

Each year since 1995, the countries of the world have gathered to negotiate what to do about climate change. They do so under the auspices of the [Framework Convention on Climate Change](#), the universally adopted climate change treaty that sets a goal of avoiding dangerous interference with the climate system.

Those talks have had ups and downs through the years and have resulted in (among other things) the adoption of the [Paris Agreement](#). Twenty-eight years in and with climate change essentially unchecked, but with significant and viable options available for controlling it, the talks continue later this month in Dubai, under the Presidency of one of the world's leading fossil fuel producing states.

What is realistic to achieve this year, given that context? I'm chatting with three UCLA Law experts on Wednesday this week about that topic, in a free zoom seminar (you can register [here](#)). My colleagues Mary Nichols, Ted Parson, and Alex Wang are each tracking different, and fascinating, aspects of the upcoming talks. (Ted, Alex, and I, along with colleagues and students from UCLA Law, will attend the talks as delegates.) Here's a quick preview of what they and others are following and thinking about COP28.

The major formal items on this year's agenda include:

- Responses to the end of the first "stocktake" period under the Paris Agreement, a moment designed to require countries to take a collective, and critical, look at what they have accomplished so far and what gaps remain to be closed in order to reach the Paris Agreement's goals. How will countries respond to this critical moment?
- Efforts to operationalize—aka make real—the revolutionary loss and damage decision reached at last year's COP, which created a new mechanism for providing financial support to countries experiencing climate change harms (see [here](#) for background), but which was underspecified as to the sources, recipients, amounts, timing, and mechanisms of funding.
- Other pathways to increase funding for climate change efforts, especially for adaptation and for renewable energy and energy efficiency transformations.

Two topics not as squarely on the agenda—but that probably should be—include the essential and seemingly perennial questions of how to increase mitigation ambition, and what to say about fossil fuels (and fossil-fuel phaseout, in particular).

Mary Nichols tells me that she's paying particular attention to accountability questions, including requirements that third parties verify claimed emission reductions. (Work by

Mary and others as part of the UN High Level Expert Group on net zero commitments of nonstate actors—summarized [here in last year's Integrity Matters report](#)—shows the importance of this issue.) “Emissions have continued to grow despite net zero pledges by over 200 countries. I think there is a good chance this COP will adopt rules, similar to those adopted by the EU and California, to spell out the scope and methods for reporting GHG emissions. Accounting may not be glamorous but without standards there is no way to assure pledges become real,” she says.

Alex Wang will be tracking China's willingness to increase its ambition, perhaps by accelerating peaking and neutrality goals or via speeding up clean energy and EV deployment. Its position on loss & damage and its stance on methane reduction (will it release its plan?) will also be on his radar.

And Ted Parson will view the talks in part with his recent experiences supporting the [Climate Overshoot Commission](#) in mind. That Commission released [a report](#) earlier this Fall calling for a phase-out (not phase-down) of fossil fuels, and making a series of other recommendations for confronting the near certainty that the world will miss its Paris Agreement targets, at least for a time. How will the COP28 parties respond to these urgent needs? What would and should stronger mitigation look like?

In addition, all of us are attuned to the special controversies and challenges this year, with a seemingly greater-than-ever disparity between what parties are working on in negotiating sessions and what's happening in the world, and with the added incongruity of having the CEO of one of the world's largest oil companies preside over the conference.

Sign up [here](#) to hear more on Wed. 11/8, via Zoom.