

## **Global Views on COP26: Why It Matters for Canada, Egypt and Rwanda**

**Article by Dianne Saxe, Frank Habineza, Mohamed Awad**  
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**With the backdrop of deepening vaccine inequality, climate disasters, and continued efforts to delay real action, COP26 got underway this weekend. This much anticipated United Nations conference has drawn attention not least for its significance in the struggle against climate change but also for mismanagement by the UK, the host of COP26.**

**One issue that civil society has mobilised around is representation and access to the conference. Networks like the Global Greens put in motion initiatives that would give leading voices from the frontlines a chance to go to Glasgow. However, the crossroads of issues would ensure that their journey to COP was anything but smooth. While some delegates waited in frustration for promised vaccines, funding and travel documents, others were facing climate disasters in their homelands.**

**To shine a light on the climate crisis's stark effects in different parts of the world, the *Green European Journal* spoke with Global Greens COP delegates from Canada, Egypt, and Rwanda. These are leaders of green movements in their countries who are determined to carry on pushing their governments to do more beyond the political moment that is COP26. We asked how their countries are experiencing climate change, key areas for action, and their message to the green movement in Europe.**

### **The view from Rwanda - Frank Habineza**

Rwanda is situated in East and Central African region. It has a moderate climate with relatively high rainfall, spanning two major agricultural seasons. Communities experience climate change mainly through prolonged dry seasons and droughts. The Eastern province is most prone to droughts and desertification which affects agriculture and animal husbandry. This has already led to famine, internal migrations through population displacement, conflicts over land and water between pastoralists and farmers, and a loss of biodiversity in areas that fail to recover vegetation.

Rwanda also experiences increased temperatures during dry seasons and greater-intensity rainfall during rainy seasons which have caused severe flooding that has destroyed homes, bridges, crops, and lives. It also leads to soil erosion and landslides which paralyse the transportation of people and goods. Climate change effects have also lowered the water levels in lakes, waterways, and rivers, insufficient water supply especially in cities, forest

degradation, serious health problems, and the emergence of new diseases.

The most important issues for the Rwandan Green movement at COP26 are climate mitigation and adaptation. We would like Rwanda to fully implement its [national adaptation programme](#) which had identified six actions that could bring improvements to livelihoods in Rwanda. These include integrated water resources management, early warning systems and rapid interventions, promotion of income-generating activities, promotion of intensive agriculture and animal husbandry, introduction of crop varieties resistant to environmental conditions, and the development of energy sources alternative to firewood.

On top of that, we would like to have sustainable land use management with modern methods of farming and irrigation techniques and empowerment of small-scale farming. Farmers and pastoralists need alternative water supply sources so that they can stop being dependent on rainfall.

We would also like to see an increase in climate financing from international bodies extending to both government and other non-governmental actors. We would like to have improved waste management plans in all major cities, including in the capital Kigali where there is still no waste management plant. Rwanda also needs to invest in waste-to-energy projects as sprawling dumping sites continue to endanger people, water, biodiversity, and the climate in cities like Kigali.

We are very grateful to the Green movement in Europe for all the support rendered to the Democratic Green Party of Rwanda, especially in its struggle to get official recognition as a party. We request that it continues to stand with us in our plight for the full democratisation of Rwanda. Without the chance of enjoying all the universal freedoms as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it would be impossible to even stand up for environmental protection. Together we win.

## **The view from Canada - Dianne Saxe**

In Canada, climate impacts are being felt everywhere, though most keenly by coastal and far northern communities and by the most vulnerable. As in other countries, the impacts of climate change are not felt equally. Indigenous communities especially are experiencing the brunt of climate chaos.

This summer, Canada saw record heat that damaged forests and crops, cooking fruit on trees and a billion marine animals on beaches. Wildfires burnt down forests and displaced First Nations communities, and their toxic smoke caused physical and mental health impacts right across the country. Heat deaths soared. In the winter, snow cover and critical ice roads are becoming less reliable.

Meanwhile, in Ontario, Canada, where I call home, climate-blind government policy is driving up pollution and congestion by turbocharging urban sprawl, destroying wetlands and forests, and trapping families in a high-carbon lifestyle. It is even making our electricity dirtier.

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Canada should be a climate leader but isn't. In fact, Canada is one of the highest climate-polluting countries in the world, as well as a major exporter of fossil fuels.

Canada can be influenced to do better. Canada is heavily involved in global trade thus depends on access to international capital and market. It can suffer major economic damage by getting out of step with its customers. It is also strongly influenced by international opinion.

Ontario Greens will watch COP26 closely for progress on global financial and commodity markets that redirects finance and customers away from fossil fuels and into the clean economy. Border carbon adjustments and green public procurement would allow our governments to pressure domestic producers to make lower-carbon materials and products. Strict international standards on what counts as "green" (such as the EU Taxonomy for green bonds) would set useful benchmarks for Canada to follow.

But the most important single step is for governments and companies around the world to commit to a cumulative carbon budget consistent with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. A target of net-zero by 2050 is not enough if it does not limit total carbon emissions between now and then.

EU leadership on climate action would set the pace for the rest of the world. The European Union needs to come together and show the world how rapidly scaling up the green transition creates jobs, invigorates the economy, cleans the air, restores biodiversity, reduces reliance on foreign powers, and reduces inequality at home. Successful European examples will ease fears about the transition and inspire competition in other parts of the globe.

## **The view from Egypt - Mohamed Awad**

Egypt is in a geographical area that is mostly desert aside from the Nile Valley. It has a Mediterranean climate in the North and a dry climate in the South where rain scarcity has always been an issue.

Historically, its two seasons have been predictable and stable. However, this climate has been subjected to distortion for several years. The dramatic effects of climate change are happening fast in sharp contrast to the 10-to-20-year outlook predicted by scientific research. Water torrents caused by changes in rain patterns, and extreme heatwaves are common and are taking Egyptians and our infrastructure by surprise.

Agriculture, one of the most important pillars of the Egyptian economy, is also being impacted by climate change – whether in terms of crop diversity, quality, or production. This has prompted the Egyptian government to adopt a new adaptation and mitigation strategy including rehabilitating waterways, infrastructure and crops to resist climate change, modernising agricultural technology, and reclaiming new agricultural lands.

From my perspective, three main challenges lie ahead for Egypt: water scarcity, desertification, and population increase. No one can be certain about the impact of climate change on the quantities of water from the Nile River. There is speculation over whether it will increase and decrease. At the same time, population growth and rising demand for food will put additional pressure on water, land, agriculture, and the cost of adaptation measures.

Raising awareness about climate change and the issue of water requires a space of political freedoms to demand the government adjust development priorities, which does not exist in the current political context in Egypt.

There is a lot of news that raises confusion regarding government efforts to combat climate change, including the Egyptian government's announcement that it has signed contracts to export electricity to some European countries – through Cyprus and Greece – as well as Saudi Arabia and other countries. 95 per cent of electricity in Egypt is produced by power plants that run on gas, coal, and diesel. Does this not mean an increase in the percentage of carbon emissions in Egypt? Maybe this move will reopen the idea of carbon capture which would allow emissions until an identified limit has been reached. But we are facing immediate danger and emissions must stop immediately. This idea of carbon capture must go.

The participation of the Egyptian Greens in the COP26 is one of the positive developments since the party was established in the early 1990s. Our main task will be to support the call for a reduction in fossil fuel use, push for compensation of the Global South for their losses and to build a green economy, and stop the industry lobby.

As the issue of food security preoccupies leaders at the COP26, it is surprising that water security has not been introduced to the discussion despite being the basis of food security and at the root of conflicts and volatile security contexts around the world. This gap is why the Egyptian Greens have taken up water as a climate rather than a resource issue.

My concern is that COP26 might turn into a mere auction hall for the Global South to display the damages and losses to obtain financial support, without there being real control and monitoring of how these funds will be spent. The Global South has received enormous financial support under the pretext of combating environmental degradation, yet environmental degradation is increasing nonetheless.

The success of Green parties like the German Greens generates pressure on the Egyptian Greens to perform better. The contexts are very different but we have common challenges and they have been instrumental to our past national struggles by organising in solidarity. We would like to see this model of support continue and strengthen.



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