

# INTRODUCTION

## **Ali Aslan, International TV Presenter and Journalist**

Ladies and gentlemen, as always, it is a great pleasure and privilege to be back at the World Policy Conference. I can tell you, usually a moderator comes onstage and says, 'Welcome to a very timely session', but I can tell you, this time, it is really heartfelt because the session, of course, is titled 'Climate Change: Is there still a collective will?'.

I could not have asked for two better individuals to guide us through this very timely, indeed, conversation – a few weeks before COP28, right here in this very country. To my immediate left, somebody who needs very little introduction in this part of the world and increasingly beyond. Nonetheless, I will give one, anyway. She is the UAE Minister of Climate Change and Environment, ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Mariam Al Mheiri.

I am equally delighted because, when we talk about COP, obviously COP28 is the one we are all very excited about, but there was one COP, COP21 in particular, in Paris that set the standard very high for all the following ones – the Paris Climate Agreement obviously being the main result of this. We have the President of COP21 with us. He is currently the President of the French Constitution Council and, needless to say, a former French Prime Minister. Please welcome Laurent Fabius.

Madam Minister, let us dive right into it. First of all, thank you for making time. I know your schedule must be super-busy. We are only a few weeks until COP28 gets underway in Dubai and you will be hosting the world. You just told me backstage that more than 100 Heads of State, including The Pope, have confirmed their attendance. Therefore, the eyes of the world will be on you.

Aside from being the Minister of Climate Change and Environment, you will also be leading the UAE delegation for COP. Give us a glimpse. We have the privilege of having you here, so obviously I cannot pass up the opportunity of asking how are the preparations coming along?

## **Mariam Al Mheiri, Minister of Climate Change and Environment of the United Arab Emirates**

Thank you so much, Ali. Thank you for having me and let me first say what a pleasure it is to share this stage with Laurent. Thank you so much for your time here today. I know you have had some great sessions.

It is 27 days until COP28 starts and you can imagine us, as a country, we are extremely excited to welcome the world; and the time is so critical to have all countries convene in a place that is serious and committed on the climate journey. The UAE has a great track record, when you look at where we are on the energy transition.

As you know, we house three of the largest solar parks. We are just embarking on wind energy. We also have the nuclear power plant. We have really diversified and, today, more than 70% of our GDP is non-oil based. Therefore, we have a track record. The geography of



the UAE and also our bridge-building abilities with so many countries make us really the ideal place to convene the world to talk about climate action.

As you know, we are off-track. We all know that. The first global stocktake will happen at COP28. This is a huge endeavor to let us know what the gaps are. How do we have to course-correct? I think it is really important that everyone realizes this is the time we need to unite. This is the time when we need to look at solutions and upscaling the solutions really quickly; and, for us, the solutions-based unification of the world to combat climate change is so critical and that is why we are actually extremely excited.

Preparations are underway, Ali. We can always look at what else needs to be done but, from our experiences in the other COPs, from looking at what we want to achieve in this COP, I think we are well underway – and the whole country is.

### **Ali Aslan**

Yes, for certain, and of course we will talk more about your aspirations and expectations, and the many sticking issues that will have to be addressed once COP gets underway.

However, you could not have been more blunt in the past and in present saying, 'The house is on fire'. Mr. President, that is, of course, something that unites us all – the collective will – at least on paper. 'The house is on fire', we do want to get it extinguished. Now, you, of course, have been the President of COP21 and you have been part of every single COP since then. Give us a glimpse. How has the trajectory changed throughout the years? What have been the biggest, most significant and most notable differences from COP to COP?

### **Laurent Fabius, President of the French Constitutional Council, President of the COP 21, former Prime Minister of France**

Thank you, and good morning everybody. What are the differences between Paris in 2015 and the Emirates today? There are some differences.

In Paris, the objective was to have a conjunction between three different planets. Today, it remains true, but the planets have evolved in a different way. What do I mean?

The first planet is the scientific planet. It was very important in Paris that science, ITCC and all these points be more understood by the general public. This was done and, since Paris, I think science and technology have improved very much. I have no doubt about this scientific planet.

The second planet is more difficult – it is civil society. As far as the general public is concerned, there is a greater awareness of the climate problem. As far as local authorities are concerned, the NGOs, many major companies have made improvements, although – and we shall probably discuss that – there are some groups who are still resisting.

The main difference is about governments. In Paris in 2015, we were able to have an international setting which was positive – in particular a sort of alliance between the US and China – and diplomacy was such that we were able to get everybody together.

Today, obviously it is a different story and it will be one of the difficulties.

Another difference which is very important is that the climate situation today is worse than it was when we met in Paris. In Paris, there were different commitments, but the main one was about the 1.5 degrees – and, honestly, today, we are off-track.



Therefore, there are similarities with Paris and there are differences, but the Emirates COP, COP28, must be a decisive one because we are in danger. We hope that this COP will be helpful and a success.

**Ali Aslan**

Yes, the situation has, in many ways, worsened, as you have pointed out.