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PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE LIVING AND RENEWABLE ENERGY FOR THE FUTURE OF OUR PLANET

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- NGO Sustainability Team

“A cry for survival comes from the planet itself. A cry that can't be any more desperate or any more clear”.

—President Joseph R. Biden

Ali Zaidi

Ali Zaidi serves as the White House National Climate Advisor, leading the Biden administration's efforts to address climate change through bold, comprehensive policies. Appointed in 2022, Zaidi plays a central role in advancing the administration's climate agenda, including achieving net-zero emissions by 2050, transitioning to renewable energy, and promoting resilience in the face of climate impacts. His work focuses on integrating climate action into national economic, infrastructure, and equity strategies.

Prior to this role, Zaidi served as Deputy National Climate Advisor, helping to shape key initiatives under President Biden's leadership. During the Obama administration, he held senior climate and energy policy roles, contributing to the development of the Paris Agreement and other major climate milestones. His background in environmental law and policy enables him to navigate the complexities of global and domestic climate challenges.

A graduate of Harvard University and Georgetown Law, Zaidi has dedicated his career to public service and climate advocacy. He is known for his ability to bring together diverse stakeholders, from policymakers to industry leaders, to drive actionable solutions to the climate crisis. His emphasis on justice ensures that the most vulnerable communities are prioritized in the clean energy transition.



White House National Climate Advisor, Ali Zaidi

Source: Getty Images

Under Zaidi's leadership, the White House is working to mobilize resources, foster innovation, and create jobs in the clean energy sector. He remains committed to uniting government, private industry, and civil society in the fight against climate change, championing policies that promote sustainable growth and environmental stewardship.

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On the Pulse of Morning
By Maya Angelou¹

A Rock, A River, A Tree
Hosts to species long since departed,
Marked the mastodon,
The dinosaur, who left dried tokens
Of their sojourn here
On our planet floor;
Any broad alarm of their hastening doom
Is lost in the gloom of dust and ages.

But today, the Rock cries out to us, clearly, forcefully,
Come, you may stand upon my
Back and face your distant destiny,
But seek no haven in my shadow,
I will give you no hiding place down here.

You, created only a little lower than
The angels, have crouched too long in
The bruising darkness
Have lain too long
Facedown in ignorance,
Your mouths spilling words
Armed for slaughter.

The Rock cries out to us today,
You may stand upon me,
But do not hide your face.

¹Maya Angelou. "On the Pulse of Morning" (excerpt), 1993.
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/48990/on-the-pulse-of-morning>

“Britain Shuts Down Last Coal Plant, ‘Turning Its Back on Coal Forever’”

By: Somini Sengupta, *NY Times*



Photo: Getty Images

Britain, originally the home of the global coal addiction for the Industrial Revolution, is now shutting down its last coal plant, one of the first globally. This facility was a 2,000-megawatt Ratcliffe-on-Soar facility, and the power company will now convert the site into a “low-carbon energy hub”. Coal, though once the cheapest and most abundant fuel, is also the dirtiest. Especially in large nations, coal accounts for majorities of power supplies, such as China and India. The closing of Ratcliffe’s has also provided the opportunity to set an example.

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“Silicon Valley Renegades Pollute the Sky to Save the Planet”

By: David Gelles, *NY Times*



Photo: Getty Images

In Saratoga California, 3 renegade climate entrepreneurs began executing a plan to release pollutants to combat global warming. Make Sunsets, the start-up, claims releasing sulfur dioxide can reflect the sun’s energy back, which has some grounding in science. Recently, the area of stratospheric solar geoengineering has grown as a whole – however, there are still concerns broader efforts could disturb Earth’s ecosystem. Though they have studied academic literature on stratospheric geoengineering, there have been no experiments or analysis to verify their claims or calculations, which has made people suspicious given the small scale. Even so, there are no laws prohibiting the dispersal of sulfur dioxide in California, and if the government did implement any, Make Sunsets would simply go elsewhere.

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“Europe’s Big Battery Ambitions are Failing, and China is Benefiting”

By: Stefan Nicola, Wilfred Ecki-Dorna, Tom Fevrier and William Wilkes, *Bloomberg*



Photo: Getty Images

Europe’s effort to build a homegrown battery industry to rival China’s dominance in electric vehicles (EVs) is faltering. The bankruptcy of Swedish startup Northvolt and delays or cancellations of 11 out of 16 planned European battery factories highlight the challenges. Demand for EVs is falling, and manufacturers struggle with scaling up production. Meanwhile, Asian companies like China’s CATL and South Korea’s Samsung SDI continue to make progress. Europe’s reliance on Asian partners for battery production, such as Stellantis’ deal with CATL, risks undermining its green economy ambitions and puts its automotive industry at a competitive disadvantage. Europe's battery efforts are lagging behind Asia, increasing dependency on foreign suppliers.

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“Electric Vehicle Battery Packs See Biggest Price Drop Since 2017”

By: Linda Lew, *Bloomberg*

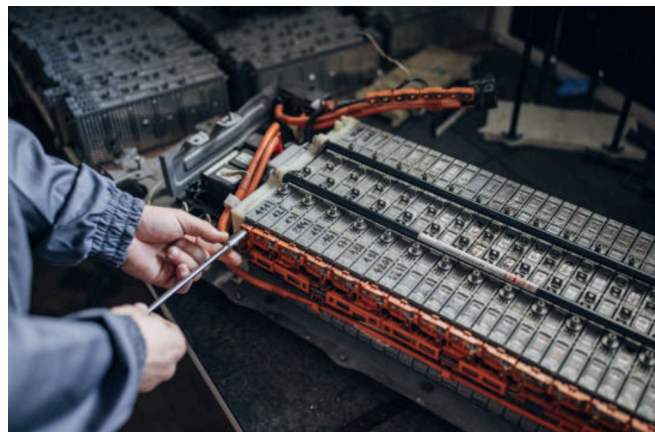


Photo: Getty Images

The average price of lithium-ion battery packs has dropped 20% to \$115 per kWh in 2024, the largest decline in seven years. This is due to overcapacity in cell production, lower metal prices, and a shift to cheaper lithium iron phosphate (LFP) batteries. The drop accelerates price parity between electric vehicles (EVs) and gasoline cars, with battery prices possibly falling below \$100/kWh by 2026. China’s dominance in battery production is driving these declines, and the country is expected to meet 92% of global EV and storage battery demand in 2024. However, geopolitical tensions and policy changes, like reduced EV subsidies in Europe, could impact prices and adoption.

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“The U.S. Is Building an Early Warning System to Detect Geoengineering”

By: Christopher Flavelle, *NY Times*



Photo: Getty Images

Researchers in Boulder, Colorado, launch balloons equipped with devices to measure aerosol levels at 90,000 feet, creating a baseline for atmospheric conditions. The system aims to detect suspicious aerosol releases, which could be attempts to reflect sunlight and cool the planet. While geoengineering offers a quick climate solution, it risks unintended global weather disruptions. Collaborating internationally, NOAA, NASA, and Sandia National Laboratories are building tools to identify aerosol origins, scale, and impacts. Although detection capabilities remain in early stages, the U.S. leads in addressing the growing concern over rogue geoengineering activities.

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“An Arctic Hamlet Is Sinking Into the Thawing Permafrost”

By: Norimitsu Onishi, *NY Times*



Photo: Getty Images

Tuktoyaktuk, a Canadian Arctic hamlet, faces imminent relocation as climate change rapidly thaws the permafrost it rests upon. Thawing has caused massive landslides, eroding shores, collapsing cemeteries, and destabilizing homes. The Inuvialuit community, including longtime monitor William Dillon, documents these changes, aware of their inevitable displacement. Despite federal projects like relocating homes and installing shoreline defenses, the measures provide only temporary relief. Residents remain divided on when to move, with cultural and logistical challenges compounding the decision. Permafrost thawing releases greenhouse gases, accelerating climate change and making Tuktoyaktuk a global case study. With the

Arctic warming four times faster than the global average, the hamlet's plight underscores the profound impacts of climate change on vulnerable communities.

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“Taxing Farm Animals’ Farts and Burps? Denmark Gives It a Try”

By: Somini Sengupta, *NY Times*



Photo: Getty Images

Denmark is implementing measures to reduce methane emissions from agriculture, a significant contributor to greenhouse gases. The government has introduced a tax on farm animals, particularly cattle, to incentivize farmers to adopt more sustainable practices. Methane, produced during digestion in ruminant animals, has a substantial impact on global warming. By imposing this tax, Denmark aims to encourage the adoption of technologies and practices that lower emissions, aligning with its broader climate goals.

“New Orleans’ Striking Advantage in the Age of Climate Change”

By: Nathaniel Rich, *NY Times*



Photo: Getty Images

New Orleans faces heightened vulnerability to hurricanes due to climate change. Rising sea levels and increasing sea surface temperatures contribute to more intense and frequent storms. The city's low-lying geography and subsiding land exacerbate flood risks. Hurricane Katrina in 2005 exemplified the catastrophic impact such storms can have. Since then, efforts have been made to strengthen levees and improve flood defenses. However, ongoing climate change poses continuous challenges, necessitating adaptive strategies to protect the city's infrastructure and residents.

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2024 United Nations Biodiversity Conference (COP16)

Amukta Panchangamvenkata (NGO Intern)

The 2024 United Nations Biodiversity Conference, COP16, held in Cali, Colombia, focused on translating the ambitious Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) into actionable steps. This conference addressed essential targets like preserving 30% of global land and waters by 2030, also known as the "30x30" goal. It was moderated by the COP16 President, Susana Muhaamad, Environmental Minister of Colombia. There were 196 countries represented.

Additionally, countries were expected to present progress on their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), which outlined specific national actions for meeting these global biodiversity goals. With only about a year left until the 2025 funding target deadline, delegates were working to bridge a significant funding gap to secure \$200 billion annually by 2030 to support biodiversity conservation.

Key issues at COP16 included the complex question of Digital Sequence Information (DSI), which involved fair benefit-sharing from genetic resources, and the need for increased participation from Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs). Both topics reflected the broader goal of harmonizing biodiversity with economic needs, ensuring that conservation benefits were equitably distributed while recognizing the cultural and ecological contributions of Indigenous communities.

Additionally, leaders aimed to improve biodiversity integration across sectors like food, energy, and finance, which was critical for embedding environmental considerations in everyday economic activities.

Key Points

1. **Indigenous and Community Inclusion:** Delegates established a new body to involve Indigenous voices and recognize the contributions of people of African descent in conservation efforts, acknowledging the critical role of diverse communities.

2. **Funding Commitments:** Nations pledged \$30 billion annually by 2030 to support biodiversity, with an interim target of \$20 billion by 2025. However, debate remained on increasing funds to support developing nations.
3. **Biodiversity Protection Targets:** The conference underscored the importance of preserving ecosystems, setting specific targets for land and marine conservation, and reviewing progress on existing frameworks to safeguard genetic diversity.

Protocol Meetings

The conference also included sessions on the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the Nagoya Protocol, focusing on genetic resource access and fair benefit sharing.

Outcomes and Challenges

While progress was made, concerns about the slow pace of funding for developing nations were highlighted. Organizers emphasized the urgency of concrete action, particularly to support vulnerable ecosystems and communities affected by environmental degradation.

The 2024 United Nations Biodiversity Conference (COP16) in Cali, Colombia, stood as a beacon of hope and responsibility in the global fight for biodiversity preservation. By bridging the gap between ambition and action, COP16 charted a path toward a future where nature thrives alongside human progress. The focus on indigenous inclusion, equitable funding, and sector-wide integration underscored a unified commitment to addressing the biodiversity crisis with a holistic and just approach.

As nations strove to meet the "30x30" goal and address critical issues like Digital Sequence Information, COP16 exemplified the power of collaboration across borders, cultures, and disciplines. Yet, the challenges ahead demanded sustained effort, innovative solutions, and unwavering resolve. The outcomes of this conference served not only as milestones but as a rallying call to governments, communities, and industries worldwide.

The world was watching, and the work initiated at COP16 had the potential to transform biodiversity conservation into an enduring legacy for generations to come. Together, we could ensure that the beauty and balance of our planet were preserved, reminding us all that biodiversity was not just an environmental imperative—it was the very foundation of life itself.

The Role of International Law in Addressing Climate Change: A Global Imperative

Wonsuck Cho (NGO Intern)

Climate change has become one of the defining challenges of our time, testing the resilience of nations, ecosystems, and human societies alike. As environmental degradation accelerates, driven by unchecked greenhouse gas emissions, rising sea levels, and extreme weather events, the need for collective action becomes increasingly urgent. A recent landmark case before the International Court of Justice (ICJ), led by Vanuatu, underscores the critical role of international law in holding states accountable for their climate responsibilities. The case highlights the intersection of justice, responsibility, and global cooperation in mitigating the climate crisis and protecting vulnerable communities.

Vanuatu's Campaign: A Symbol of Climate Vulnerability

Vanuatu, a Pacific island nation, serves as a poignant example of the disproportionate impact of climate change on developing countries. As rising seas erode its coastlines and extreme weather devastates communities, Vanuatu has emerged as a global advocate for climate justice. The case before the ICJ is the culmination of years of advocacy, particularly from Pacific nations and grassroots movements, calling on the international legal system to address the responsibility of states in mitigating and preventing climate harm.

Vanuatu's campaign represents more than its own existential struggle; it amplifies the voices of other climate-vulnerable nations disproportionately burdened by emissions they did not produce. Small island developing states (SIDS) contribute less than 1% of global emissions, yet face the gravest consequences, including the loss of homes, livelihoods, and entire ecosystems. This legal action aligns with the principle of climate justice, demanding that powerful nations act responsibly to reduce emissions and uphold the rights of vulnerable populations.

The Role of International Law in Climate Responsibility

At its core, the ICJ case seeks an advisory opinion on what international law requires of states concerning climate change. Specifically, it aims to clarify states' obligations to protect the environment, mitigate emissions, and safeguard future generations under existing frameworks like the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement. Although ICJ opinions are not legally binding, they carry substantial moral and political weight, influencing policies, treaties, and legal decisions worldwide.

International law operates on principles of state sovereignty and shared responsibility. While each nation retains the right to exploit its resources, it must do so without causing significant harm to others—a principle enshrined in the “no-harm rule” of international law. The case challenges major emitting nations to recognize their historical contributions to climate change and adopt meaningful measures to fulfill their responsibilities. By seeking accountability, Vanuatu’s effort exposes the existing gaps in enforcement and implementation of international climate agreements.

Climate Justice and Accountability

A central theme in Vanuatu’s campaign is the pursuit of climate justice—an acknowledgment that climate change is not only an environmental issue but a matter of equity and human rights. Communities that contributed least to global warming often lack the resources to adapt, exacerbating social and economic inequalities. By bringing the issue before the ICJ, Vanuatu highlights the disproportionate suffering of marginalized communities and underscores the ethical obligation of wealthier nations to lead mitigation efforts.

The case also sheds light on the historical context of climate accountability. Much like the tobacco and fossil fuel industries’ efforts to obfuscate scientific evidence in past decades, powerful states and corporations have delayed meaningful action on climate change. In recent years, lawsuits against oil companies and utilities, such as Duke Energy, have accused these entities of misleading the public and exacerbating environmental harm. Vanuatu’s case expands this conversation to the global level, reinforcing the need for legal frameworks that hold nations accountable for both action and inaction.

A Precedent for Future Climate Action

The ICJ Vanuatu case represents a watershed moment in climate diplomacy and law. If successful, the advisory opinion could pave the way for future legal challenges, encouraging nations to strengthen their commitments to reducing emissions and financing adaptation efforts. It may also empower vulnerable nations to seek reparations for climate-related damages, providing them with the resources needed to meet all the challenges of climate change.

At a broader level, the case highlights the importance of collaboration between nations, organizations, and communities. More than 100 countries are participating in the hearings, signaling a growing recognition of the role international law plays in addressing transboundary challenges like climate change.

Challenges and Global Implications

Despite its potential impact, the ICJ case also faces challenges. Wealthy nations may resist calls for increased accountability, arguing that economic growth and energy security are priorities. Moreover, the

implementation of international law often relies on voluntary commitments, raising concerns about enforcement. The United States, for instance, has faced criticism for its inconsistent climate policies, with leadership shifts influencing its commitment to international agreements. Similarly, powerful nations and corporations may seek to delay legal and political reforms, prioritizing short-term interests over long-term sustainability.

Nevertheless, the case has already succeeded in elevating the conversation about climate accountability. It has brought renewed attention to the role of international courts in addressing global challenges and underscored the moral imperative for states to act. By framing climate change as a matter of justice and human rights, the case challenges policymakers, businesses, and individuals to confront the crisis with urgency and resolve.

Conclusion: A Call for Global Responsibility

The ICJ hearings led by Vanuatu represent a powerful appeal to the international community: climate change is a shared challenge that demands shared responsibility. While legal opinions alone cannot solve the crisis, they provide a foundation for holding nations accountable, strengthening climate agreements, and advancing climate justice. As rising temperatures and sea levels threaten the planet, the case serves as a reminder that the consequences of inaction are global and irreversible.

In the pursuit of a sustainable future, nations must recognize their interconnectedness and act collectively to address the climate crisis. The ICJ's advisory opinion may not bind states to specific actions, but its moral and legal influence could shape the trajectory of climate policy for generations. For nations like Vanuatu, the case is more than a legal battle—it is a fight for survival, justice, and the protection of future generations.

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