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World leaders, including Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, who is standing in the middle of the penultimate row, attend the opening ceremony of the COP29 Leaders Climate Action Summit, Nov. 12 in Baku, Azerbaijan. (CNS/Courtesy of UN Climate Change/Kiara Worth)



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November 15, 2024
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The developed countries should stop their nonsense and get their acts together.

COP29, the United Nations climate change conference taking place in Baku, Azerbaijan, will be assessed by many based on the outcomes of the negotiations on a new global climate finance target.

While discussion on that issue remains wide open — including its structure and mechanisms for mobilization — certain components should be part of this new pledge, known formally as the new collective quantified goal on climate finance. One of them is including a subgoal on funding addressing loss and damage.

The Holy See, alongside numerous Catholic organizations, has been advocating for global solutions to avert, minimize and avoid loss and damage — those impacts of climate change where adaptation is not possible. Seeing loss and damage as inherently a justice issue, Catholic groups have advocated the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage be operationalized based on solidarity and subsidiarity, with funding flows that are restorative and truly accessible to communities.

Speaking on behalf of Pope Francis at COP29, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, reiterated that climate solutions must not further undermine the development and adaptive capacity of nations already burdened with crippling economic debt.

Yet it is no secret that developed nations are proposing that a loss and damage subgoal should not be included in the new climate finance target, which became especially evident during a recent technical expert dialogue held in Baku ahead of COP29.

Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, addresses the COP29 Leaders Climate Acti

Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, addresses the COP29 Leaders Climate Action Summit Nov. 13 in Baku, Azerbaijan. (CNS/Courtesy of UN Climate Change)

These countries are likely to point out under Article 9 of the Paris Agreement only adaptation and mitigation are specifically mentioned, which means they do not have to agree to include loss and damage in the next global goal on finance.

These are the same arguments that were made during the events leading to COP28, when the loss and damage fund was operationalized. In meetings and workshops last year under the transitional committee, some developed countries kept citing provisions under the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change, or UNFCCC, to justify their calls to not fund actions averting, minimizing and addressing loss and damage.

The climate crisis does not care about these delay tactics in the negotiations.

The Philippines, the current host of the loss and damage fund board, recently experienced both ends of the extreme weather event spectrum in a matter of months. From the suspension of classes caused by El Niño-enhanced high temperatures to the barrage of six tropical cyclones the country has experienced within a month, the past few months have made clear of the "new normal" brought by the climate crisis.

Developed countries have also experienced the kind of extreme weather events that warrant discussions on loss and damage. In the past two months alone, the United States felt the wrath of Hurricanes Helene and Milton, while central Europe experienced its worst storm in two decades.



Broken utility poles downed by strong wind gusts are seen as Hurricane Milton approaches Fort Myers, Florida, on Oct. 9. (OSV News/Reuters/Ricardo Arduengo)

The world when the UNFCCC was created back in 1992 is not the same as the current one, especially due to the climate crisis.

Its worsening impacts and changing circumstances necessitate changes in agreed-upon approaches and strategies, from the multilateral to the local level. This is a main reason why the Paris Agreement was made in the first place, and why the loss and damage fund was established despite "loss and damage" not being mentioned at all in the UNFCCC text.

For developed nations to continue these tactics is not only disrespectful to the billions worldwide that are vulnerable to the climate crisis, it also undermines the significance of providing and mobilizing sufficient funding for the fund still at its nascent stage.

The estimated $700 million of current pledges, almost all of which come from developed nations, simply is not enough. Across the board, global climate finance has simply fallen way short; the prior goal of $100 billion annually by 2020 remains to be undeniably met to this day, despite the claims by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Policymakers must not forget that loss and damage is fundamentally different from mitigation and adaptation. It is a workstream that has climate justice even more ingrained into its core. It is unjust for the most vulnerable countries and communities to carry any further burden for the historical and continuing pollution of industrialized nations.

Developed countries at COP29 should focus less on finding ways to further slow down the progress of the negotiations and instead look at what truly matters: responding to the needs of the most vulnerable countries and communities. This commitment will be formalized by including a loss and damage subgoal under the new finance target while also reaffirming it as the third pillar of climate action that it has become.

In Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation *Laudate Deum*, he directly addresses the kind of multilateralism that has dominated the climate negotiations. It is evident that countries known as the biggest climate polluters have exploited the weaknesses of the global decision-making process to maintain the current balance of power that favors their interests.

The conduct of the global climate negotiations must adapt to better respond to the changing climate. It needs to be firmly anchored once more to its true ultimate goal: to truly respond to the needs of the most vulnerable and avoid further global warming.

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At COP29 countries have a chance to address the many remaining questions on how the loss and damage fund will operate.

Generating pledges is one thing, but turning them into disbursed funds, and how quickly that can be done, is another matter entirely. Defining the role of non-government stakeholders in this process also remains a point of contention, from

communities directly accessing the funds to making its board meetings open to more observers.

Developed nations should also help in figuring out how to overcome challenges on finance provision and mobilization, especially by looking at the fossil fuel industry — the sector overflowing with excess cash that is the main source of climate pollution and a powerful roadblock in negotiations.

The governments of developing countries must not be discouraged from fighting for sufficient funding against loss and damage or financing against the climate crisis overall. There is no room for countries from Africa, the Asia-Pacific and other regions of the developing world to start softening their voices due to the vague, unjust lens of being realistic.

As the saying goes, with great power comes great responsibility. It is now up to the developing countries at the negotiating table to ensure that the developed countries, who accumulated that power at our expense in the context of the climate crisis, will not be able to escape their responsibilities, no matter what excuse they have.

Related: Catholics head to COP29 climate summit seeking new finance, end of fossil fuels
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