

## QUESTION 1

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

The imminency and the dangers of climate change are becoming much more noticeable, Madam Minister. That is why you have repeatedly said, 'We have to walk the talk. We have to raise the ambition. We have to step up the efforts', and you are leading by a good example. You have put forth a plan in the UAE that cuts emissions by 40% by 2030; and become Net Zero by 2050.

Now, you are, of course, one of the biggest oil and gas producing countries attempting to lead the energy transition here. That is quite ambitious indeed.

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

I just want to give you all a story. I know you have heard a lot of speeches, but I just want to share something with you.

I was in Iceland two weeks ago and what I saw there – and, of course, being close to the glaciers – what is climate change about? It is because the ice is melting – and, because the ice is melting, you are having this whole ripple effect that is happening. When you want to explain to a child what climate change is, it is about us disrespecting nature for too long.

We are seeing the glaciers melting. By the way, they told me a fact which really scared me, actually – if a quarter of the Greenland ice masses melt, this leads to a two-meter sea level rise across the globe. This is huge, and you actually hear the ice melting the whole time. It is consistently melting. You see the ice breaking and falling into the water. Actually seeing these things with my own eyes was a huge eye-opener.

Now, when it comes to us here in the UAE, we have been very serious about the whole climate change journey. I mean, we ratified the Paris Agreement in 2016 – we were one of the first in the region to do so because we understood the implications, we understood this is a serious subject that we have to follow.

Therefore, we directly set up – also, Masdar was set up in 2006 because already our leadership said, 'We need to diversify from where we get our energy. We need to build the knowledge', because, ladies and gentlemen, it is not just about putting money into making a facility; you need the intellectual transition as well. You need the capacity-building. That is why we are always talking about a just energy transition.

By the way, COP28 is going to try to solve four things. First of all, it is about the just energy transition and, because ourselves as a country are going through this transition, we understand we need political will; we need money; we need to build up the national capacity; we need to diversify. We know from experience what it means when we talk about a just energy transition – and everyone needs to do it in their own ways because every country is

different, is at a different level, has accessibility to certain financial funds or no funds. It is really complicated.

The second thing we will be looking at is fixing climate finance. That is a huge deal. That is the enabler in everything we are trying to do and, of course, His Excellency Sultan, the COP28 President Designate, is really pushing for the USD 100 billion commitment; the Loss and Damage Fund is another area that needs to be fixed. The whole financial institution needs to be relooked at so that money can be accessible, available and affordable and needs to go to the places it needs to go to.

The other aspect we are looking at is making sure that nature, people, livelihoods are in the center of COP28. It is so important to think of the food systems, to think of health, to think of nature, make nature our ally – how can we use the force of nature to our benefit? We need to do that.

Then, of course, the inclusivity. We are trying to make the COP28 the most inclusive COP ever done. What I mean by this is the indigenous people, the women, the youth, faith-based organizations, all coming together because what they have in common is about doing more to respect nature. Bringing them all together and making sure that all voices from across the world are here is our commitment.

What is so important – Ali, I am so sorry, because I am very passionate about this – is that we need to bring hope back to this whole process. We need to enlighten the young people because this is about their future. We need to showcase solutions and technologies and innovations which I have seen to be able to scale it up in the places that it is needed and make sure the funding goes there.

The UAE walking the talk? Yes, we have updated for the third time our second NDC to 40%. Last year, we were at 31% and we improved it by 9% in one year. This is to show that we can see technologies are maturing and, again, we are very lucky that we have the political will.

For us, we are on the transition in our own country, but we are making sure to also help others. That is why, in Africa Climate Week, we have put forward a USD 4.5 billion fund to help the African countries in their transition because we understand how important funding is for this transition.

### **Ali Aslan**

Hope is, of course, the word that you have mentioned, that everybody wants to rally round. We have many young people also here in the audience who, I am sure, would very much like the sound of your message. I will come back to you a little bit more about the ambitions that your country has, but I want to bring in Laurent, Mr. President, here once more because hope is one thing but, if we are looking at the naked numbers, energy still accounts for two thirds of total greenhouse gas.

The energy sector is still the central player in the efforts to reduce emissions and combat climate change. Now, it is very admirable to hear Madam Minister talk about trying to wean itself off fossil fuel in the long run, more diversification, more renewable energies. However, are we really at a point right now where we can completely phase out fossil fuels?

Many people say – and Madam Minister, you are one of them – that oil, gas and coal still have a role to play. Therefore, the balance that we are trying to do here, the movement towards renewables while at the same time still being dependent on fossil fuels, how do we narrow that gap?

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

It is obviously one of the main difficulties of this COP and for all the COPs. Now, all of us, we read a lot of reports and the main thing is establishing what is serious and what is not serious. As far as I am concerned, I base my positions mainly on three elements:

- a) the work of the IPCC, because they are very serious. There is a consensus and, when they write something, it is serious.
- b) the International Energy Agency. They too are very serious.
- c) more generally, what the Secretary General of the UN, Mr. Guterres, says, he is well-informed, he is a reasonable man.

If, with my own judgement, I am stemming from these elements, then I think that if we want the Emirates COP to be a success, we have at least three main objectives. I do not mean that they are easy, but they should ensure the success of the COP.

The first one is about what we call global stocktake. It is a bit technical, but it means that, in Paris, we have decided that, periodically, every single country has to deliver what we call a nationally determined contribution, saying, 'I will do that', and then it is verified. This time, in the Emirates, we have to see where we are – and we know we shall be off-track – and where the different nations want to be in the future.

A first decisive element is to conclude the global stocktake. A second one is about energy. The idea has developed that there must be a real commitment at least to triple the renewables and to phase out of fossil fuels.

I will add, which is important, the question of methane, CH<sub>4</sub>, which is less 'popular' than CO<sub>2</sub>, but which is a decisive element and where we can get outstanding results.

Then, obviously, the question of finance, which will be decisive. What you said, Mariam, is true. We have to make operational the Loss and Damage Fund – it was about the only result of COP27 – and we have to make it real. We have to make real the objective of USD 100 billion a year from rich countries to developing countries. It was promised in 2009 and hoped to be delivered in 2020. We are now in 2023 and, fortunately, this aim is now fulfilled.

Obviously, the question of investing more in renewables, and divesting from fossil fuels, is central - otherwise the objective of a better balance makes no sense.

Then there is, which will take time, the general reform of the international financial system, especially in favor of developing countries; and especially directed towards Africa, because they are not responsible for the emissions and they do not have enough funding to get the renewables and so on.

If we are able to reach these elements, COP28 could become important in the wake of the Paris COP.

**Ali Aslan**

Stressing the need to balance the green transition with affordability and energy security. Inclusivity, you have already mentioned, Madam Minister, will be very high on the agenda of COP28.



Of course, the question is always switching off fossil fuels and solely depending on clean and renewable energy – Net Zero by 2050 is what your country has set out to do. We are in 2023, that is not too long from now.

**Mariam Al Mheiri**

No, it not too long. We announced our strategic initiative, which is Net Zero by 2050, in 2021. Last year, at Sharm El Sheikh, we actually announced our pathway, where we want to be every five years when it comes to emissions. That has already been set for the country; and now we are actually looking into the how, how we are going to reach it; what policies; which sectors need to be involved; what projects; where should the money go? All that is being discussed now heavily in the UAE.