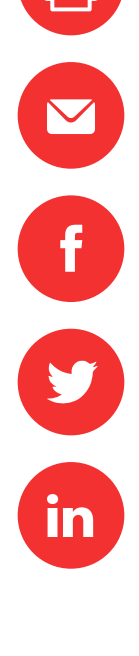


Marta Koch
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COP30 – How to include the voices of those most affected by climate change

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When it comes to climate policy, marginalised communities have historically been underrepresented in multilateral decision-making processes, writes Marta Koch, UK Youth Delegate at COP29. How can international climate events – such as COP30 in Brazil later this year – ensure greater inclusivity?

For years, we have known that the climate crisis will affect the most disadvantaged groups, from the **changing physical landscapes affecting island nations** to the **financial toll impacting women more than men**.

Voices from across these communities including those from Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) – have accused organisers UNFCCC’s UN’s Conference of the Parties (COP), of historically marginalising them from this annual platform for critical multilateral decision-making on global climate action.

COP29 Progress

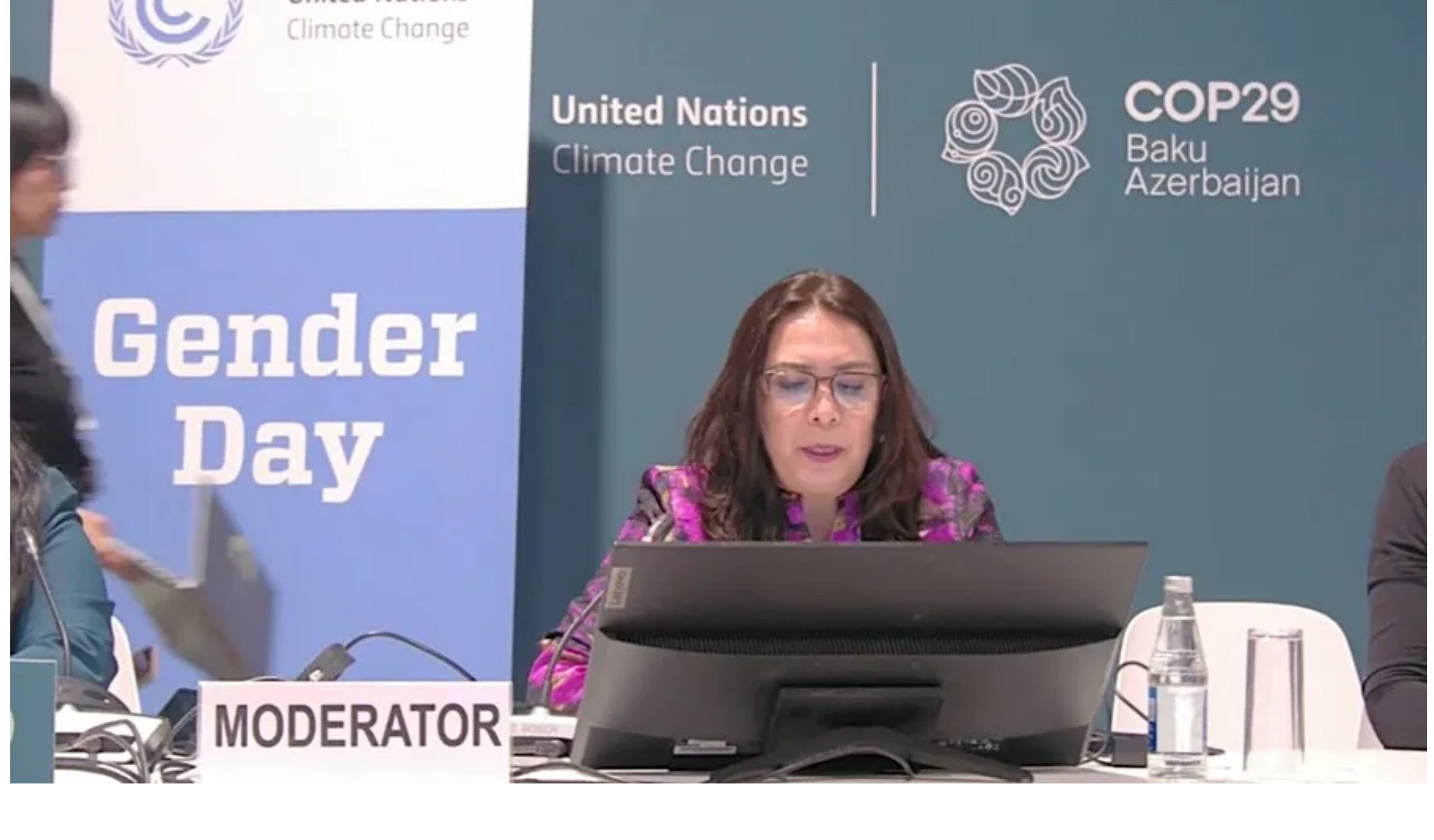
International climate conferences like COP29 play a critical role in supporting the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, adopted by all UN Member States in 2015 as “a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future”, particularly the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) focused on marginalised group inclusivity and equity in decision-making and opportunities as well as climate action capacity-building.

In particular, UN SDG Target 5.5 calls for ensuring women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life, Target 10.2 calls for the social, economic, and political inclusion of all, while Target 13.b emphasises capacity-building for climate action in LDCs and SIDS, with a particular focus on women, youth and local and marginalised communities.

At the most recent COP29 in November 2024 in Baku, Azerbaijan, I was struck by the visible prioritisation of marginalised group engagement, a commitment evident over the two weeks. From dedicated negotiations, summits, roundtables, forums, coordination meetings and side events, it was clear that ensuring the active involvement of marginalised communities was a central focus of the Presidency’s approach. Among the **65,000 total delegates**, making it the second-largest COP in history, the event hosted NGO and developing country **coalition party groupings** such as the Alliance of Small Island States, Least Developed Countries, African Group of Negotiators, G77 and Arab Group, as well as the new **NGO Coalition**, which allowed them to collaborate in advocating for the voices of those they represented.

There were significant numbers of youth delegates, including through the **COP29 Presidency Youth Delegates Program**, reflecting a growing engagement from young people.

UN Women reports that 35% of delegates were women and that the 5-year enhanced Lima work programme on gender and its gender action plan (GAP) was **successfully extended**.



Technical In-Session Dialogue On Gender In Transparency Mandated Event, COP29

The final New Collective Quantified Goal on Finance (NCQG) **draft document** clearly refers to the vulnerability of a broad range of marginalised groups, including “women and girls, children and youth, persons with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, migrants and refugees, climate-vulnerable communities and people in vulnerable situations” to climate change. The Global Environment Facility **document** explicitly mentioned women and girls and Indigenous peoples, while the **UAE just transition work programme** and **adaptation** documents went further by also referring to workers affected by a just transition, including informal workers, people in vulnerable situations and migrants.

However, there was criticism from marginalised group representatives of the **final so-called “finance COP” NCQG** decision to triple finance to developing countries to USD 300 billion annually by 2035 and secure efforts of all actors to work together to scale-up finance to developing countries, from public and private sources, to the amount of USD 1.3 trillion per year by 2035. This fell significantly short of the developing country needs “estimated at \$5.1–6.8 trillion for up until 2030 or \$455–584 billion per year” noted in the **final document**.

The agreement also avoided concrete demands, such as setting specific finance targets based on regions, income levels or spending types.

The African Group of Negotiators called it “too little, too late”, while the India representative dismissed the committed amount as “a paltry sum”. In addition, the **final Global Stocktake draft document** had no mention of gender-disaggregated data and the UAE Just Transition Work Programme was not adopted, significant because it recognised that women-dominated care work is increasing due to climate-induced resource scarcity.

Looking ahead to COP30 in Brazil

International high-profile climate events such as the COP meetings provide an opportunity to discuss and ensure inclusive and equitable climate action for marginalised communities who have been historically underrepresented in multilateral climate decision-making. Not only are these communities likely to suffer most due to the consequences of the climate crisis, but it is integral to the aspirations of the United Nations Sustainable Developments Goals on gender equality (5), reduced inequalities (10) and 13.b (climate action capacity-building in LDCs and SIDS for women, youth and local and marginalised communities).

Looking forward to COP30, due to take place in November 2025 in Belém, Brazil, it is essential that stakeholders and decision-makers from the state, private and third sectors integrate the principles of marginalised group inclusivity and equality into their frameworks.

This must not be merely symbolic inclusion – instead, the needs of marginalised groups most vulnerable to climate change must be prioritised, ensuring meaningful representation and robust capacity-building and financial support. Furthermore, the compounding challenges faced by groups with intersectional marginalised identities, such as women with disabilities or Indigenous youth affected by displacement, should be noted and accounted for.

By empowering these groups into the heart of global climate action decision-making and enabling them to lead in adaptation-building, we can create more inclusive and equitable pathways to addressing the climate crisis while advancing sustainable development for the benefit of all people and planet.

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