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EVALUATION NOTE

COP28 OBSERVATIONS[1]

The End of the Beginning - At COP28, a call was made to transition away from fossil fuels in energy systems in a fair, orderly, and equitable manner.

In 1942, during the challenging days of World War II, the Allies' repulsion of Germany from Egypt was a promising turning point that could change the course of the war for the Allies. This historic moment was interpreted by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill as 'This is not the end, nor is it the beginning of the end; but it may be the end of the beginning.' Churchill's words emphasize the hope for an uncertain future and the significance of being on the verge of change.

In my view, this historical perspective echoed at the COP 28 Climate Conference held in Dubai from November 30 to December 12, 2023, which I had the opportunity to attend through TEPAV. For the first time in nearly 30 years of environmental negotiations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, a call was made to mark the end of the rise of fossil fuels, for the achievement of the 2050 net zero target, “a transition away from fossil fuels within energy systems in a fair, orderly, and equitable manner.' Such a call at the UN is an encouragement to the countries to take action on a matter, though it is not actually binding for the countries. This can be described as a very important sign that we are coming to an end in the long-standing rise of fossil fuel dependency, as Churchill said, neither an end nor the beginning of the end; but the reversal of this rise, the beginning of the end for fossil fuels, will only happen with concrete steps taken globally by governments and the private sector in line with the call made at COP28. For instance, a complete exit from unabated coal and a significant reduction

[1] The ideas expressed in this work are solely the opinions of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the opinions of TEPAV.

in oil and natural gas investments, a substantial increase in renewable energy investments, and advancements in energy efficiency. Nevertheless, at COP28, we can say that we witnessed a historic joint declaration of intent regarding the future of fossil fuels and the establishment of the dominance of clean energy sources.

The Common Goal is to Limit Global Temperature Rise to 1.5°C

During the two-week-long COP28, leaders of over 150 countries, government representatives, civil society organizations, international entities, business and finance communities, and representatives of indigenous peoples from various parts of the world convened with a common goal. As a demonstration of global solidarity, negotiators representing about 200 parties gathered in Dubai to discuss the world's first 'Global Stocktake' to increase climate action and the objective of keeping the global temperature rise within 1.5°C.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)'s 6th Assessment Report released in March 2023, which forms the scientific and technical basis guiding the entire agenda of COP28, contains warnings about the world approaching 'irreversible' levels of global warming and the rapidly inevitable nature of disastrous impacts. The report also emphasizes the necessity of taking urgent and radical measures to prevent catastrophe and outlines potential policies and actions that could prevent the worst destructions of climate collapse.

The World is off track in Achieving Paris Agreement Goals

COP28 witnessed the first Global Stocktake to assess progress, identify deficiencies, and propose new revised actions regarding the decisions taken in the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement. This assessment process, which began with the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow in 2021 and lasted for two years, is planned to occur every five years. The results of this assessment were discussed by international parties at COP28 and constituted its most important agenda. Not only did it encompass every negotiated element, but it was also crucial as a foundation that countries could use to develop stronger climate action plans by 2025.

The final draft of this Global Stocktake, released on December 13th, unfortunately emphasizes that we are off track in achieving the Paris Agreement goals. It indicates that global greenhouse gas emissions need to be reduced by 43% by 2030 compared to 2019 levels.

The assessment calls on parties to take actions to triple global renewable energy capacity and double improvements in energy efficiency by 2030. Additionally, it includes accelerating efforts towards phasing out unabated coal power and eliminating inefficient fossil fuel subsidies, along with other measures guiding the transition away from fossil fuels in energy systems.

The conference urges parties to create more ambitious climate action plans that cover all greenhouse gases and sectors and are in line with the 1.5°C limit. In this context, it encourages parties to be more ambitious in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to be voluntarily presented by countries by 2025.

Enhancing Climate Finance for Global Energy Transition and Implementation of National Climate Plans

Climate finance was a significant agenda item at the conference. The Green Climate Fund (GCF) received support for its second replenishment phase with new funding commitments from six countries at COP28, reaching a record level of $12.8 billion from 31 countries, with more expected.

Eight donor governments have made new commitments of over $130 million so far to the Least Developed Countries Fund and the Special Climate Change Fund. Additionally, the Adaptation Fund at COP28 received new commitments totalling around $166 million.

However, as emphasized in the Global Stocktake Report, these financial commitments fall far short of the trillions of dollars ultimately needed to support developing countries in their clean energy transitions, implementation of national climate plans, and adaptation efforts. According to a November 2023 report by Deloitte, achieving global net-zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050 will require a fundamental transformation of society from the current fossil-fuel-centric model to one heavily reliant on renewable and electric energy systems. This transformation will require significant investments of about $5 to over $7 trillion annually by 2050. Currently, less than $2 trillion is being invested annually for this transition.

To secure such funding, the Global Stocktake report highlights the importance of reforming the multilateral financial architecture and urgently introducing innovative financial sources for rapidly increasing climate investments and achieving global climate goals.

Inadequate Contributions to the Loss and Damage Fund

On the first day of the conference, parties reached a historic agreement on the operation and financial arrangements of the Loss and Damage Fund. This was the first instance of a tangible decision being adopted at the conference. Immediately following the decision's approval, commitments to the fund began, totalling approximately $800 million to date.

Turkey, which has one of the top 20 highest gross domestic products (GDPs) in the world, expressed its intention during the conference process to benefit from the Loss and Damage Fund established for disasters related to the climate crisis.

COP28 from Turkey's Perspective

According to estimates by the International Energy Agency and the International Renewable Energy Agency, to limit warming to 1.5°C, the world needs to triple its renewable energy capacity by 2030, reaching at least 11,000 GW, and increase the global average annual energy efficiency improvements from about 2% to over 4% each year until 2030.

In this context, at COP28, 130 countries signed the 'Global Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Pledge', committing to tripling renewable energy and doubling energy efficiency efforts by 2030. Turkey, however, did not join this pledge.

At COP28, Turkey displayed a different stance compared to many countries by not signing various declarations that included commitments to renewable energy and energy efficiency.

Turkey's current installed capacity for renewable energy sources is approximately 12 GW for wind energy and 11 GW for solar energy. According to the National Energy Plan published by the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources in 2022, Turkey aims to increase these installed capacities to about 30 GW for wind and approximately 53 GW for solar by 2025. This indicates that Turkey plans to increase its current installed capacity for wind and solar by 3.6 times by 2035, if not by 2030.

Why Did Turkey Not Sign the Global Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Call?

One possible reason why Turkey did not join the countries signing the global call for renewable energy and energy efficiency might be due to the commitment's inclusion of phasing out unabated coal energy, including the cessation of ongoing investments in new unabated coal-fired power plants. This aspect of the commitment could be incompatible with Turkey's efforts to limit warming to 1.5°C, considering Turkey's commitments to support the domestic coal sector and promises to keep these investments operational until their economic life ends. In the 2017-established Powering Past Coal Alliance (PPCA), seven more countries joined during the COP28 process and committed to phasing out coal. Unfortunately, Turkey remains one of the few countries in Europe and its vicinity not yet to join the alliance.

Turkey, which meets a large portion of its energy needs through the import of fossil fuels, seems to find it more appealing to focus on exploration and production efforts in the Black Sea and Southeastern Anatolia for gas and petroleum production, which can last for 20-30 years and are major sources of carbon emissions. Instead of supporting investments in renewable energy production domestically and breaking free from dependence on imported and fossil fuels, Turkey appears to prioritize these fossil fuel-based energy production initiatives.

Why Was Turkey Not Among the Countries that Signed the Global Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Call?

One possible reason Turkey did not join the global call for renewable energy and energy efficiency might be related to the call's inclusion of phasing out unabated coal energy. This includes ending ongoing investments in new unabated coal-fired power plants, which otherwise conflicts with efforts to limit warming to 1.5°C. Perhaps, Turkey's commitments to supporting the domestic coal sector and the existing promises to keep these investments operational until their economic life ends got in the way of signing the call. The Powering Past Coal Alliance (PPCA), established in 2017, saw seven more countries becoming a part of it during the COP28 process, committing to phasing out coal. Turkey remains one of the few countries in Europe and its vicinity not yet to join the alliance.

Turkey, which relies heavily on imported fossil fuels to meet a significant portion of its energy needs, seems more inclined to focus on exploration and production activities in the Black Sea and Southeastern Anatolia for gas and petroleum, which can last 20-30 years and are major sources of carbon emissions. Rather than supporting investments in renewable energy production domestically and moving away from dependency on imported and fossil fuels, Turkey appears to prioritize these fossil fuel-based energy initiatives.

At the COP28 conference venue (Dubai Expo Center), over 150 countries opened their agendas for international discussion through panels in their designated areas. Japan

introduced new hydrogen production technologies for decarbonization; India announced billion-dollar eco-friendly transportation investments with international partners; Saudi Arabia detailed the NEOM project, a trillion-dollar venture to be powered entirely by green energy; the United States demonstrated how NASA's dozens of satellites in space monitor the effects of climate change on agriculture. In summary, dozens, perhaps hundreds of panels were conducted by various countries on climate change and its subtopics. There was notable interaction, experience sharing, and solidarity among international participants from both developed and developing countries. Turkey, however, chose to utilize half of its designated physical space for promoting Ebru art! Although Turkey appeared to have one of the highest numbers of registered visitors statistically at the conference, my observations suggest that a significant portion of these visitors, after showing up for the first few days, seemed more attracted to Dubai's shopping centers and did not attend important parts of the conferences and panels in the following days. Participation in Turkey's panels was low from both national and international circles. Even in the panel hosted by Turkey, where Jim Skea, the Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), spoke about the significance of the 7th Assessment period for global climate change actions, scheduled for January 16-19, 2024, in Istanbul, there were unfortunately only a handful of viewers, excluding Ministry circles. Participation from Turkish civil society organizations, academic and scientific communities in the panels was limited. At these events, where global and regional issues related to climate change were discussed, Turkey missed an opportunity to adequately articulate the potential opportunities and challenges it may face in the coming years in an international setting and to learn from the experiences of countries undergoing similar processes.

What's Next?

The 60th Session of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), scheduled to take place in Istanbul in January 2024, holds critical importance for discussing the lessons learned from the 6th assessment period and for initiating and planning the 7th assessment period. The fact that the session will be held in Istanbul presents a valuable opportunity for Turkey to maintain close contact with international stakeholders on climate change issues.

During the COP28 process, it was decided that the next meetings (COP29 and COP30) will be held in Azerbaijan from November 11-22, 2024, and in Brazil from November 12-21, 2025, respectively. The next two years seem crucial. COP29 will be a significant milestone, especially in addressing the shortcomings in global climate financing, financially supporting the decarbonization processes of developing countries, and underscoring the urgency of these issues. Considering our private sector's statements about difficulties in finding financing for green transformation, participating in this upcoming conference, which will be a significant international meeting point for financing, should be well-utilized.

According to the Paris Agreement, the parties must update their national climate targets by the end of 2024 in line with the Agreement. The Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to be presented will be reviewed at COP30, where decisions will be made on the next steps, considering what these targets mean for keeping the global temperature rise within 1.5°C.

Lastly…

It is now clear that time is running out to reach the 2050 net-zero targets. Effective national action against climate change and achieving related goals require global collaboration, technology transfer, sourcing of financial resources, and engaging with international stakeholders in the development of international green legislation and regulations.

The long-discussed Climate Law in our country needs to be finalized as soon as possible, clearly referencing the 2053 net-zero target. The Sectoral Roadmaps, crucial for unlocking investments in energy transformation and still in draft phase, need to be finalized and published. Following the commencement of the European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism in October 2023 and similar news from the UK in December, it's evident that carbon intensity of products will create fiscal/tariff disadvantages in international trade in the coming years. The pilot Emission Trading System (ETS), planned to be implemented by the end of 2024, benefits from long years' worth of experience and significant data from the already implemented MRV system. This will give Turkey an advantage in the ETS process. However, more importantly, our country needs to take stronger steps in decarbonizing and green transitioning our industry to achieve results.

With the vision of becoming a net-zero emission country by 2053, Turkey must start reducing greenhouse gas emissions as quickly as possible, accelerate the phase-out from unabated coal heavily used for energy, be more ambitious in the renewable energy capacity targets for wind and solar as stated in the 2022 National Energy Plan of Turkey, aiming to triple them not by 2035 but by 2030, and set significant absolute emission reduction targets by the end of 2024 compared to 2020, accelerating the achievement of these targets.