

My Reflections of COP 28



Embarking on my first international adventure, COP28 in Dubai, was a rollercoaster of emotions, combining the thrill of exploring a new country with the profound impact of participating in one of the world's largest environmental conferences. As my first COP experience at COP28 in Dubai was a journey of profound significance, both personally and professionally. As a person who mainly works for SDG 14, Life below Water, my motivation to attend COP28 was fueled by a desire to expand my network and knowledge in environmental and marine protection on a global scale. It marked not only my inaugural COP attendance but also my first venture beyond the borders of my home country.

COP28, the 28th Conference of the Parties, stands as a pivotal global event in the realm of environmental protection. It serves as a platform for nations to discuss and strategize actions to address climate change. For me, it was an opportunity to immerse myself in the ocean-related discussions that align with my passion for preserving marine ecosystems.



My focus at COP28 revolved around ocean-related discussions, where I delved into topics



ranging from ocean alkalinity to coral restoration, harnessing societal and private sector power for corals, and combating ocean plastics. The Ocean Pavilion became my haven, offering a wealth of knowledge and connections. Engaging with diverse individuals, including academics, activists, and students, provided a holistic understanding of global efforts in ocean conservation. Active participation in sessions on climate financing, youth empowerment, and education added depth to my COP28 experience. A notable event was the Youth Climate Education Meetup, at British Council Pavilion, fostering idea exchange among youth on climate change education. Moreover, a meet-up with a passionate young group from Taiwan has paved the way for future collaborations in ocean education between Sri Lanka and Taiwan.

A significant highlight was my participation as a panellist in the discussion on "Fostering Equitable

Just Transitions Through Nature-Based Solutions." Centered on Coral Conservation and Restoration, I shared insights with the experience and lessons learned from my coral restoration and conservation project. This was a happy and very proud moment for me as all the panelists were a group of inspiring women who are fighting battles for the ocean and their communities in their own communities. This experience underscored the importance of empowering women in the fight against climate change. Furthermore, I was able to join a high-level ocean reception

which allowed me to expand my network, fostering potential projects for Sri Lanka. Meeting dedicated activists further underscored the collective effort required to protect our planet.



While in Dubai, I marveled at the city's remarkable development but also noted the scarcity of green spaces. This experience stirred a renewed commitment to my home country, known as a biodiversity hotspot. Dubai's contrasting landscape set a new goal, motivating me to work even harder for the natural beauty of my homeland.



Many thanks to Women Divers Hall of Fame, especially all the sea sisters who supported me even though I haven't met them before. Without your generous support, I could not have been able to make it to COP28.

As I eagerly anticipate the next COP in Azerbaijan, I carry forward the lessons learned and connections forged at COP28. The journey has reinforced the need for collective action and empowerment, particularly in the realm of ocean conservation.

