

GCE's COP28 Thematic Policy Priorities

Context:

[COP28](#) is the annual iteration of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change's (UNFCCC) Conference of Parties. COP28 will be taking place in the United Arab Emirates from 30th November to 12th December. COP28 marks a milestone since the 2015 Paris Agreement in the form of the first Global Stocktake (GST); this will serve to assess the progress of national and international climate action.

[Generation Climate Europe](#) (GCE) is the largest coalition of youth-led networks at the European level on climate and environmental issues, with a view to empower young people to meaningfully engage in European Union (EU) decision-making processes. At COP28, GCE aims to play a convening role to facilitate the collaboration, amplification, and support of young European voices in climate policy. As such, elements of intergenerational equity and systems thinking are innately embedded throughout the strategy. This extends into advocacy across our thematic areas for more ambitious policy. We aim to bring together our Member Organisations (MOs) to raise awareness on key topics, increase the visibility of youth presence at COP, strive for meaningful and substantive engagement of young people at COP and channel youth voices into decision-making processes. Our strategic priorities and key goals are largely aligned with the broader network of EU Youth NGOs and coalesce to educate, empower, and connect.

Strategic Policy Goals

As co-authors and a signatory, GCE endorses [the European Youth Demands towards SB58 and COP28](#). In recognition of the strategic strength of GCE, we have focused on three key thematics to centre our COP28 advocacy: (1) Implementing debt relief in response to loss and damage; (2) Considering the interdependence between biodiversity and the climate crisis; and (3) Just energy transition: phasing-out fossil fuels. These three thematic areas are contained within the Policy Paper and contribute to broader umbrella goals of pushing for greater intergenerational equity in decision-making negotiation spaces and highlighting systemic solutions to the climate crisis. These strategic and thematic priorities are underlined by a critical need to equitably reduce resource consumption, phase out fossil fuels and develop solutions that centre systemic justice. We have chosen to highlight these areas given their alignment with our MOs and their importance to the regional and international climate agenda. Below, we develop our policy stances in greater detail.

Ultimately, our goal is to disseminate key information on these topics and meet with ministers and delegations in order to influence policymakers to adopt more ambitious policy, highlight significant developments, and support young Europeans in negotiating on these topics. This will entail the production of digital engagement toolkits, the production of a collaborative COP28 Policy Paper, the mapping of relevant stakeholders and organisations as well as bilateral meetings with these bodies, the delivery of digital and in person capacity-building workshops and the communication of these activities to the wider youth climate community.

Implementing debt relief in response to loss and damage

Summary: At COP28, the EU must champion ambitious, just and equitable financing by:

- 1) ensuring that funding is reaching the Most Affected People and Areas (MAPA)*
- 2) taking proportional responsibility as a lead historical emitter*
- 3) providing funding through public contributions*

At every stage of the process, including committees, GCE urges delegations, negotiators and decision-makers to be mindful not to replicate existing power structures in order to achieve a high degree of impact. This will include taking into consideration the stances and priorities of vulnerable countries as well as platforming voices from Most Affected People and Areas (MAPA) and civil society.

The EU should also ensure that resources from the Loss and Damage Fund reach MAPA. Our priority is seeing the creation of a fund that is transparent and informed from the bottom up, considering MAPA realities and addressing their needs.

As a leading historical emitter, the EU has an obligation to equitably contribute to the Loss & Damage Fund to ensure that the promises made at COP27 are being delivered. It is important that the Fund is not merely relabeled but rather adds to existing Official Development Assistance funds. In the spirit of international solidarity, working towards a contribution structure based on historical emissions related to per capita GDP is ideal.

We note that incurring additional debt due to climate adaptation measures could lead countries in the Global South into debt traps and significantly hinder their sustainable development prospects. Therefore, the EU should strive to ensure that funds provided through the Loss and Damage Fund are grants.

Public contributions should cover the required sums for Loss and Damage Finance. Private contributions should only be considered as an addition to this sum. Philanthropy cannot be a cover for the Global North's historical responsibility. In situations where public contributions are insufficient, alternative revenue sources must be considered,

such as redirecting fossil fuel subsidies or establishing additional taxes on fossil fuel companies and international fossil-fuelled transportation.

Considering the interdependence between biodiversity and the climate crisis

Summary:

At COP28, the EU must advocate for a reasonable and impactful integration of nature & biodiversity by:

- 1) Promoting nature-based solutions to drive inherent synergies among climate and biodiversity*
- 2) Leveraging climate data collection and disclosure frameworks for nature & biodiversity*
- 3) Calling for a complete stop in nature-harmful taxes, subsidies, and other financial incentives*

Resource extraction, even for purposes aligned with combating climate change, is at the root of 80% of biodiversity loss worldwide. Inequitable resource usage and overconsumption indicates a pressing need for proactive approaches to minimise damage and reduce excess consumption of material resources in addition to addressing accountability regarding the role of the Global North and the EU in the exploitation of resource and labour as it concerns overconsumption.

A systemic approach to reducing resource consumption must be taken on a broader scale, particularly in the COP spaces. Therefore, It is critical to recognise the inherent synergy between preventing climate change and protecting biodiversity; one cannot be achieved without the other. Nature-based solutions must be promoted and implemented in order to approach the climate crisis in a holistic, meaningful and ultimately successful manner. It is equally critical to end subsidies and incentives for initiatives that are directly or indirectly harmful to nature, even if they are adopted to directly combat climate change.

The UN Convention on Biological Diversity and the [EU Biodiversity Strategy](#) are key components of biodiversity protection globally, thus signposting the EU's appetite for biodiversity protection; GCE advocates for their timely and effective implementation. We recognise that the EU has built frameworks that aim to advance and review relevant laws for compliance, as well as achieving biodiversity targets while aspiring to more ambitious goals.

This has culminated in increased levels of corporate guidance and developing practice for climate and biodiversity disclosures in [light of the Montreal-Kunming protocol](#). This includes the disclosure standards under the [European Sustainability Reporting Standards \(ESRS\) under the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Standards \(CSRD\)](#), which provides a

series of specific governance, strategy, risk management, and data protocols pertaining to climate and biodiversity topics.

These guidelines are highly data specific and are particularly pressing on small-to-mid-sized firms that tend to not be able to collect large data volumes as a result of lower cost margins. The sheer volume of work and cost anticipated in collecting such data extraneously can become problematic for maintaining profitability in a difficult market environment.

While these challenges can exert pressure onto firms, there is an immediate opportunity for such companies to identify the synergies between climate and biodiversity disclosures. For example, the EU CSRD's updated stance on double materiality requires firms to view both biodiversity and climate as material issues depending on their assessment of interactions with wider value chains. This incentivises firms to "leapfrog" larger corporations that have to dissect biodiversity separately by providing a clearer framework for assessing relevant risks and opportunities.

As a result, EU firms require very clear guidance on how to use corporate climate disclosures to enable high-quality biodiversity disclosures. This could be promoted as viewing both climate and biodiversity as an interrelated set of risks that can be managed with similar data and strategy. This would require sector specific and financial recommendations which would be sufficient in catering to the needs of EU firms. The EU European Financial Reporting Advisory Group (EFRAG) could be well positioned to lead on such exploratory work.

Just energy transition: phasing-out fossil fuels

Summary:

At COP28, the EU must advocate for a swift, ambitious, and just energy transition by calling for:

- 1) a multilateral fossil fuel phase-out;*
- 2) an end to all fossil fuel subsidies; and*
- 3) EU member states and other parties to develop a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty (FFNPT).*

As has been known since the International Energy Agency's 2021 report, we can have no new oil and gas fields in order to achieve net-zero by 2050. As the IPCC's 2023 AR6 synthesis report noted, 'Projected CO₂ emissions from existing fossil fuel infrastructure without additional abatement would exceed the remaining carbon budget for 1.5°C' (Article B.5). The urgent need to end fossil fuel expansion and phase-out existing infrastructure is clear.

We advocate for EU parties to adopt 'phase-out fossil fuel' language to replace the current 'phase-down' approaches, as advocated by France and Germany at the 2023 G7 Summit. As authors and signatories to the policy statement [EU: Let's Phase Out Fossil Fuels](#) issued at COP27, GCE has made its stance on non-proliferation language known.

We urge EU negotiators to advocate for the phase-out of all fossil fuel subsidies at COP28, as per the call to 'to urgently end fossil fuel subsidies and other environmentally harmful subsidies in the EU and worldwide' in the EU Parliament's COP27 Resolution ([2022/2673\(RSP\)](#) Article 49. We ask the EU to advocate for stronger language than that which was adopted in the Glasgow Pact, following the COP27 Resolution's concern about the loosely defined term 'inefficient fossil fuel subsidy'. In the EU, the money previously used for those subsidies should be put towards targeted support measures, like the EU Social Climate Fund, for consumers vulnerable to energy poverty. As a youth organisation, we advocate for policymakers to pay more attention to the impact of their policies on youth, as one of these vulnerable groups.

The EU must take concrete actions in supporting the development of a FFNPT, which will provide an international mechanism for ending subsidies and phasing-out fossil fuels. The aforementioned COP27 Resolution 'encourage[d] other Parties [...] to work on developing a fossil fuel non-proliferation treaty'. Currently supported by 6 nation states, the Treaty calls for non-proliferation of fossil fuels, a fair phase-out and a just transition. Now EU member states must endorse the [working version](#) of this Treaty, and the EU Commission must encourage other parties to follow suit at COP28.