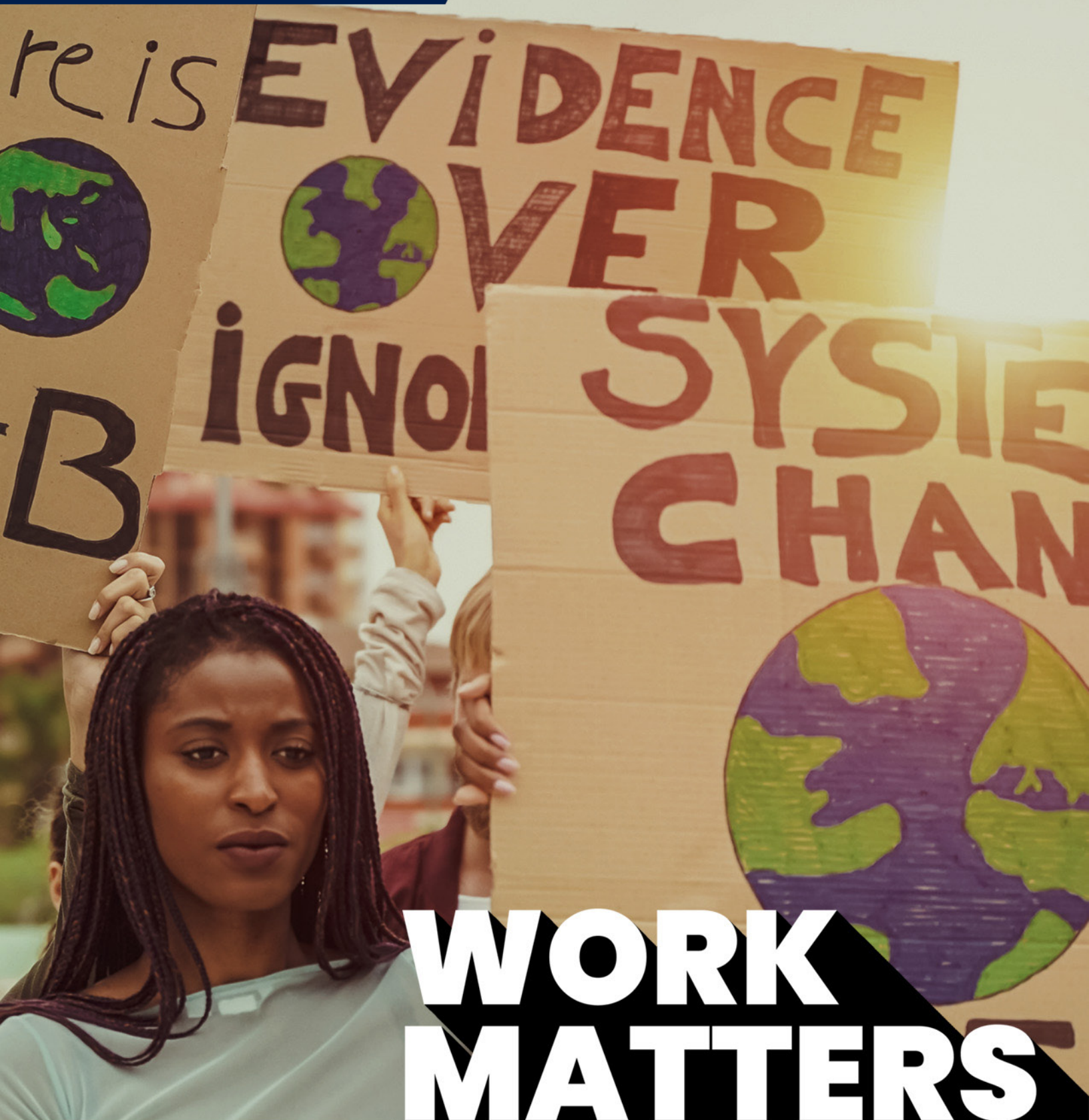




CIPRIANI COLLEGE
OF LABOUR AND CO-OPERATIVE STUDIES



WORK MATTERS

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COLUMN

COP28: ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE

COP28 will take place in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UAE) from November 30 to December 12, 2023. The Conference takes place in a highly charged political and economic global environment. In addition to the Ukraine/Russian war we must add the ongoing Israel/Hamas war which has not only absorbed vast additional resources but has sharply divided world opinion and has significantly distracted interest from the climate challenge. To these issues it is possible to insert the political climate in several major capitals, particularly the United States in the lead-up to the Presidential election and the election of leadership in some European capitals with far-right populist tendencies.

Since COP27 in Egypt, and the designation of the UAE, a major petrostate, as the next host of the Conference of Parties, there has been vigorous discussion as to merit of this decision. There was further consternation when the Head of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company, H.E. Dr. Sultan Al Jaber, was chosen to be the Chair of the Conference.

For those who have followed the COPs it is now commonplace for there to be twists and turns in the process. It is argued in some quarters that the Gulf States, including the UAE, are interested in the transition to a renewable energy future and may be interested in playing a positive role in addressing the climate challenge. In addition, it would be beneficial if these states could devote their vast resources to climate financing including the operationalization of the Loss and Damage Fund. Some commentators have, nevertheless observed, with concern, the increasing visible presence of oil company executives at the annual Conferences.

The journey to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement has been compared to a marathon and not to a sprint. In that vein, it is hoped that the Abu Dhabi COP will build on the earlier Conference and “move the ball forward”. The agenda of the COP should not be difficult to establish and will rotate around issues of mitigation, adaptation, phase out of fossil fuels and of course, finance

for climate action. At this COP, in addition to these issues, the Global Stocktake will take pride of place.

The Global Stocktake (GST) is scheduled to occur every five years under the Paris Agreement and is essentially to assess the collective progress towards achieving the objective of the Agreement. The year 2023 is the first official GST. The Global Stocktake will identify, at the global level, the gaps and opportunities which are present in the journey to net zero. The technical phase of the GST will be based on data collected over a two-year period, a technical assessment by experts and the production of a Synthesis Report. The Synthesis Report will be the basis of the deliberations of delegations during COP28.

The aggregate of the National Determined Contributions (NDCs) of individual countries provides a bottom-up picture of the state of the global climate. The Global Stocktake, by contrast, will give a top-down view and should produce greater transparency, accountability, and overall accuracy.

Delegations from the Global South in this COP will be particularly interested in the conclusions of the Transitional Committee tasked with the establishment of the Loss and Damage Fund. There have not been any early indications that those deliberations have been successfully concluded.

Continuing in the area of financing, the Green Climate Fund (GCF) is now under the leadership of Mafalda Duarte who has undertaken to simplify its procedures, to attract additional capital, and offer greater support to projects in developing countries. This is a welcome development and a useful mechanism in financing the transition to a renewable future.

As we await the start of COP28 we are confronted with a planet that is warming at an accelerated rate. This year 2023 has been the hottest year on record. In addition, we have seen significant climate events in countries and regions that have not experienced them be-

fore. In the Global South there is growing cynicism and frustration at the pace of progress. Tackling climate change is an existential threat and therefore the option to walk away from the process does not exist.

The quest for climate justice continues.

Francis Anthony McBarnette

Former Organization of American States Representative to Barbados, and Former Trinidad and Tobago Foreign Service Officer.