

Navigating the future

Sustainable leadership
reflections from COP28



Introduction

As the new year unfolds, it's time to reflect on one of the final major global events of 2023 and our attendance at COP28 – the “global stock take” that marks a critical halfway point towards the 2030 sustainability targets. These targets commit countries to limiting global warming to less than 2 degrees Celsius, ideally to 1.5 °C, compared to the pre-industrial era.

HH Global, as a leader in sustainable marketing, attended this pivotal event and brought back a trove of insights and a reinforced commitment to our planet and stakeholders. In a world where businesses are increasingly recognized as instrumental in the ongoing battle against climate change, COP28 stands as a testament to the transformative potential of sustainable business practices.



Understanding COP28

COP28 was the 28th instalment of the United Nations' annual climate conference. COP (“Conference of the Parties”) gathers member states of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) – the key international treaty for managing climate change – to assess global progress and negotiate action toward environmental sustainability.

This year, the UAE hosted the event in Dubai, welcoming participants from government delegates to NGOs and business leaders.

Overcoming controversy

COP28 opened against a backdrop of paradox and scrutiny. Not only was 2023 marked by the warmest temperatures on record, but the event also took place in a nation famed for its oil wealth. Controversies flared when the COP presidency was assumed by a prominent figure from the oil sector.

Such circumstances inevitably cast a shadow over the summit's authenticity. Yet, as the world looked on, the stakes were clear: the summit had to overcome these criticisms to pave the way for actionable solutions and sustainable leadership.

COP28: Key themes and discussions

At COP28, a number of key themes emerged, underscoring a collective commitment to sustainability solutions and sustainable leadership across nations and industries.

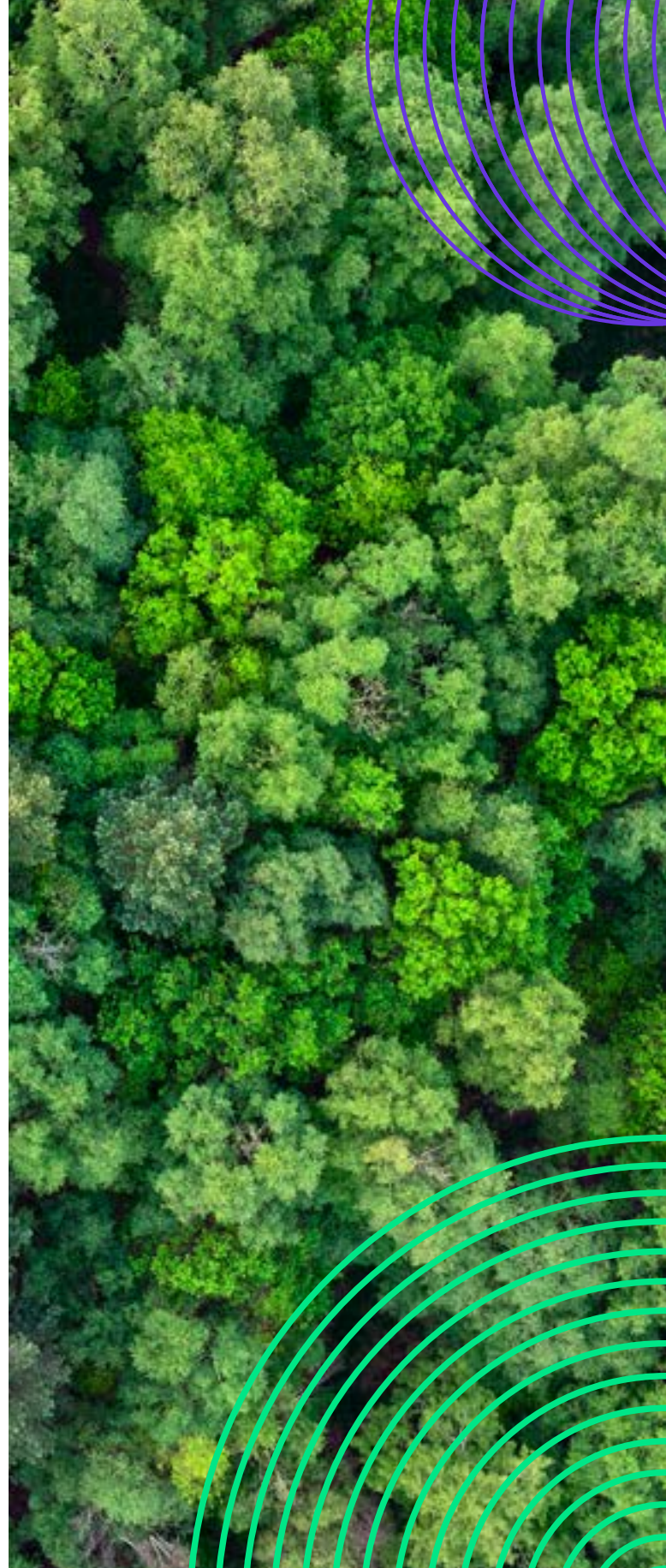
Turning the tide to renewable energy

COP28 was a charged environment, where every party, from oil and gas lobbyists to passionate protest groups, defended their corner. Yet a common thread emerged: a shared recognition that environmental sustainability is no longer a fringe concern but a universal imperative. We sensed a seismic shift as, for the first time, the conversation explicitly acknowledged fossil fuels in the final agreement, albeit with ambiguous language about “transitioning away” from fossil fuels in energy systems. This unprecedented consensus, secured by the collective will of 200 countries representing 90% of global carbon emissions, was a major achievement.

Additionally, over 100 countries endorsed tripling their reliance on renewable energy sources. There was also an agreement that further financial support and debt restructuring would be necessary to help developing nations invest in renewables.

Financial milestones and shortfalls

The financial architecture of sustainability solutions also came under the spotlight. A green light for the Loss and Damage fund was a leap forward, a tangible outcome from the one proposed during COP27. However, the pledged \$700 million is a far cry from the \$100 billion that the more vulnerable nations, bearing the brunt of climate change, were counting on.



Circular economy focus

The circular economy was again recognized as a key element in the fight against climate change. The final text underscored the transition to “sustainable lifestyles and sustainable patterns of consumption and production in efforts to address climate change, including through circular economy approaches.” Education is key to delivering this: businesses, including ours, need to continue to develop our consumption and production models to eliminate waste.

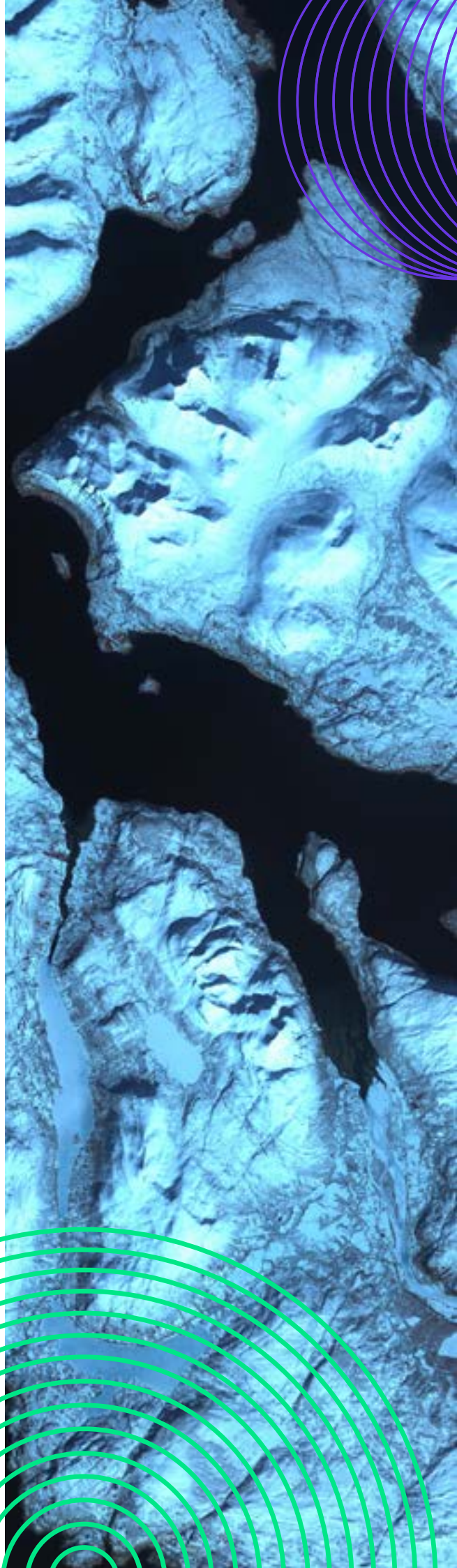
Safeguarding life on land

What did not receive as much attention but remained a cornerstone of the conference was the endorsement of a nature-based approach to combating climate change. The commitment to halt and reverse deforestation by 2030 highlighted the interconnected challenges of climate change and human health.

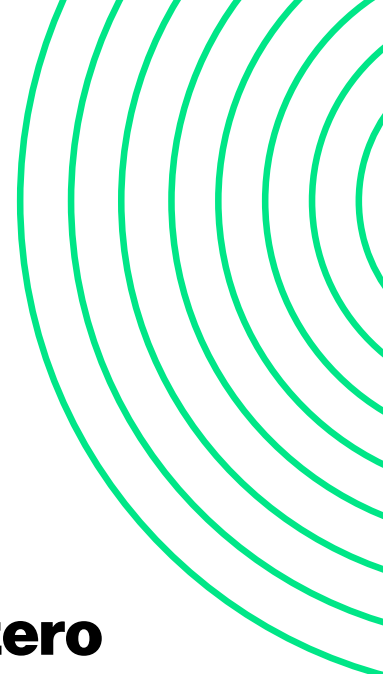
AI for climate action

Innovation in sustainability took center stage at this year’s summit, following on from the launch of a challenge from the UN Climate Change Technology Mechanism to develop AI-powered climate solutions. This initiative highlights AI’s potential to cut global emissions by 5–10% by 2030, positioning it as a key player in the transition to a more sustainable future. It’s a crucial aspect that often goes unnoticed amid concerns about job displacement through automation.

[To learn more, see this snapshot of COP28 from the UN Environment Program](#)



HH Global: What does COP28 mean for business?



At HH Global, our mission is to amplify the impact of brands while minimizing their environmental footprint – all while progressing our own sustainability goals. As members of the World Climate Foundation – the most influential global platform focused on action and impact on climate, biodiversity and health resilience – we were able to participate in multiple COP28 events.

This included the summit, which was described as the world's largest B2B sustainability workshop. Attended by many of our clients, this was fertile ground for exchanging innovative strategies and best practices.



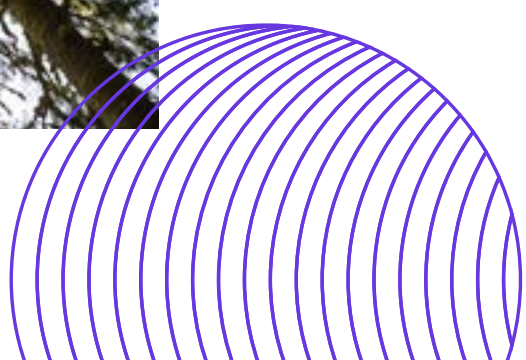
Beyond net zero

At COP28, the dialogue transcended the Net Zero conversation. It was clear that meeting Net Zero would not help us if our natural ecosystems collapsed. Instead, businesses must look at helping the planet holistically, considering strategies to stop deforestation, alleviate water stress and restore ecosystems, alongside ambitions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The recently implemented European Union Deforestation Regulations ([EUDR](#)) were a hot topic at the event, prompting businesses to reassess their supply chains with a newfound urgency.

Many businesses, including HH Global, have already begun to invest in nature-based solutions, calculating their reliance and impact on natural ecosystems in preparation for pending [Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures \(TNFD\)](#) requirements – expect to hear more about this in 2024.

Our pledge to environmental sustainability was further solidified at COP28 with the announcement of our [Conscious Creative program](#). As early signatories of The Climate Pledge in 2021, we are focused on accelerating change and achieving our science-based Net Zero Targets by 2040, alongside 463 other signatories across the globe. The overriding theme for COP28 from [The Climate Pledge](#) members was one of optimism, progress and collaboration.





Human rights at the heart of COP28

The summit was a reminder that human rights are inextricably linked to sustainability. It was also a reminder that collaboration, throughout the supply chain, is key to supporting human rights initiatives. The [HH Global Sustainable Procurement Framework \(SPF\)](#) and tools like [SEDEX](#) and [Ecovadis](#), are testaments to our commitment to responsible sourcing and fostering a culture of collaboration.

A shift towards data sharing

COP28 also highlighted the ever-growing importance of data in our journey towards sustainability, with side events, such as the one hosted by [Deloitte](#), offering tips and support – crucially that imperfect data should not be a barrier to getting started. An emphasis on reporting, metrics and the embracing of data standards highlights the level of transparency and accountability that is now demanded of us.

Conclusion

As we chart the course toward a sustainable future, the insights and experiences from COP28 are invaluable compass points to guide us forward. HH Global is not just setting targets – we are forging a path toward a sustainable and resilient world, bolstered by optimism, innovation in sustainability and a collaborative spirit.

Our role at COP28 extends beyond mere attendance; it is a reflection of our enduring commitment to **sustainability solutions** and **sustainable business practices**. It is a pledge to our planet and to every stakeholder that HH Global will continue to lead the charge in our industry, setting a precedent for sustainability that is both ambitious and achievable.

HH Global: Strategic sustainable solutions



In our road toward a sustainable future, we at HH Global are committed to collaborating with industry partners and clients, fostering a shared vision and innovative strategies for a more sustainable world.

Conscious Creative: A design revolution

At the heart of our innovative approach lies **Conscious Creative**. This initiative is a testament to our dedication to environmental sustainability, providing a platform that educates and empowers design teams. By embracing circular economy principles, educational resources and technology tools, we encourage a creative process – from inception to the end of the product lifecycle – that respects finite resources, while making a greater creative impact.

Sustainable procurement framework: Pioneering change

HH Global has long recognized that sustainability solutions are only as robust as the supply chains they support. By integrating supplier data with insights from our partners, our **Sustainable Procurement Framework (SPF)** helps educate, improve and measure complex supply chains. This is underpinned by the UN Sustainable Development Goals, which offer a roadmap for businesses to navigate the complexities of sustainable procurement.

Carbon calculator: Measuring for the better

In our quest for sustainable leadership, measurement is key. Our **Carbon Calculator** technology gives you the ability to set strategic sustainability goals based on assured CO2 data. Through our dashboards, our clients can track emissions and monitor progress against set targets.

To find out more about the actions we are taking in the pursuit of environmental sustainability, read our latest **Sustainability Report**.

Are you ready to embark on this journey with us? To learn more about our actions and how we can support your sustainability journey, get in touch. Together, let's make a lasting impact.