



SEMAPHORE

Newsletter of the Maritime Law

Association of Australia and New Zealand



A Fair COP?

COP26 president Alok Sharma has described the recent two-week Glasgow summit as having kept “alive” the international goal of limiting global warming to 1.5C degrees above pre-industrial levels.

However, Mr Sharma also described the Glasgow Climate Pact – agreed to by the about 200 parties in attendance at the latest annual Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) – as a “fragile win”.

“We can now say with credibility that we have kept 1.5C degrees alive,” said Mr Sharma.

“But, its pulse is weak and it will only survive if we keep our promises and translate commitments into rapid action. I am grateful to the UNFCCC for working with us to deliver a successful COP26.

“From here, we must now move forward together and deliver on the expectations set out in the Glasgow Climate Pact and close the vast gap which remains. Because as Prime Minister [of Barbados] Mia Mottley told us at the start of this conference, for Barbados and other small island states, ‘two degrees is a death sentence’.

“It is up to all of us to sustain our lodestar of keeping 1.5C degrees within reach and to continue our efforts to get finance flowing and boost adaptation.

“After the collective dedication which has delivered the Glasgow Climate Pact, our work here cannot be wasted.”

A statement issued by the COP26 press office immediately following the summit’s conclusion expressed expectation the Glasgow Climate Pact would “speed up the pace of climate action”.

“All countries agreed to revisit and strengthen their current emissions targets to 2030, known as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), in 2022,” read the statement.

“This will be combined with a yearly political roundtable to consider a global progress report and a Leaders’ summit in 2023.

“The Paris Rulebook, the guidelines for how the Paris Agreement is delivered, was also completed today after six years of discussions. This will allow for the full delivery of the landmark accord, after agreement on a transparency process which will hold countries to account as they deliver on their targets. This includes



Article 6, which establishes a robust framework for countries to exchange carbon credits through the UNFCCC.

“And for the first time, heeding calls from civil society and countries most vulnerable to climate impacts, the COP agreed action on phasing down fossil fuels.”

The statement noted that COP decisions went “further than ever before” in recognising and addressing loss and damage from the existing impacts of climate change.

“There were also commitments to significantly increase financial support through the Adaptation Fund as developed countries were urged to double their support to developing countries by 2025.”

The finalised COP26 text was noted to have been formulated over “two years of intense diplomacy and campaigning” undertaken by the United Kingdom Presidency to “raise ambition and secure action from almost 200 countries”.

“Work focused on driving short-term reduction of emissions to limit temperature rises to 1.5C, mobilising both public and private finance, and supporting communities to adapt to climate impacts.

“When the United Kingdom took on the COP26 mantle in partnership with Italy, nearly two years ago, only 30% of the world was covered by net-zero targets. This figure is now at around 90%. Over the same period, 154 parties have submitted new national targets, representing 80% of global emissions.

“The United Kingdom Presidency has also been focused on driving action to deliver emissions reductions. We have seen a huge shift in coal, with many more countries committing to phase out unabated coal power and ending international coal financing.

“Alongside this, we have seen a marked commitment to protect precious natural habitats, with 90% of the world’s forests covered by a pledge from 130 countries to end deforestation by 2030.”

Furthermore, the statement observed that the transition to zero-emissions vehicles was also gathering pace, with some of the largest car manufacturers working together to make all new car sales zero-emission by 2040 and by 2035 in leading markets.

“Countries and cities are following suit with ambitious petrol and diesel car phaseout dates.”

The statement concluded by observing that, unabated, current global policies would have left The World “on a path to a devastating temperature rise”.

“But work done by independent experts Climate Action Tracker show that with the full implementation of the fresh collective commitments could hold temperature rise to 1.8C.

“Even with the action committed both during and before COP26, communities around the world will continue to feel the impact of our changing planet.”

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