

COP26 - disappointing results

Date

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There was profound disappointment with the final results of the COP26 climate conference. The Glasgow climate pact, the final set of positions and decisions adopted by around 200 states, didn't include the phase-out of coal or firm commitments on finance to assist developing countries and especially the island communities threatened with extinction. An unashamed last-minute power play by China and India managed to weaken the language on coal leaving it as phasing-down rather than a full phasing-out. Without firm action to keep coal in the ground, emissions will increase and we have the presence of [a large number of fossil-fuel industry lobbyists](#) to thank for this result.

[Research by the Trade Unions for Energy Democracy coalition](#), of which EPSU, PSI and several affiliates are part, together with the Transnational Institute shows that emissions continue to increase and despite the pandemic are already back at 2019 levels. I saw an analysis explaining that if all the commitments were realised by 2100, the average temperature on earth will still increase by 1.8 degrees. However, many of the Nationally Determined Contributions are not firm and representatives of the Pacific islands have underlined that if the increase hits 2 degrees then many of their countries will disappear under rising sea levels, with the resulting displacement of whole populations. And scientists are predicting more extreme weather events and other impacts. The urgency to take the necessary action is really still not there.

Austerity kills

COP26 adopted a statement on Just Transition, co-signed by the European Commission and the United States and this offers a basis for trade unions to demand more consultation and negotiations with governments and employers on how companies, institutions and public authorities at all levels prepare to achieve zero emissions. Research commissioned by UK public services union Unison reveals that it will cost around €160 billion for public authorities in the UK to achieve zero emissions from hospitals, elderly homes, networks, waste and other services by 2035. This is the kind of study needed in other countries to help get the issue on the agenda with employers and governments and make the case for the finance that is needed.

Unfortunately, several governments in the EU are conspiring to bring back austerity. They want to see a return of the Stability and Growth Pact, an end to public deficits and a reduction in state debt. If this materialises we can forget funding for the implementation of the EU Pillar of Social Rights, for public services and public services workers and for funds to bring about a just transition. EPSU raised these concerns during the ETUC's mid-term conference last week. The European Commission's review of the economic governance rules is now an importance focus for Europe's union movement. Austerity will kill in more ways than one. We will work with others to prevent this and ensure that there is an end to the exploitation of our planet and that the future is public, democratic and socially just.

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