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BY PATRICK BOND - DES D'SA

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## *Oil Jabber Heard in Dubai: Our Top 10 Reasons to Dismiss the Conference of Polluters 28*



The Ruwais Refinery, UAE. Photo: [Rickmaj](#) CC BY-SA 4.0

The most publicized sentence from the final [COP28 document](#) – the first ‘Global Stocktake’ (GST), presided over by oil man Sultan Al-Jaber and co-managed by South Africa’s environment minister Barbara Creecy – is this objective: “Transitioning away from fossil fuels in energy systems, in a just, orderly and equitable manner, accelerating action in this critical decade, so as to achieve net zero by 2050 in keeping with the science.”

The term “transitioning away” is, though, full of weasel-word components.

1) The crucial point for the host-country president and his supporters in the West, BRICS+ and OPEC countries was to *not* concede the need to “phase out“ gas, oil and coal, and hence, acknowledged UNFCCC Executive Secretary Simon Stiell: “We didn’t turn the page on the fossil fuel era...,” because the only use of ‘phase’ (not ‘out’ but ‘down’) is in this objective: “Accelerating efforts towards the phase-down of unabated coal power,” an implicit endorsement of ‘abated’ coal through (so-far unsuccessful) carbon, capture and storage technology.

2) One reason for the lack of progress on fossil fuel cuts was the “litany of loopholes” that small island states’ delegates complained about, including ‘abatement’ through unproven technologies and the ‘transitional’ use of methane ‘natural gas,’ even though when methane leaks, the result is 80+ times more potent a greenhouse gas than CO2 over a 20-year period, which leads to a violation of the most basic reality, as articulated by Marshall Islands climate envoy Tina Stege: “1.5 is not negotiable, and that means an end to fossil fuels.”

3) The GST fully endorses gas – “transitional fuels can play a role in facilitating the energy transition while ensuring energy security” – which in part reflects South Africa’s coming methane addiction (thanks to Creecy’s approvals of offshore gas exploration by TotalEnergies, Shell and others), and yet schizophrenically, the agreement’s 18th clause “calls on Parties to contribute to... accelerating and substantially reducing non-carbon-dioxide emissions globally, including in particular methane emissions by 2030,” in part because of the critique of methane emissions from inside the UN, especially leaks – and one region full of ‘super-emitters’ is South Africa’s vast Mpumalanga Province coal field.

4) Profound climate injustice characterized the outcome (such as the ongoing refusal to admit polluter-pays liabilities) and procedural justice was also violated, according to Samoa’s lead negotiator Anne Rasmussen: “you just gaveled the decisions and the small island developing states were not in the room. It is not enough for us to reference the science and then make agreements that ignore what the science is telling us we need to do.”

5) Even if there is a ‘breakthrough’ Loss&Damage fund, the UNFCCC offers no accountability and has allowed a long history of promises to be broken, and the most crucial example of non-accountability was in June 2017 when Donald Trump pulled the U.S. out of the UNFCCC but faced no climate sanctions or punishment, a scenario likely to be repeated in 2025.

6) The highest-emitting bloc is the BRICS+ consisting of Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa plus new members Saudi Arabia, Iran, UAE, Egypt and Ethiopia – together responsible for 56% of global emissions based on producing only 28% of global GDP – whose October 2024 summit will be hosted by Vladimir Putin, and according to one of his leading officials, “Russia is satisfied with the results of this year’s climate talks... Moscow also welcomes the fact that the next climate summit will be held in Azerbaijan, another major oil producer and a part of the OPEC+ coalition.”

7) Creecy – co-chair (with Denmark) of the GST – celebrated because her main objective was to halt climate sanctions that will be imposed on products made with high-emissions energy: “We are also pleased to see that the final text takes a stand against unilateral measures (such as Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism). The decision emphasizes that ‘unilateral measures should not constitute a means of arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination or a disguised restriction on international trade’,” which in turn will protect high-carbon exports from BHP Billiton aluminium and Arcelor Mittal steel smelters, mineral processing plants and deep mines run by transnational corporations, Sasol petrochemicals, and the German-Japanese automakers which – as the core of the 27-member Energy Intensive Users Group now guzzling 42% of South Africa’s scarce electricity while producing only 20% of GDP (while rapidly depleting non-renewable natural mineral resource wealth).

8) ‘False solutions’ are given new lease on life, as, according to *CarbonBrief*, “The GST also kicks the door wide open for expensive, niche and largely ineffective abatement technologies such as carbon capture and storage, blue hydrogen, carbon markets and geoengineering with negligible safeguards, and which will probably lead to further land grabs, water scarcity and deadly pollution for mostly Indigenous and other communities of colour.”

9) The crucial linkage between the climate crisis and macroeconomic misery was utterly ignored, as the NGO DebtJustice observed: “the debt crisis was not adequately considered in the COP28 agreements. In the Global Stocktake, which informs countries’ climate action moving forward, debt is only referenced once, in relation to the need to scale up grant-based, non-debt creating climate finance (whereas previous versions had multiple sentences on this point). Despite referencing grant-based climate finance, there were no tangible commitments to secure this. While various texts mentioned the need for “fiscal space”, the impacts of the debt crisis and debt relief were not explicitly acknowledged, unlike the “Sharm el-Sheikh Implementation Plan” from COP27.”

10) As George Monbiot points out, the “Cop28 was meant to be the first climate summit at which the impacts of the food system were properly considered. But by the time 120 meat and dairy lobbyists had done their worst, nothing meaningful came of it.”

Al Jaber is most famous for uttering his belief in *increased* oil and gas production, especially from the firm he runs (Abu Dhabi National Oil Company): “There is no science out there – or no scenario out there – that says the phase-out of fossil fuels is going to achieve 1.5C.”

The extent to which this bias infected the COP leaders was obvious to even the Associated Press: “As the United Nations COP28 climate summit ended Wednesday, Sultan al-Jaber walked out with what the United Arab Emirates wanted all along — the prestige of hosting negotiations that got the world to agree to transition away from fossil fuels while still being able to pump ever-more oil... The traditional Western nations held largely similar views, with U.S. envoy John Kerry staying close to al-Jaber in the months leading up to the talks. The growing powers of China and India focused on ensuring their rise wouldn’t be curtailed by shutting off their coal-fired power plants. And the Gulf crude producers, led by neighboring Saudi Arabia, want to make sure their oil fields pump into the next generation to fuel their economic ambitions.”

Creecy has learned a great deal of progressive jargon, which – all evidence to the contrary – she used in her final assessment: “South Africa particularly welcomes the strong human rights, inclusive, and participatory approach in the decision to nationally defined just transitions, in which all stakeholders have a role to play and the right to development is respected. This is fundamental to the achievement of climate justice, at both the national and international level.”

But in reality, she has chosen sides: BRICS+ super-polluters and Western multinational corporations. One year from now, at the COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan, things will continue to have degenerated given the adverse balance of forces – unless in mid-2024 the electorate punishes planetary arson as a critical element, among the many other sins of Creecy’s African National Congress.

Patrick Bond is professor of sociology at the University of Johannesburg in South Africa. He can be reached at: [pbond@mail.ngo.za](mailto:pbond@mail.ngo.za). Des D’Sa coordinates the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance; Patrick Bond teaches at the University of Johannesburg Department of Sociology.

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