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Editor's Note

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The 27th annual United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27) will take place in Sharm El Sheikh, a resort city on the Red Sea in Egypt, from 6th to 18th November 2022, once again to discuss the trajectory of global warming, announce new targets to hold warming at no more than 1.5°C over preindustrial levels and assess whether pledges made at COP 26 in Glasgow in 2021 are being met. Despite the fact that the Glasgow Climate Pact is a legally binding treaty with most countries making pledges to reduce carbon emissions by 50 per cent by 2030 and zero by the early 2050s, the omens are not encouraging.¹

Many, especially young people, came away from Glasgow disheartened. It seemed to them that their elders still could not match their words with actions that reflect the massive scale of the problem: 2030 is half a lifetime away. The highly regarded Climate Action Tracker concluded that even if countries live up to all their pledges, the temperature of the earth will soar to 2.4°C by 2100.²

More worrisome is the report from the United Nations on the eve of COP27. Countries were failing to meet their commitments. The planet, it said, is on track to warm by an average of 2.1 to 2.9 degrees Celsius by 2100.³ At least one major study found that five dangerous tipping points may have been reached, that “irreversible” warming was increasingly likely.⁴

Stephanie Heckman is a visual artist who attended the Glasgow conference. “I attended COP26 as a visual storyteller,” she says. “Visual storytelling (known also as graphic recording) involves the use of graphics, drawings and hand lettering to capture the essence of collective conversation. It is a tool for live notetaking and sense-making; it stimulates participants to engage with each other and complex subject matter, and makes the outcomes more memorable, engaging and accessible to others not present at these conversations.”

Stephanie was an accredited observer delegate at COP26 and a “civic participant” in the many events happening around Glasgow at the time. “I captured my impressions in daily watercolour visual summaries,” she says, “as well as a number of graphic recordings commissioned by official and unofficial side events. All of these I compiled in a ‘COP26 Visual Report’, to share what it was like to be present, on the ground at COP26 in Glasgow.”

This visual report is the subject matter of this special issue of the *New England Journal of Public Policy*. At Sharm El Sheikh, Stephanie will again be an accredited delegate but working inside the negotiating tent alongside the UN Climate Secretariat itself to help bring clarity through imagery that crosses language and cultural barriers to its proceedings as they are happening. We look forward to bringing you that visual report in a forthcoming issue of the journal.

You can follow Stephanie’s journey on social media @stephaniesaloli. Her website is stephanieheckman.com.

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Notes

¹ Max Bearak, “Climate Pledges Are Falling Short, and a Chaotic Future Looks More Like Reality,” *New York Times*, October 26, 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/26/climate/un-climate-pledges-warming.html>.

² Fiona Harvey, “Far from Where Cop26 Needs to Be: Dismay at 2.4C ‘Reality Check,’” *Guardian*, November 9, 2021. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/nov/09/shock-at-24c-reality-check-prompts-dismay-at-cop26>.

³ Max Bearak, “Climate Pledges Are Falling Short, and a Chaotic Future Looks More Like Reality,” *New York Times*, October 26, 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/26/climate/un-climate-pledges-warming.html>.

⁴ Damian Carrington, “World close to ‘irreversible’ climate breakdown, warn major studies,” *Guardian*, October 27, 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/oct/27/world-close-to-irreversible-climate-breakdown-warn-major-studies>.