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Looking ahead - SPARC at COP26

The 26th Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC (COP26) has begun, and the SPARC team is there. We asked some of the programme members to share their hopes and expectations for COP26.

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The 26th Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC has begun. For the next two weeks, world leaders, negotiators, activists and representatives of a whole host of multilateral organisations, NGOs and businesses will gather in Glasgow to try to find a way forward for the global fight against climate change.

The SPARC team is there too, leading the conversation on the need for resilience building in farming and pastoralist communities in dryland and conflict-affected areas. After day one of the conference, we asked some of the team members to share their hopes and expectations for this COP.

Mark Redwood, SPARC Executive Director, Cowater International, Canada.



“The challenge with all COPs has been that the voices of the Global South are often limited and overwhelmed by international organisations speaking to each other.

I hope that this year – with the largely virtual format – we witness a radical shift in hearing more voices from those people who do not have the luxury or ability to travel to Glasgow. Most events are free, and provided they have a stable internet connection, we should be able to hear from many people that otherwise could not have attended. This is particularly important for the SPARC programme, working with pastoralists and agro-pastoralists in conflict-affected countries – groups that are frequently on the margins and excluded from international debates around climate adaptation.

Overall, I hope these voices help lead the COP26 negotiators to specific commitments on climate finance for adaptation, concrete steps to engage small and medium-sized enterprises, and ultimately help build more trust among both international and local partners.”

Colette Benoudji, People and Societies Team Lead, ODI, Chad.



"The great challenge at this COP26 is to find out what happened to the \$100 billion that should have been raised by 2020 to finance mitigation and adaptation measures. Will we stop procrastinating and save the Paris Agreement? Will egos make way for common sense and a little humanity to find consensus on article 6 of this agreement, which has given us so much hope?

Personally, I hope for greater recognition of the importance of sustainable and inclusive agro-pastoral development in the climate change negotiations.

I hope that adaptation financing is increased by the donors to allow states to support sustainable agriculture and pastoralism. Decision makers urgently need to create suitable governance systems, legal and support mechanisms for agro-pastoralists if they are to have any chance to find economically, socially and ecologically sustainable livelihoods. Governments must mobilize the necessary momentum because, according to the scientists,

the damage is already irreversible.

In the Sahelian region, where I am from, for example, agro-pastoralists who face the interconnected threats of insecurity, land degradation and the effects of climate change are already suffering numerous losses and damages."

Mairi Dupar, Communications and Engagement Lead, ODI, UK.



"We often talk in SPARC about the way shocks and stresses can compound upon each other, in the drylands of east and west Africa – causing extra challenges for communities and for marginalised groups within them. For example, climate change impacts, Covid-19, the desert locust plague and localised conflicts – although there are also myriad sustainable development opportunities in these areas and reasons for optimism.

Switch gears and let me take you to Glasgow, Scotland, for a moment, where delegates have been joining the first day of the [UNFCCC COP26](#) and where the SPARC team will be working hard to put the needs and concerns of dryland people in the spotlight. This will include highlighting the urgent need for more, [conflict-sensitive climate finance](#) to these regions and the imperative for programmes to be [designed with and for young people](#) and with [transboundary climate risks](#) in mind.

Over the weekend, I faced multiple Covid- and extreme weather-related challenges to reach the COP venue (and I didn't even have to navigate the flights, transits, pre-departure Covid tests and visa applications – as did my African colleagues). On Sunday, high wind blew trees across all the rail lines leading from England into Scotland and damaged overhead wires; there were floods and public transport was cancelled.

I had to turn around and go home. I finally reached Glasgow on Monday but struggled to register my negative Covid test with the authorities so I could gain entrance to the COP26 venue. It was a real conflux of extreme weather and Covid challenges here.

Now I have finally arrived and I can't wait to join the discussions inside. For those who have

made it to Glasgow from much further away than I did, I salute you! I and the rest of the SPARC team stand ready to work with you for an ambitious COP26 that mobilises higher amounts of finance, targeted far more widely to the countries and communities who need it, and programmed in ways that give women, young people and the most marginalised a real voice."

Find out more about our events at COP26 [here](#).

To learn more about our work, come and talk to us in Glasgow or [subscribe to our newsletter](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#).



Sir David Attenborough and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson at the launch of COP26
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