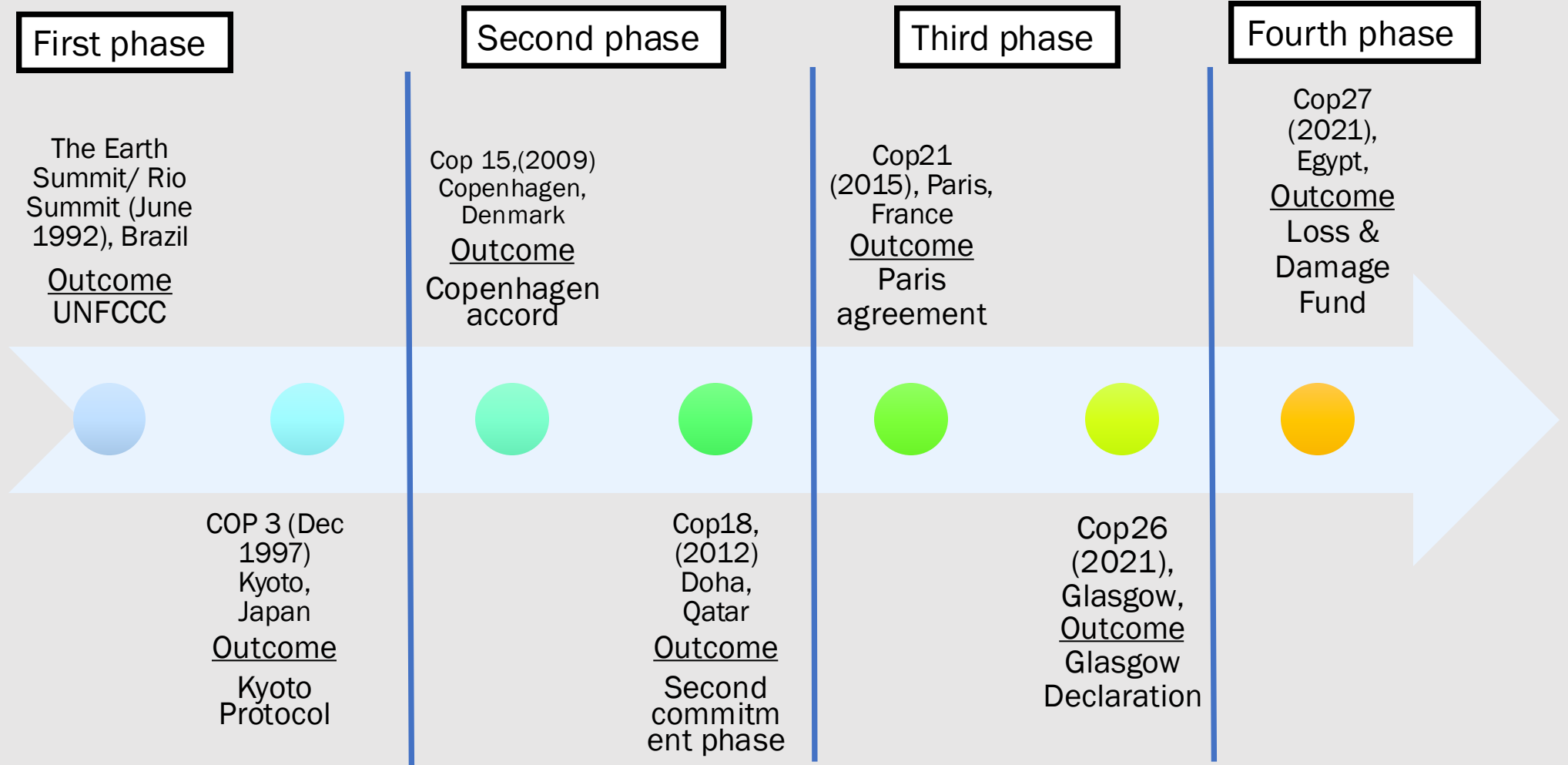




Climate negotiations at conference of parties

Major international climate negotiations



What is Conference of Parties ?

- The **Conference of the Parties (COP)** is the supreme decision-making body of the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)**.
- It is an annual meeting of representatives from all member countries (referred to as "Parties") to assess progress in addressing climate change, negotiate agreements, and make decisions to implement the Convention's objectives.
- Review the implementation of the UNFCCC and its protocols (e.g., Kyoto Protocol, Paris Agreement).
- Assess progress toward the UNFCCC's ultimate goal: stabilizing greenhouse gas (GHG) concentrations to prevent dangerous interference with the climate system.
- Facilitate negotiations for new or enhanced climate agreements and commitments.

Key Responsibilities:

- Set emission reduction targets and climate policies.
- Monitor implementation of commitments by member nations.
- Foster collaboration on climate adaptation, mitigation, finance, and technology transfer.

Participants:

- Member countries (197 Parties).
- Observers, including representatives from civil society, NGOs, intergovernmental organizations, academia, and the private sector.

Negotiations in COP

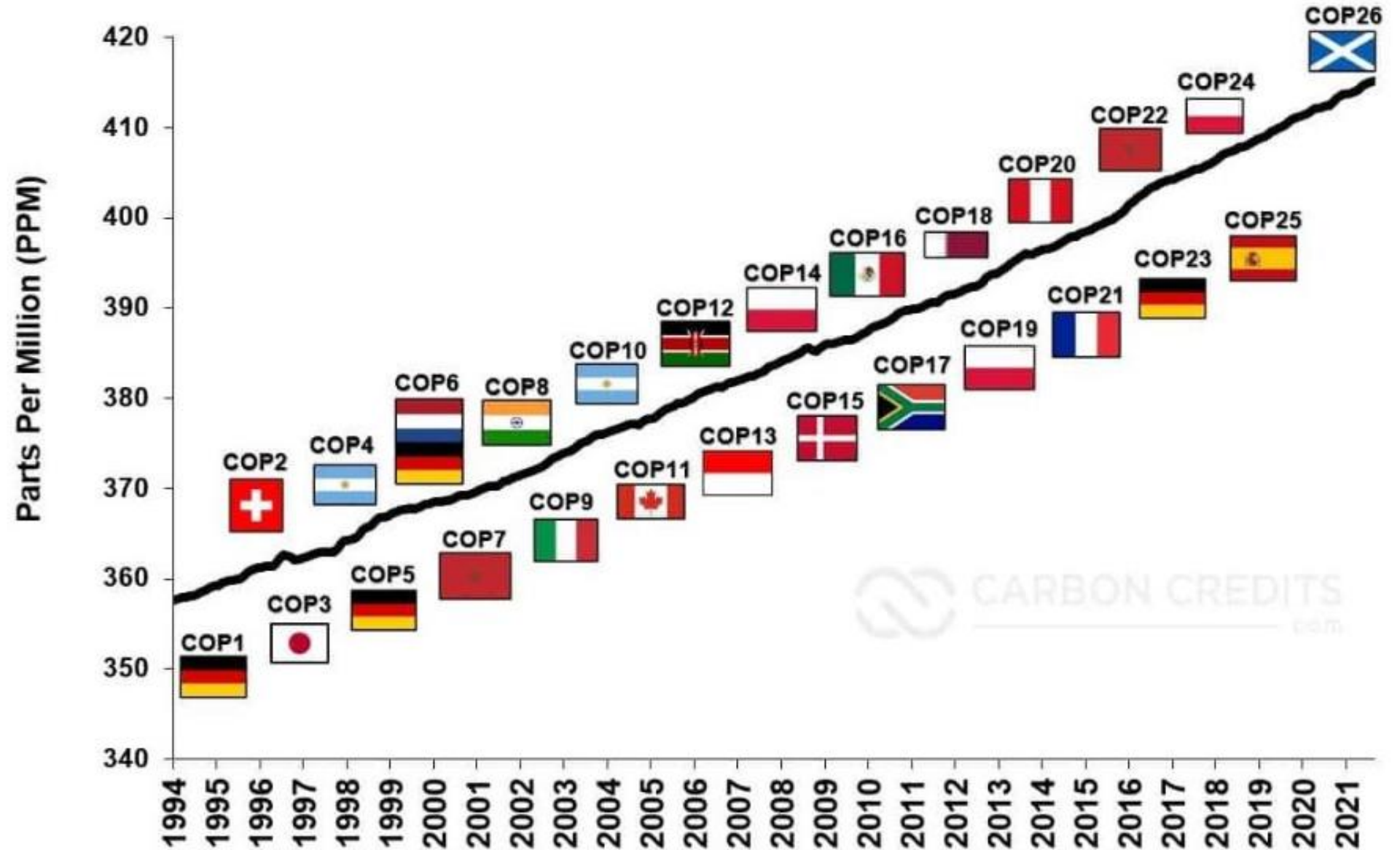
- A complex, multi-layered processes involving representatives from almost all countries in the world.
- These negotiations aim to address climate change by setting global policies, goals, and frameworks
- Require balancing diverse interests and addressing complex scientific, economic, and political issues.

- **Number of COPs** – 29
- **Last COP** – COP 29 (Baku, Azerbaijan)
- **Next COP** – COP 30 (Brasil)
- **India-** COP 8 (New Delhi) - 2002

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kJhgEnRI4HU>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NPd6qt0XPa0>

Global CO₂ Emissions



The Timeline of the COP Conferences Leading to COP27 By Jennifer L

Why Negotiations Take Time?

- **Diverse Interests:** Countries have varying priorities based on their economic status, climate vulnerabilities, and development needs.
- **Legal and Political Sensitivities:** Agreements must be acceptable to domestic constituencies and legislatures, especially for legally binding commitments.
- **Scientific Complexity:** Negotiations rely on complex scientific data and modelling, requiring careful interpretation.
- **Geopolitical Tensions:** Broader political disputes can spill into climate negotiations, delaying consensus.

Preparation before the COP

- **National Consultations:** Each country prepares its positions and priorities through domestic consultations involving ministries, scientists, NGOs, and other stakeholders.
- **Submission of Proposals:** Countries or groups of countries may submit proposals or texts to be discussed during the COP.
- **Coordination by Blocs:** Countries often align with regional or interest-based negotiating blocs, such as the G77, the European Union, or the Least Developed Countries (LDC) Group, to coordinate their positions.

Submission of Agenda

Preparatory Meetings and Submissions:

- **Parties and Observers:** Member countries (Parties) and observer organizations (NGOs, IGOs) submit proposals or items they wish to see included in the agenda.
- **UNFCCC Secretariat:** Collects, compiles, and circulates these submissions among Parties before the COP event.

Draft Agenda:

- The UNFCCC Secretariat, in consultation with the COP Presidency and other key stakeholders, prepares a **draft agenda** based on prior submissions, ongoing work streams, and mandated items from previous COPs.
- Items typically include climate finance, mitigation targets, adaptation measures, loss and damage, technology transfer, and capacity-building.

Consultations and Review:

- **Presidency-led Consultations:** The COP Presidency holds informal consultations with Parties to ensure consensus and resolve disputes over contentious items.
- Some Parties may propose additional items or object to the inclusion of certain topics. These objections are addressed through negotiations.

Adoption of the Agenda:

- At the beginning of the COP, the draft agenda is presented for approval during the **Plenary Session**.
- Parties discuss, negotiate, and adopt the agenda, either as proposed or with amendments.
- If consensus cannot be reached on specific items, they may be deferred for future consideration or addressed informally.

SUBMIT YOUR GROUP'S ADENGA TO UNFCCC Secretary BY 2nd APRIL EOD



PREPARATION

National-Level Preparations

- **Stakeholder Consultations:** Governments engage with various stakeholders, including ministries, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academic institutions, and the private sector, to identify priorities and challenges related to climate change.
 - Example: Environment ministries typically lead this process.
 - Focus areas include adaptation, mitigation, finance, technology transfer, and capacity building.
- **Research and Analysis:** Countries assess their emissions data, climate impacts, and progress toward Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement.
 - Preparation may involve updating NDCs or other commitments, guided by scientific evidence and national interests.
- **Position Development:**
 - Governments develop their negotiation positions based on national priorities, such as financial assistance, loss and damage, or technology needs.
 - For developing nations, issues like climate finance and adaptation are often prioritized.
 - For developed nations, emphasis may be on mitigation commitments and transparency.

Regional and Coalition-Level Coordination

- **Engaging in Negotiating Groups:** Countries align with their respective negotiating blocs or coalitions to strengthen their positions. Examples include:
 - **G77 + China:** Developing countries focusing on equity, finance, and capacity building.
 - **Least Developed Countries (LDCs):** Highlighting vulnerabilities to climate impacts.
 - **European Union (EU):** Advocating for ambitious mitigation targets.
 - **Small Island Developing States (SIDS):** Emphasizing sea-level rise and loss and damage.
- **Pre-COP Regional Meetings:** Regional and coalition meetings are held to develop common agendas and strategies.
 - Example: The African Group on Climate Change negotiates a shared stance for African countries.

Submissions to the UNFCCC

- **Position Papers and Proposals:** Countries and groups submit position papers or proposals to the UNFCCC Secretariat for inclusion in the COP agenda.
 - Example: Submissions might cover new mechanisms for loss and damage or updates on NDCs.
- **Review of Existing Agreements:** Countries assess the progress of previous commitments and identify gaps to address at the COP.

Capacity Building and Team Formation

- **Delegation Selection:** Governments assemble delegations comprising negotiators, technical experts, and policymakers.
 - Delegations often include representatives from multiple ministries and sectors.
 - Some countries also include youth representatives or NGOs in advisory roles.
- **Training and Briefings:**
 - Delegates undergo training to understand the technical aspects of climate negotiations and the latest developments in the UNFCCC framework.
 - Mock negotiations or simulation exercises may be conducted.

Preparation of National Statements: Leaders prepare opening and plenary session speeches outlining their country's positions, priorities, and commitments.

- Example: Heads of State often announce new initiatives or enhanced NDCs during the high-level segment.

Drafting Proposals: Countries prepare draft resolutions or text amendments for submission during the COP sessions.

Examples of COP Preparations

■ Before COP21 (Paris Agreement)

India announced its ambitious renewable energy targets, including achieving 175 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2022. This was part of its strategy to demonstrate leadership while demanding equitable climate action from developed countries.

■ Before COP26 (Glasgow)

India submitted its "Panchamrit" strategy, which included achieving net-zero emissions by 2070, as a signal of its long-term commitment to climate goals. This was carefully prepared to balance international expectations with domestic development priorities.



KEY STRUCTURES OF NEGOTIATION AT THE COP

Plenaries

1. These are large sessions where all Parties meet to set the agenda, make announcements, and adopt major decisions.
2. Plenaries often take place at the beginning and end of the COP.

Subsidiary Bodies

Two main bodies

1. the Subsidiary Body for Scientific Technological Advice (SBSTA)
2. the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) — work on technical and implementation issues. They often meet during the COP to advance negotiations.

Negotiating Tracks

Specific topics, such as mitigation, adaptation, finance, technology transfer, and loss and damage, are addressed in parallel negotiating tracks.

Informal Consultations

Smaller groups, including informal consultations or "contact groups," are formed to discuss specific issues and draft text for agreements.

Side Events and Parallel Platforms

While not part of the formal negotiation structures, side events provide:

1. Platforms for discussion, capacity-building, and showcasing best practices.
2. Opportunities for non-state actors to influence the formal negotiations.

Country Delegations

Head Delegates

Each country appoints a head of delegation who represents the official position of their country and makes key decisions.

(India - Naresh Pal Gangwar, MoEFCC)

Experts and Negotiators

Delegations include experts on various topics, such as finance or adaptation, who participate in specialized discussions.

Observers

NGOs, intergovernmental organizations, and other stakeholders attend as observers, though they do not directly participate in negotiations



Negotiation process

1. Agenda Setting

- The first step in COP negotiations is agreeing on the agenda.
 - ❖ *Example: At COP27 (2022) in Sharm El-Sheikh, a significant amount of time was spent debating whether to include "loss and damage" financing for vulnerable nations as a formal agenda item. Developed nations were initially hesitant, but sustained advocacy by developing nations and island states led to its inclusion.*
- This process can take days because countries must agree on the scope of discussions, with no party wanting its key issues sidelined.

The COP agenda is adopted at the opening plenary, and contentious issues may take days to finalize.

2. Drafting and Revising Texts

- Negotiators work in small groups or "contact groups" to draft and revise the language of agreements. Every word is scrutinized for its implications.
 - ❖ *Example: At COP21 (2015) in Paris, the phrase "shall" versus "should" caused intense debate in the Paris Agreement text. Developing countries insisted on stronger language ("shall") to mandate commitments, while developed countries preferred the softer "should" to avoid legal obligations. This single word required hours of negotiation before a compromise was reached.*
- Each draft goes through multiple iterations, with input from all parties. Even minor disagreements can delay the process.

3. Consensus Building

- COP decisions require consensus, meaning no party formally objects to the final text, even if it doesn't fully satisfy everyone.
- Achieving this can be time-consuming, as countries often have conflicting priorities:
 - Developed nations may prioritize mitigation (reducing emissions).
 - Developing nations focus on adaptation and financial support to cope with climate impacts.
 - Vulnerable nations demand commitments on "loss and damage" to address irreversible climate harm.
- ❖ *Example: At COP26 (2021) in Glasgow, consensus on phasing down coal took extensive negotiations. India and China resisted language committing to "phasing out" coal, citing their reliance on coal for energy. A compromise to use "phasing down" was reached in the final hours, enabling consensus but highlighting the difficulties of balancing interests.*

4. Role of Ministers and Leaders

- In the final days, ministers and heads of state step in to resolve political disagreements. High-level diplomacy often becomes essential to break impasses.
 - ❖ *Example: During COP15 (2009) in Copenhagen, U.S. President Barack Obama and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao directly negotiated behind closed doors to salvage an agreement after days of stalemate. Although the resulting Copenhagen Accord fell short of expectations, it reflected a compromise between major powers.*

5. Informal Consultations and Side Deals

- Negotiators often hold informal meetings and bilateral discussions to build trust and resolve contentious issues. These side negotiations are crucial for breaking deadlocks.
 - ❖ *Example: At COP21, the High Ambition Coalition, a group of developed and developing countries, worked behind the scenes to push for a 1.5°C temperature limit in the Paris Agreement. Their informal diplomacy swayed other parties to adopt the more ambitious goal.*

6. Time Pressure and Final Stretch

- Negotiations often extend beyond the official timeline. As deadlines approach, there's increased urgency to finalize agreements, sometimes resulting in all-night sessions.
 - ❖ *Example: At COP25 (2019) in Madrid, discussions on carbon market rules under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement failed to reach consensus despite extending negotiations by two days. The issue was postponed to future COPs, reflecting how even extended negotiations don't guarantee agreement.*

7. Implementation Mechanisms

- After agreements are reached, countries negotiate how commitments will be implemented, reported, and verified. These technical discussions can be contentious.
 - ❖ *Example: At COP24 (2018) in Katowice, negotiators spent days finalizing the "rulebook" for implementing the Paris Agreement, with debates over how to balance transparency requirements for developed and developing countries.*

In summary

While time-consuming, the process underscores the importance of inclusivity and consensus in achieving collective action.

Examples like the Paris Agreement (COP21) and the creation of the Loss and Damage Fund (COP27) show that despite delays, COPs can produce transformative agreements when countries find common ground.

Key Factors Influencing Negotiations

Differentiated Responsibilities

Countries negotiate based on the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities" (CBDR-RC), reflecting their varying levels of development and historical emissions.

Financial and Technological Support

Developing countries often push for commitments on financial and technological support from developed nations

Coalitions and Alliances

Groups like the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) or the African Group can influence outcomes by presenting united positions.

Outcomes of the COP

Decisions and Agreements

Negotiations culminate in COP decisions, which may include setting new goals, establishing funding mechanisms, or creating frameworks for reporting and accountability.

Implementation Mechanisms

Parties agree on mechanisms for implementing prior agreements, such as the Paris Agreement.

Side Events and Announcements

Parallel to formal negotiations, many countries, organizations, and companies announce new climate initiatives or collaborations.



Source: <https://www.greenhumour.com/2024/11/live-cartoons-at-cop-29-azerbaijan-for.html>
COP Resilience Hub / Global Resilience Partnership