

COP29 BAKU

COP29 AND AZERBAIJAN'S
CONTRIBUTION

HOW CAN THE GOVERNMENT
PROMOTE CLIMATE AGENDA?





CENTER OF ANALYSIS
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RELATIONS

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CLIMATE AGENDA?**

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Introduction

Global ecosystems and society are now seriously threatened by climate change, necessitating an immediate and united response at the international level. In this global effort, the Conference of the Parties (COP) under UNFCCC plays a crucial role; countries draw upon climate-related challenges in discussions and seek to agree on mitigation as well as adaptation measures aimed at reducing emissions. It includes different countries' delegations globally, who will engage in deliberations over the climate-related challenges in coming to an understanding of the agreed-upon efforts required for mitigation and adaptation, especially towards emission reduction. The meetings can be considered as forums of negotiation and collaboration across the globe that facilitate the determination of a common approach to the complex issues presented by climate change.

COP meetings have borne fruit in the history of the establishment relating to the global climate policy framework. Specifically, COP21 in Paris is a very important step - a turning point for the Paris Agreement on climate diplomacy adopted during the conference. The Paris Agreement is a universal climate action pact under the United Nations Framework Convention, whereby all countries are urged to update and increase the level of ambition in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) every five years. First, the iterative process signals that the current ambitions of the international community and national government efforts recognize both the ongoing and nascent character of the climate change battle and thus will require ongoing iterative improvements in the current framework being established by climate national strategies. This is precisely the reason the Paris Agreement is outstanding: The temperature goals are too ambitious, but at the same time, the flexibility and inclusivity concerning the varied circumstances and capabilities of country signatories are given space within the framework of signatories. At this juncture, the world is moving toward COP meetings with an enhanced focus on how to make sure that an effective implementation of the Paris Agreement is in place and an enhancement in NDCs. Each COP is a critical checkpoint to look at progress, disseminate best practices, and set more ambitious targets for the future. COP29 will, therefore, provide an opportune moment for the international community to take stock of how far it has come in efforts towards mitigating climate change and explore what more can be done to strengthen actions on climate more effectively.

The role and contributions of Azerbaijan to COP 29 assume heightened significance in further reflecting the commitment of the country toward furthering the global climate agenda. With a geopolitical and ecological landscape right at the crossroads between Eastern Europe and Western Asia, Azerbaijan holds a place of special notice in international climate efforts. The nation has set ambitious goals for the percentage of renewable energy, increased energy efficiency, and strategic environmentally friendly initiatives in response to the reduction of climate change measures. Here, the

stability of the Azerbaijani nation is the main indicator of its degree of determination to reduce its carbon footprint; By observing the global emission reduction trend, the world expects an equal amount of reduction from these developing countries. Financing the renewable energy sector, such as solar and wind energy investment in Azerbaijan, is an example of thoughtfulness through climate action. Another living proof of Azerbaijan's strategic views on diversification and long-term sustainability of energy sectors can be found in the form of the "State Program on the Use of Alternative and Renewable Energy Sources for 2015-2020" (Nurtaj et al., 2017). Azerbaijan is committed to providing sustainable domestic energy solutions using its extensive solar and wind resources, joining the growing international trend towards the use of renewable resources. Garadagh Solar Power Plant reduces or replaces non-renewable fuels by adding the necessary stone to create a sustainable energy source for the country (Zalov et al., 2023). This further proves the strategy of Azerbaijan in environmental preservation and mitigation of climate change regarding their reforestation and rehabilitation initiatives. The country has taken great strides toward increasing its forest cover and restoring degraded land to sequester carbon, along with biodiversity. This is in concordance with the global initiative, including fighting desertification and land degradation in the way of another important strategy toward mitigating climate change. Additionally, they managed to succeed in the Green Belt Project, which entailed the plantation of millions of trees in the country, further illustrating the total commitment the country had made toward the betterment of its natural carbon sinks and ecological resilience. (Ahmadov, 2020)

All the initiatives shall find an opportunity to be represented at COP 29 to have a platform to present their initiatives before the international community. The experience the country has in integrating renewable energy into their national mix and the effort put towards land conservation and rehabilitation, therefore, contributes toward building knowledge for development that can be sustained with climate action. Actively involving the discussions and negotiations during COP29, Azerbaijan will be able to claim its impact on the global climate agenda and further advance collective efforts in climate change and goals of sustainable development. This will further allow Azerbaijan to be part of COP29 and give its delegation room and ground to be listened to and allowed to represent their needs and interests, being almost similar to other countries that have transition economies. This way, Azerbaijan can contribute to the actualization of the global climate agenda, in general, as part of all-inclusiveness and consideration of the different circumstances of countries by availing the challenges and opportunities it has in the face of other nations with similar economic and environmental contexts. Such advocacy thus remains central to the crafting of effective and equitable climate policies in a manner that takes cognizance of the capacity and responsibility variability within the international community. Azerbaijan's proactive engagement in COP29 epitomizes leveraging national capacities and resources through strategic investments in renewable energy, ambitious reforestation initiatives, and comprehensive sustainable development policies symbolizing a model for the contribution of

the country's transitional economies to the global climate agenda and collective pursuits. The paper explores Azerbaijan's strategic role in global climate initiatives, highlighting its hosting of COP29 as an important moment to demonstrate leading regional efforts in reducing emissions, embracing renewable energy and mitigating climate change.

Methodology

In exploring the position of Azerbaijan about COP29 participation and its broader effects on changed global climate policy, the research methodology brings together various approaches: comprehensive literature review, comparative, and semi-structured interviews. This method will be designed to provide deep insight into the dynamic framework of international climate negotiations, and the unique place that Azerbaijan will undoubtedly occupy in it. It has built the standpoint through the detailed review of the literature from academic databases such as JSTOR, Taylor and Francis, and Google Scholar. The review focuses on current journals and publications of the conference proceedings on climate change. Most of the information was from the most recent COP26. In this context, it is arguable that this will be a crucial step toward examining an emerging international climate policy regime, different policy mechanisms, and different strategies for its implementation.

It assesses the impacts of Azerbaijan's obligations and actions under international agreements in contributing to climate change policy in the context through a clear reflection by the reviewed literature on past COP outcomes. The discussion and review of literature will analyse the trends and developments over the years of the COPs forums through the comparison in thematic areas of interest and scope of the strategies in climate negotiation, as well as the thematic priorities and involvement of stakeholders, with the past COP forums. This analysis will focus on how these issues impact the commitments and actions of the participating countries, with the main focus on the emission reduction commitment, adaptive strategies, and how these will be operationalized. The results of these analyses are intended to represent a background for what strategies might work for Azerbaijan at COP29.

Background/ History

The COP meetings, which take place under the banner of the UNFCCC, enable the international community to map out a roadmap to address the climate crisis. The aim of these conferences is characterised by expanding commitments, controversial negotiations, and the chance of slow steps toward a more sustainable world. This paragraph introduces the main tasks that COP29 is going to take and places the role of countries like Azerbaijan in the context of a global strategy to tackle climate change.

The first International Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was adopted after the UN Conference on Environment and Development (often referred to as the Rio Earth Summit), a pivotal moment for the global consensus on the need to address the climate crisis. The Convention, having

been ratified back in 1994, created a groundwork for international cooperation in the field of climate change by aiming to stabilize the content of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. COP meetings, It was established in Berlin in 1995 (COP1) as the Convention’s highest decision-making and responsible body, a range of parties to ascertain progress and determine future directions. In particular, the Berlin Mandate, which was initially conceived during COP1, helped the development of more binding commitments under the Kyoto Protocol per se (UNFCCC, 1995).

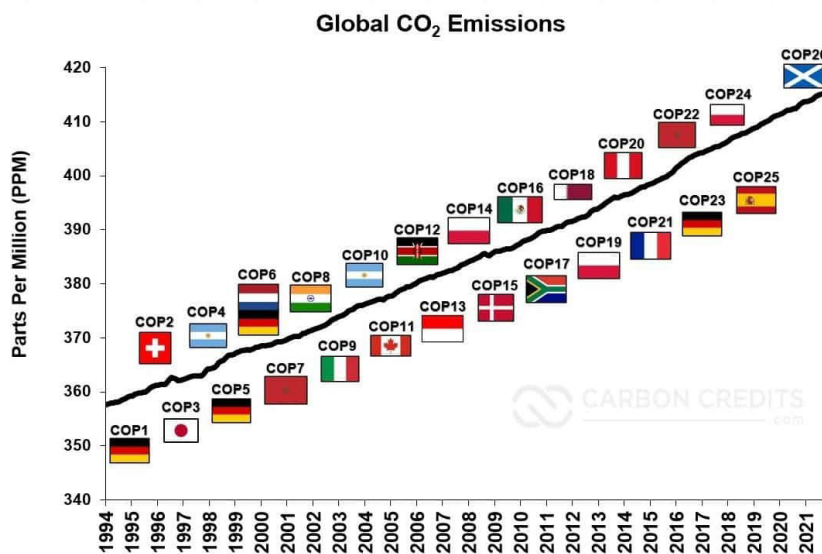


Figure 1. The Timeline of the COP Conferences Leading to COP29 (Jennifer, 2023)

In 1997, the Kyoto Protocol was born under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) - an avant-garde international treaty meant to slow down the worldwide emissions of greenhouse gases. The developed nations had, during the commitment period between 2008 and 2012, committed to cutting amounts averaging 5% of their emissions below the 1990 level. These countries should reduce the emissions by 13% below the 1990 level by the year 2020. Therefore, the protocol’s three novel market-based mechanisms - the Joint Implementation (JI), Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), and Emissions Trading (ET) - were to be used to achieve these decreases (Youngman et al., 2007). These mechanisms are designed to ensure that countries achieve their emissions targets at the lowest cost. This involved them participating in or funding emissions reduction projects in other countries. This would enable the development of the practice of sustainability and the transfer of technology into practice.

The Kyoto Protocol was, however, full of a myriad of challenges that seemed to escape the effectiveness of this novel approach. One of the challenges was that the United States, which is one of the world’s biggest polluters, did not ratify the protocol, hence putting far-reaching dents on the global effort at emissions reduction (Maamoun, 2019). Moreover, fast industrial growth in developing nations - which were exempt from the protocol’s emission reduction obligations - led to an increase

in their emissions that more than compensated developed nations' decreases in emissions. Nevertheless, an extended synthetic control technique empirical evaluation revealed that the protocol was successful in lowering emissions of the ratifying countries approximately by 7% below what would have been expected under a "No-Kyoto" scenario, thus affirming the protocol's utility in curbing emissions where it was enforced (Maamoun, 2019). The CDM, in particular, has been a focal point of both praise and criticism. While it made it possible for wealthy nations to fund initiatives in underdeveloped nations to reduce emissions - such as renewable energy projects, which were facilitated considerably under this mechanism - it also faced criticism for issues such as the additionality of projects (ensuring projects funded would not have occurred anyway) and the real impact on sustainable development outcomes in host countries. Nevertheless, the CDM and other mechanisms played a critical role in promoting international cooperation and encouraging investment in cleaner technology solutions globally.

The Copenhagen Accord, crafted during the 2009 UN Climate Change Conference, aimed to build upon the foundations set by the Kyoto Protocol but ultimately emerged as a non-binding agreement that permitted countries to establish their emission reduction targets (Lau et al., 2012). Unlike the Kyoto Protocol, which is comprised of binding targets, the voluntary character of the Copenhagen Accord contained an individual country's initiative and ambition in the commitments, which are very different in form and enforceability. One of the huge achievements of the Copenhagen Accord was the creation of the Green Climate Fund, which assists in mitigating and adapting developing countries' efforts (Lau et al., 2012). However, critics have the view that the amount of finances that accrue into the fund is adequate. Most of them have concluded that the financial commitments were not, in fact, close to the needs of these countries and were to fight against climate change (Cian and Favero, 2010). This has been the bone of contention since effectiveness in climate finance is central to enabling the spread of global actions for the climate.

In addition, the Accord was considered a very important step in acknowledging the need to limit global temperature rises below 2 degrees Celsius to avoid severe impacts of climate (Cian & Favero, 2010). This is a target based on scientific advice and is recognised worldwide as an important recognition of the risks of uncontrolled temperature rise. The goal has also been unrealistic, considering there are no binding commitments that it would be met. Such efforts aside, the Copenhagen Accord was judged to fall short of setting strict, enforceable climate goals. Most pointed to its dependence on non-binding commitments as the biggest flaw, speaking to the fact that there are serious shortcomings in global climate policy, and international climate negotiations remain pretty much in the doldrums. Critics suggest that if there are no enforceable commitments, the Accord does little to ensure a substantial reduction in global emissions (Rogelj et al., 2010). Indeed, the Copenhagen Accord was composed of many forward-looking provisions, but it had no mechanisms in place for compliance. For example, the pledges under the Accord were analysed and found probably insufficient to meet the 2°C

target, with some works indicating that the commitments could bring about even higher increases in temperature (Rogelj et al., 2010).

Over time, these meetings grew in importance and led to COP21 in Paris, where the famous Paris Agreement was signed. This agreement led to collective action towards a global action plan to save the climate keep global warming below 2°C and make attempts to keep it from rising above the point of industrialization by 1.5°C (UNFCCC, 2015). The Paris Agreement thus became a milestone in how international climate diplomacy is conducted and signified the start of a new age. Unlike its top-down predecessors, the Paris Agreement was for the first time bottom-up, with countries presenting their MDGs as country-specific plans to achieve higher goals. Such NDCs reflect the different levels of achievement of countries while cutting emissions and preparing for global warming based on national characteristics and capabilities. COP conferences since Paris have focused on working out the details of the Agreement's implementation, and they have also created a rulebook on how states should report and a framework to help developing countries. For example, COP24 in Katowice was instrumental in the adoption of the Paris Agreement Work Programme, which took concrete steps to operationalize the Paris Agreement by creating guidelines for its implementation (UNFCCC 2018).

As an energy-rich country, Azerbaijan can make significant contributions to carbon-free energy in its quest for net zero. The model that one individual country sets up and tries to implement through renewable energy, energy efficiency, and sustainable development should be copied and considered a guide for the rest of the region. For example, Azerbaijan has been making use of wind and there are also solar energy projects which assist in diversification of the latter. The aim is to make its energy composition easier, as well as, decrease its level of carbon footprint (IEA, 2019). Also, COP29 plays a role in Azerbaijan sharing its determination for the Paris Agreement's achievement and taking part in international climate change activities. Thus, the chronology of the COP sessions demonstrates the intricate and constantly changing character of international climate policy discussions. The initial talks in Berlin laid the groundwork for what has been the world's perception of and response towards climate change, and the learnings from each meeting are all vital for sustaining the efforts against climate change. While we gaze at COP29, the combined actions of nations, particularly Azerbaijan's initiatives, must be necessary for global sustainability purposes altogether.

Lessons from Previous COP Forums

The perennial Conference of the Parties (COP) of the UNFCCC provides an important forum for discussing and reviewing international climate policy. As reported by McSweeney (2024), the initial figures for COP28 were 97,372 delegates who signed up in person to attend the summit. Additionally, 3,074 people were expected to join virtually, bringing the total to 100,446 attendees. In comparison, the first climate COP held in Berlin in 1995 had 3,969 participants (McSweeney, 2024).

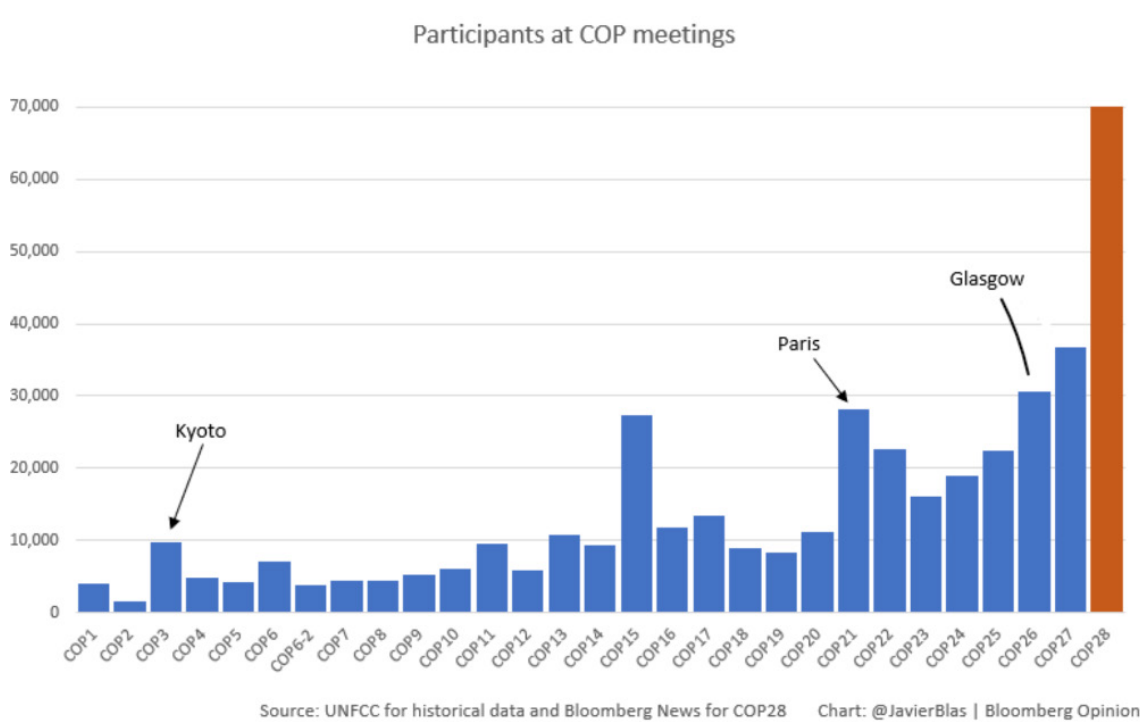


Figure 2: Participants at COP meetings in years (American Energy Alliance, 2023)

Contrastingly, in Sharm El-Sheikh assembly drew nearly 50,000 participants, outstripping the 38,000 who converged at COP26 in Glasgow back in 2021 (McSweeney, 2024). This underscores a perceptible uptick in engagement at climate COPs after a lull post-COP21 zenith in Paris in 2015. Each meeting not only advances the dialogue on global climate efforts but also provides valuable lessons that can inform future negotiations and strategies. As Azerbaijan prepares to host COP29, a comprehensive review of lessons from previous COPs is essential.

First, the Kyoto Protocol, while the third Conference of the Parties (COP3) took place in Kyoto, Japan, and marked a key moment in the climate negotiations. This was the first international agreement where industrialized countries had binding targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; in its wake, it left a precedent for all future climate agreements. But perhaps more than that, the biggest lesson from Kyoto was an understanding of the value of commitment and how truly daunting it is to implement them on a global scale. A great example is the United States - which signed but never

ratified the Protocol, thus throwing the global effort into great discredit. This points to the sine qua non-necessity of commitments backed up by strong mechanisms for compliance as an indispensable condition for the success of international climate agreements. However, this lesson is a warning: keep an eye on COP29 and tighten accountability frameworks that mitigate the traps of non-compliance. On the other hand, this should motivate just the same national commitment to climate action at COP29 through active measures by Azerbaijan toward lowering carbon emissions and switching to green energy.

Next, COP15 in Copenhagen was very much hyped but looked at with a sense of totality in failure, since it could not bring forth any legally binding agreement in the area of post-2012 climate action (Falkner, 2010). Since the COP is not an official document, the Copenhagen Consensus was cited but not formally adopted. So, it shows only the difficulty of harmonizing national interests with objectives of the common good for the climate. The summit brought out a clear picture of how difficult it is to ask countries with such diverse economic priorities and environmental concerns to reach a consensus. This experience entrenched the importance of diplomatic preparedness and preparedness of mechanisms that can adapt to changeable national conditions so that they promote ambitious global climate action. Well-understood are these dynamics: Azerbaijan at COP29 will shape an agenda that can thread the needle of international politics and lead to meaningful agreements. Dr. Fariz Ismailzade stressed that Azerbaijan, the COP29 host, has the potential to bridge national differences by ensuring a balanced dialogue that respects national circumstances while guiding negotiations towards ambitious and achievable climate goals.

COP21 the Paris Summit was a real success, producing the Paris Agreement – a comprehensive framework for tackling climate change that has the support of many countries. One key lesson from Paris would be the indigenized spirit of transparency and trust between countries. The agreement introduced a transparency framework aimed at building mutual trust and confidence in the effective implementation of climate action (Bodansky, 2016). This will be critical to fostering an atmosphere of transparency at future COP meetings, including COP29, which will ultimately increase participation and compliance, thereby improving the effectiveness of the international climate agreement overall. This will be of paramount importance, so that COP 29 doesn't set ambitious goals, but these are concretely and transparently defined in the mechanisms of the meetings. The Paris Agreement (COP21) brought critical lessons on the importance of transparency and trust in fostering broad international support and effective implementation of climate actions. Regarding COP29, Dr. Fariz Ismailzade stresses the need for COP29 to create an environment where transparency catalyses greater participation and compliance, thus enhancing the summit's overall effectiveness.

On the other side, during Marrakech COP22, the focus was elaborated, through which the role that was going to be played the role that non-state entities, including businesses, civil society, and cities and regions. This dialogue is intended to comprehend the objectives of the Paris Agreement because

they are not achievable by the policies and stand of the states only. The wide range of stakeholders will enrich the dialogue and bring innovative solutions while, at the same time, bridging the gap between national commitments and actual greenhouse gas emissions reductions (Chan, 2017). The take-home message? Inclusivity should be a key fixture in climate negotiations. COP 29 has to make sure that the voices coming from every corner with an effective contribution to the climate agenda must be echoed. This very vividly means the active involvement of every member from the different groups of different sectors towards discussions and decision-making.

COP26 in Glasgow underlined, once again, the imperative of giving significant financial support for adaptation and mitigation, with a focus on developing countries. It was, therefore, the developed nations that needed to mobilize \$100 billion annually by 2020 to keep this hope, inter alia, of some of these nations (UNFCCC, 2021). This once again highlights the ongoing challenge of sourcing financing in climate action, and the need for fulfilling financial commitments that support vulnerable regions. In this context, it should focus on operationalizing these financial pledges and look for innovative financing solutions for adaptation and mitigation in COP29. This would call for an affirmation of the commitments but rather, and especially, ensure that these funds are effectively and transparently disbursed. The COP26 additionally helped to shed more light on the urgent need for prompt, higher-scaled climate action to realize the ambitions of the Paris Agreement, especially the 1.5 degrees Celsius target in limiting global warming. The Glasgow Climate Pact accelerates the phase-out of coal and other fossil fuels while encouraging more ambitious nationally determined contributions (NDCs) from countries (UNFCCC, 2021). That would set a clear direction: COP meetings are not about haggling over future commitments, but they put a premium on immediate, decisive action that results in clear environmental benefits. Translating policy discussions into actionable steps implementable at this juncture will be key to real-world impacts for COP29.

COP28 in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates, marked a significant moment in global efforts to address climate change. COP28 was particularly momentous as it marked the conclusion of the first 'global stocktake' of the world's efforts to address climate change under the Paris Agreement. Having shown that progress was too slow across all areas of climate action – from reducing greenhouse gas emissions, to strengthening resilience to a changing climate, to getting the financial and technological support to vulnerable nations – countries responded with a decision on how to accelerate action across all areas by 2030. This includes a call on governments to speed up the transition away from fossil fuels to renewables such as wind and solar power in their next round of climate commitments.

COP 29 in Azerbaijan

In November 2024, Azerbaijan is preparing to host the Conference of the Parties (COP29) of the 29th United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). As the highest

decision-making body of the Convention, COP29 will bring together all States Parties to review and advance the implementation of the Convention through various institutional and administrative arrangements. According to Mgr. Shahmar Hajiyeu, Senior Specialist at Center of Analysis of International Relations, this event emphasizes the important role of international cooperation in solving global climate problems (Hajiyeu, 2024). The selection of Azerbaijan as the host country for COP29 reflects the COP’s policy of rotation among the five UN regional groups. This decision, supported by other Eastern European countries, positions Azerbaijan as a central forum for global leaders, including heads of state, government officials, civil society organizations and business leaders. The main goal of these discussions will be to speed up the implementation of the Paris Agreement and discuss long-term climate strategies that are important for sustainable global development (Hajiyeu, 2024).

President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev said 2024 should be marked as the “Year of Solidarity for a Green World,” emphasizing this as proof of the country’s intention to take an active part in green programs and work to combat climate change. This meets Azerbaijan’s new climate targets: a 35% cut of greenhouse gas emissions to about the 1990 level by 2030 and a 40% reduction by 2050. In addition, the country has achieved a major transformation in the energy sector through strategic initiatives to develop renewable energy. By 2030, Azerbaijan wants to have 30% of its energy come from renewable sources in total electricity production, which currently has a high share of fossil fuels (Hajiyeu, 2024).

According to the survey, opinions on Azerbaijan’s suitability to host COP29 were mostly positive, with nearly 90% either agreeing or strongly agreeing.

ANSWER	AMOUNT	RATIO
Agree	44	51.2%
Strongly agree	33	38.4%
Disagree	6	7%
Strongly disagree	3	3.5%

Figure 3: Survey result about hosting

Results

Against this backdrop, Azerbaijan’s hosting of COP29 offers a unique, strategic opportunity for the country to greatly impact the architecture of international climate negotiations. In any case, the host country will decisively influence the meeting agenda, steering the discussions in a productive direction with a greater chance of reaching a consensus.

Opportunities for Azerbaijan in Hosting COP29

1. Accelerating Environmental Initiatives

Hosting COP29 provides Azerbaijan with an important opportunity to significantly advance its environmental policy objectives. The country has set ambitious goals for at least 30% of all electricity production coming from renewable sources by 2030 and targeting cutting greenhouse gas emissions by up to 35% in 2030 and 40% in 2050 from 1990 (Hajiyev, 2024). The fact that among them will be high-level global environmental leaders solely focusing on Azerbaijan is a definite source of stimulatory conditions toward increased environmental attention (Hajiyev, 2024).

The 29th World Climate Summit should seriously stimulate the country to important reforms in the sphere of energy, namely in the field of investments in renewable sources, among which, by the way, solar and wind are widespread in the region. The focus on renewable energy at COP29 is in line with Azerbaijan's long-term economic strategy to diversify energy sources. The measure could attract foreign direct investment to the country's burgeoning renewable energy sector, helping it move away from its customary dependence on gas and oil. Cooperation with entities such as Saudi Arabia's ACWA Power and UAE's Masdar companies highlights Azerbaijan's potential as a renewable energy centre (Mammadov, 2024). The event also promotes the adoption of green technologies and sustainable practices in various sectors of the economy. The conference will also provide an opportunity for Azerbaijan to receive international support and financial prospects with the aim of a speedy transition from an oil-relying economy to a diversified, eco-friendly one.

2. Development of Geopolitical Structure

These accords with the agreement that built on Azerbaijan's role in hosting COP 29 will put a premium on its geopolitical influence in the international arena, primarily in environmental diplomacy. It is indeed a country that can host and manage a summit of such a great deal. Thus, carrying out the organization of a global summit on this scale successfully would be regarded as a very serious player in international climate negotiations. Besides, this will give the country a platform from which it could influence and promote future environmental policies and initiatives (Hajiyev, 2024). This opens a window of opportunity for Azerbaijan to improve its relations with foreign states, especially those in Eastern Europe and the international community in general. The latter will prove the commitment to world climate goals and, further, that it is possible to host such an important event, increasing the credibility of Azerbaijan. This shall carry much more influence in future environmental agreements and leadership positions in other international climate-related platforms in the process.

Research shows that the prestige of holding an international summit leads to an increase in climate legislation in the country hosting the summit (Fankhauser et al., 2016). Hosting activities were also

encouraged in the sense of strengthening the host country’s determination to develop national policies about methods for mitigating and adapting to climate change. According to Dr. Fariz Ismailzade, “This impact comes from the international focus and attention brought by hosting mandates.” These will also include Azerbaijan’s commitment to provide political support for hosting COP29, as they invite host countries to develop their climate policies. In addition, the organization of the COP29 summit will encourage Azerbaijan to take some domestic measures to support climate change encourages the development of initiatives.

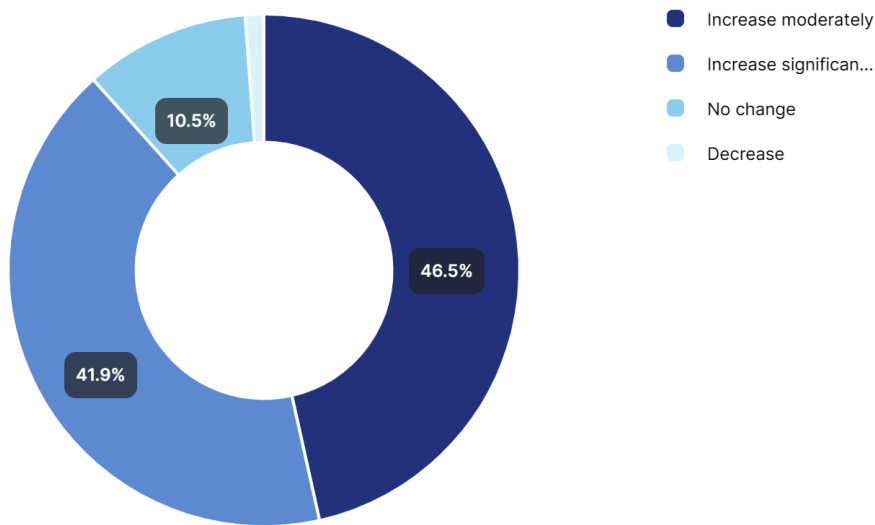


Figure 4: Survey results about geopolitical impacts

A significant part of the 86 participants (40) expects a moderate rise in the geopolitical position of Azerbaijan. This indicates that a balanced increase in the international influence of the country is expected. 36 respondents predict a significant increase in impact and reflect the strong belief that hosting such a landmark event can elevate Azerbaijan’s role on the global stage.

3. Economic Increase

The economic implications of hosting COP29 are poised to be transformational for Azerbaijan, especially Baku and its neighbouring regions. With the expected attendance of thousands of delegates, international visitors and media personnel, the event is expected to act as a catalyst for significant growth in various sectors, particularly tourism, hospitality and services. Moreover, this would increase the number of visitors, stimulate the higher demand for local businesses, increase revenues, and expand job opportunities - all of which ultimately lead to higher incomes for local workers and entrepreneurs (Hasanov, 2024). These visitors, therefore, herald the beginning of a short-term vibrancy in economic activity, but more importantly, the beginning of a long-term economic development process.

It has also increased essential infrastructure that can host such massive events, including improved transport and communications, accommodation, and utilities, all of which give long-term benefits to this region (Hasanov, 2024). This is an investment that will pay off, not only in terms of hosting COP29 but also a lasting legacy that will see this region with strengthened infrastructure and connectivity. The developed infrastructure will also serve the conference well and strengthen the city's allure to host key forthcoming international conferences and events, hence ensuring that the economic momentum created from the COP29 conference is sustained.

As a result, Baku has become one of the hot points for international gatherings and turned into a well-known platform. Besides, such infrastructure development may also stimulate new investments and, therefore, create business opportunities that will create an atmosphere for innovation and entrepreneurship. Then, hosting the COP29 would build on this increased global visibility that could, in turn, attract foreign investment and stimulate technological advancement, spur knowledge sharing those results in more economic diversification and growth. The economic impact of hosting COP 29 will go far beyond the near-term gains and lay down the grounds for sustainable development, positioning Azerbaijan among the powerhouses to host global conferences.

Lastly, COP29 is expected to become an event remarkable for its economic benefits since perhaps it would bring green energy deals that could open new markets for Azerbaijani energy products. This area turns out to be of great importance as it becomes a part of the world's agenda in terms of energy transformation from fossil fuel dependence. Participation and the hosting of COP29 can help Azerbaijan in bettering access to renewable energy projects, which will enhance the competitiveness of the nation in the international energy market (Mammadov, 2024).

The chart below highlights the survey results of participants' opinions on the economic effects of COP29 in Azerbaijan:

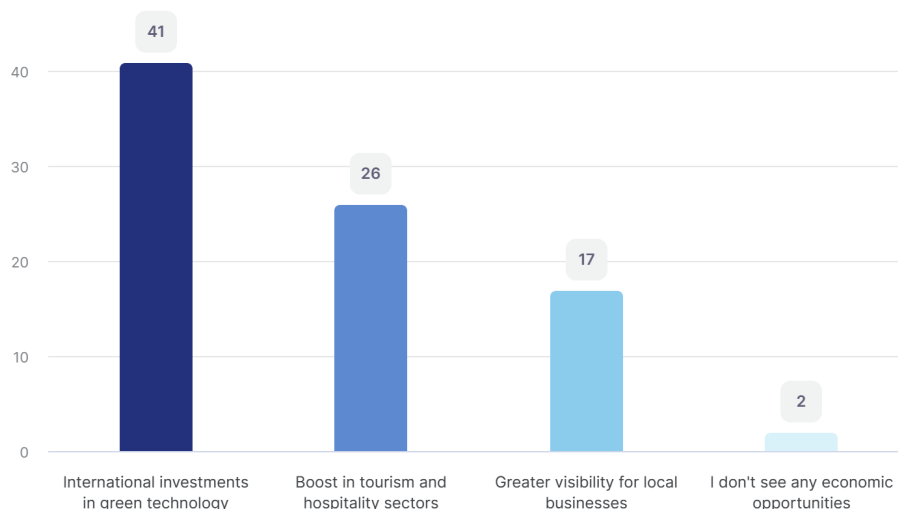


Figure 5: Survey results about economic impacts

Likewise, according to survey data, hosting COP29 is expected to create various economic opportunities for Azerbaijan. First, a significant proportion of respondents (41) envisage international investment in green technology, consistent with the expectation that this measure will catalyse economic growth through sustainable pathways. In addition, 26 respondents expect a boost in the tourism and hospitality sectors, as the influx of international visitors for the conference is expected to favorably affect regional companies and the economy. In addition, the 17 participants believe that COP29 will provide greater visibility for local businesses, potentially opening up new markets and customer bases beyond the event itself. However, a small number of respondents (2) do not perceive any economic opportunities arising from hosting COP29, possibly due to their scepticism about the tangible economic impacts of such international events.

Azerbaijan's Strategic Contributions and Commitments at COP29

Hosting the 2024 UN Climate Change Conference (COP29) would be the country's humane contribution to the environment and its position in the world. This is indeed a great opportunity and honour for Azerbaijan as it will allow Azerbaijan to demonstrate its readiness and leadership on the regional and global sustainable development agenda. The government of Azerbaijan has developed a comprehensive strategy to improve climate initiatives that include strong policy actions, strong public engagement strategies and active international cooperation.

Strategic Policy Actions: Through the last decade, Azerbaijan has taken several significant political start-ups for the conversion to an even more green and sustainable economy. In a bid to encourage the production of renewable energy, there were several financial incentives offered by the government in the form of tax holidays and subsidies, which promote private and commercial investment in the development of renewable energy sectors. This is in line with best practices observed internationally of fast-tracking towards renewable energy sources. Equally interesting is the fact that Azerbaijan is updating its regulatory framework with the aim of better support for energy efficiency. Such an update would ensure that, when new development activities are taken up, policies at the national level are in line with such international levels that promote sustainable development with a significantly reduced carbon footprint for the country (Falkner, 2016).

This, in turn, defines the basis of the energy strategy, which Azerbaijan targets: supposedly, this is the focus, first of all, on a special energy diplomacy through the Southern Gas Corridor. This project presupposes the diversification not only of Europe's gas supply but further enhances Azerbaijan's leadership in terms of sustainable energy development in the region. These sentiments are echoed in the fact that the Southern Gas Corridor characterizes Azerbaijan's unwavering commitment to developing sustainable energy and, at the same time, defines the leading function of the country in the context of the world's energy market (Ramazanova, 2023).

Renewable Energy Initiatives of Azerbaijan: One of the main points of Azerbaijan's environmental strategy is its focus on the development of sustainable aviation fuels. As detailed by Ms. Nazrin Baghirova, this initiative involves the creation of fuel from low-carbon raw materials such as waste vegetable oils, starches, and agricultural residues (Baghirova, Interview, 2023). By investing in this technology, Azerbaijan is taking concrete steps to reduce its carbon footprint in aviation, one of the most difficult sectors to decarbonize.

In addition, according to Ms. Nazrin Baghirova, Azerbaijan has made significant strides in decarbonizing its energy sector. The country has introduced several large-scale projects aimed at reducing dependence on fossil fuels, including the development of sustainable aviation fuel programs that utilize lower-carbon feedstocks such as waste materials from agricultural, forestry, and household sources. These projects have reportedly reduced carbon emissions by up to 80% compared to traditional jet fuels (Baghirova, Interview). The establishment of Greenport, which received Ecoport status in Alat, is proof of Azerbaijan's commitment to sustainable industrial practices. This port is the first among Caspian coastal states to receive such a distinction and highlights its role in promoting environmental sustainability through improved operational practices (Baghirova, Interview).

Greenhouse Gas Reduction Targets: Azerbaijan has also set clear and ambitious goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Net zero emissions are the nation's goal by 2035, which is in line with global efforts to prevent climate change and limit global warming to below 2 degrees Celsius as stipulated in the Paris Agreement (Baghirova, Interview). These goals reflect Azerbaijan's commitment not only to fulfil its international obligations but also to set an example as the economy shifts to one that is low-carbon. In terms of policy, President Ilham Aliyev's declaration of 2024 as the "Green World Solidarity Year" signifies a clear directive towards enhancing environmental sustainability and promoting green technologies within the country. This aligns with Azerbaijan's national objectives to attain net-zero status and decrease greenhouse gas emissions by 2035 (Ashirov, 2024).

The Role of Global Climate Policy: By hosting the COP29, Azerbaijan will have its critical role in shaping global climate policy. As a leader, Azerbaijan will have the option of steering key discussions and decisions that are very important for the future of world climate action. The conference will be an effective platform for Azerbaijan to establish partnership international relations in order to attract investment in green technologies and receive an additional incentive for sustainable economic growth. Besides, the event gives a forum to discuss especial issues like water scarcity, which has been relevance to the region due to its physiographic and meteorological characteristics. It is here that Azerbaijan gets a chance to project its peculiar environmental problems and opportunities. Focusing on regional difficulties within a global perspective is very important to engender mutual understanding and cooperation among international stakeholders.

ANSWER	AMOUNT	RATIO
Increase investment in green technologies	45	52.3%
Positively influence with stricter policies	28	32.6%
No significant impact	9	10.5%
Possible negative impacts due to pressure	4	4.7%

Figure 6: Table about impacts on contribution from survey

According to the survey, the expected impact of COP29 on Azerbaijan’s internal environmental policy causes different expectations among the respondents. Based on the visibility and international research that comes with hosting such a prestigious event, most of the nearly 40 participants expect investment in green technologies to increase significantly in Azerbaijan. About 20 per cent of respondents who saw a positive impact saw it led to the implementation of stricter environmental policies, indicating a belief that COP29 will require enhanced environmental governance. However, about 15 of the participants expressed doubts that any positive effect would be realized. This suggests that participants were sceptical about the effectiveness of international interventions to leverage national policy changes. In addition, only five of the respondents to the study were seen to mention the potential downsides of pressure or hasty implementation resulting in unfulfilled commitments under international pressure.

Necessary steps taken in the field of ecology, especially in the field of ecology and environmental protection, clearly demonstrate that Azerbaijan is committed to full sustainability, a phenomenon that can be a benchmark for other countries. Other important factors in the continuous quest to improve the environment are widespread greening campaigns across the country and the push towards alternative energy. It is at this point that this initiative highlights the importance of such an initiative against climate change while improving public health and biodiversity for the Global Environment priorities.

Educational Campaigns: The Azerbaijani government is launching comprehensive educational campaigns to elevate public awareness about the repercussions of climate change and the benefits of sustainable practices. These campaigns are crucial for cultivating a populace that is knowledgeable and engaged in the nation’s sustainability endeavours. Educational initiatives are tailored to inform citizens of how individual actions can contribute to national and global environmental goals, thus empowering them to participate actively in climate action efforts. Such campaigns are fundamental in shaping a culture that values and practices sustainability, reflecting recommendations for effective public engagement (Chan, 2017). Until now, a large number of billboards, advertising companies, and social media sharing related to climate change and the traffic environment were carried out by the

government. The following billboards are from companies that currently exist. COP29 is expected to increase these effects, which will have a positive effect on resource wastage in Azerbaijan.



Figure 7: Campaign on Billboard 1



Figure 8: Campaign on Billboard 2

The billboards featured in the images are a prime example of how Azerbaijan is using visual media to raise public awareness and encourage public participation in environmental protection as part of its broader climate action efforts. These billboards are not only informative but also serve as a call to action, which is part of the strategy to mobilize the population of Azerbaijan towards sustainability.

One of the main billboards depicted is designed around a droplet of water, whereby on the left side, one could see a rich green forest against a dry, cracked landscape. The text “Həyat izi itməsin! #AXSINDEYE Bir damcı qoruyaq!” translates to “Let’s not leave a trace of life! #SAVEWATER Save a drop!”. This campaign is for the conservation of water, since it is part and parcel of environmental

sustainability, more so in the area facing scarcity of the commodity. The happy anthropomorphism of the smiley-faced water drop makes the message relatable and inviting, with a likely good reception coming from both old and young demographics.

The second one promotes tree planting as the main environmental effort to help the earth combat carbon emissions. “ƏKİLƏN HƏR AĞAC GƏLƏCƏK NƏFƏSDİR!” “Every tree planted is a breath into the future!” This billboard sponsored by AzEnerji (Azerbaijan Energy) underscores the commitment of Azerbaijani energy companies toward equilibrium in their environmental impact through green investment in reforestation. The young tree symbolizes the caring and caring attitude that the environment cries for protection and restoration.

Both billboards are part of a larger picture that combines public engagement with practical action in Azerbaijan’s environmental strategy. They show that the government uses public communication to develop a sense of personal responsibility among citizens and to encourage them to participate in nationwide efforts towards environmental protection and sustainability. These initiatives are particularly relevant as Azerbaijan, as it prepares to host COP29, underscores its commitment to global climate goals and demonstrates its commitment to implementing realistic, actionable environmental strategies within its borders.

Community-Based Programs: Along this line, Azerbaijan has come up with a series of initiatives in which citizens can be involved directly to save the environment. Examples of such initiatives include recycling, tree-planting, community clean-up days, and other projects that are quite basic in local environment improvement and building a sense of community commitment to environmental responsibility. This not only has increased the aesthetic value of the environment but also has allowed Azerbaijan to carry out huge greening initiatives that support the effort to combat climate change. This suggests that these efforts are likely to be successful if the area occupied by forest cover has increased from 11.4% to 11.8% of the country’s territory. It is to be mentioned that the campaign of planting 650,000 trees across the country in 2019 marking the legacy of the poet Imadeddin Nasimi concludes both the cultural heritage and protection of nature (Ilhamoglu, 2019). These projects work to sequester carbon, restore habitats and enhance biodiversity. These projects aim to translate environmental awareness into concrete actions, so sustainable practices are integrated into life (Baghirova, Interview). COP29 will stimulate the development of these processes and thus contribute to the environment.

Conclusion

In conclusion, as Azerbaijan prepares to host COP29, the importance of this event goes beyond the conference and provides a unique opportunity for the country to strengthen its role on the global stage and highlight its commitment to sustainable environmental practices. Hosting international

events and supporting important interregional energy and connectivity projects became a key element of Azerbaijan's vision for economic growth and regional cooperation. This important international event is not only proof of Azerbaijan's increasing influence in global environmental policy but also accelerates future national and regional progress in sustainable development.

COP29 can significantly contribute to the diversification of the local economy. To this end, tourism is one of the priority sectors in Azerbaijan's non-oil economy, and hosting international events such as COP29 can contribute significantly to infrastructure development, showcase the country's attractiveness as a tourism destination and foster socio-economic mobility and inclusion. This international conference may also serve as a catalyst for capacity building and knowledge sharing necessary to tackle the dramatic environmental challenges that Azerbaijan, like many other developing countries, are faced with.

Moreover, holding COP29 in Azerbaijan will allow us to show the world the strategic contribution of our country to climate problems. This includes specific and ambitious targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, as well as renewable energy initiatives. These initiatives are in line with the world's climate goals and the country's determination to significantly contribute to the fight against climate change (Baghirova, Interview). The conference also creates an important platform for strengthening international relations for Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan can host discussions and negotiations from all corners of the world, with representatives coming to stronger cooperation on climate-related issues. This is a strengthening of the country's diplomatic positions at a time when the country is assuming the role of mediator and leader for both regional and global environmental initiatives to alleviate geopolitical pressure (Mammadov, 2024).

COP29 represents a critical milestone for Azerbaijan, which continues to act as a key player in global climate discussions. Taking advantage of this opportunity, Azerbaijan can strengthen its international position, promote sustainable economic growth and make a significant contribution to global efforts to combat climate change. Successful hosting of COP29 will require careful planning, strong policy support and effective international cooperation within Azerbaijan's capacity. This event is not only a diplomatic or environmental turning point; This is a powerful catalyst for national and regional transformation towards sustainable development and a sign of Azerbaijan's continued commitment to play an important role in the global climate agenda.

In the end, Azerbaijan has already started planning COP29 agenda, and the primary goal of the COP29 Presidency is to establish a clear and ambitious "New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG)" for climate financing, addressing the needs of all parties. Azerbaijan has announced the Climate Finance Action Fund (CFAF) to invest in climate action in the developing world. CFAF will be capitalized with contributions from fossil fuel producing countries and companies across oil, gas and coal, and Azerbaijan will be a founding contributor.

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