

## **Blog On COP29 for Britain Yearly Meeting**

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The atmosphere during the recent climate change Conference of Parties 29 (COP), in Baku Azerbaijan, at times felt ominous. Trust between countries, always fragile, received hard blows.

At core, the COP29 was about increasing financial commitments from developed to developing countries, at a time when the wealthiest and highest greenhouse gas (GHG) emitting developed country was likely to leave the process. More widely, the COP was held in a dangerous time for international relations. Powerful member States threaten use of nuclear weapons, block ceasefires and remain silent over a plausible case of genocide and attacks on UN agencies, openly reject the highest legal voices (International Court of Justice and International Criminal Court), and systemically underfund multilateral bodies while global spending now surpassing 2.4 trillion US\$. The COP29, like the recent UN Summit of the Future in September, the biodiversity COP and negotiations for a treaty on plastic pollution, have all been affected.

The COP29 began with host nation Azerbaijan referring to fossil fuels as a ‘gift from God’. In the negotiation room, countries discussed GHG emissions mitigation, yet nearly every fossil fuel wealthy country in the room planned oil and gas production increases which would eliminate chances for a 1.5C global temperature rise limit.

The denial in the room is no longer about the dangers of climate change – this is agreed. The denial now regards the ‘how’ as countries look to ‘false solutions’ including geo-engineering. Too few decision makers are ready to honestly address root causes driving planetary crises in our unsustainable and inequitable energy, economic and agriculture systems. Nonetheless, there are some brave actors in the room including Colombia, which announced a cap on fossil fuel extraction, and the UK, which announced a cap on new oil and gas licenses.

Leading up to the COP29, negotiators had three years to prepare a new collective quantified goal for climate finance ([NCQG](#)), set to replace and update the ‘100 US\$ Billion a year by 2020’ promise critical to establishing the 2015 Paris Agreement. However, it was because that very 100 US\$ Billion a year did not materialize fully until after 2020, that harmed trust in this process.

Over the years, civil society including QUNO and Britain Yearly Meeting have proposed approaches that would make polluters pay, [including fair sources of finance for loss and damage](#). The Paris Agreement committed developed countries to lead on financing and mitigation; they have the highest per capita GHG emissions, the highest historical emissions, and in most cases benefited financially from colonization. However, at the COP29 we witnessed stand-offs, last minute drafts, selective sharing, walkouts, and final language mirroring the last ineffective finance deal. Specifically, inclusion of the word ‘by’ in the

clause ‘with developed countries taking the lead, of at least USD 300 billion per year by 2035’. The ‘by’ allows 11 years for full delivery. The text also contains no clear commitment to protect sufficient grants rather than loans that exacerbate debt, it includes many references to private finance over public finance, and no analysis on the diluting impact of inflation.

There were decisions relating to the [Global Goal on Adaptation](#), though again without sufficient funding. A [decision to extend the enhanced Lima work programme on gender](#) was met with efforts to weaken previously agreed language relating to gender and human rights language. Finally, there were decisions on guidelines for implementation of carbon markets proposed in Articles [6.2](#) and [6.4](#) of the Paris Agreement. Carbon markets are not supported by most civil society voices at the COP29. They are essentially ‘carbon offsetting’ for high GHG emitters failing to sufficiently mitigate their own emissions. Carbon markets do not reduce GHG emissions ‘at source’, have a history of ineffectiveness, abuses of Indigenous Peoples and human rights, and fail to recognise increase of eco-system collapse under rising temperatures.

At the COP29 we prepared and translated [toolkits](#) for negotiators on the latest climate science, and [booklets](#) for grassroots action on ‘what we can do’. We distributed a [briefing paper](#) on the risks of geo-engineering reliance on carbon dioxide removal (CDR). We helped author an [inter-faith statement](#) for the COP and helped plan and facilitate an inter-faith Talanoa Dialogue with faith voices from around the world. We coordinated Quaker voices in [global civil society demands](#) for the COP Presidency protect human rights in climate action. We co-hosted with BYM and [Quaker Earthcare Witness](#) an official COP event titled, ‘*What Really Makes us Safe?*’ and in a [COP Press Conference](#) asked the same question before journalists: why do we beg for climate finance to support needed root cause transitions and help people experiencing loss and damage, while trillions are spent on weapons to oppress and kill? Throughout, we met with a diverse group of negotiators to talk through hopes and concerns, as part of our ‘quiet diplomacy’ efforts here to build communication between countries.

We hold to Quaker Testimonies as a clear witness to peace and justice. ‘Do not be afraid to say what you have found and what you value’. As Quakers, we can bring vision to overcome fear. A vision of transformations which promote clean air, clean water and healthy wildlife, promote public transport, public health and education, promote clean and more equitably owned renewable energy, sustainable and just economic systems, more equitable societies, restorative agriculture and healthy diets. The story of Care for Creation – to walk cheerily in this world, a witness to love not fear, to regeneration not destruction.