

Reflections on COP30 and a Look Towards COP31

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Foreword

Seven months on from COP30, this timely publication, authored by Earth Fellow and PhD student Katherine Taylor, brings together insightful and candid reflections on the COP30 negotiations in Belem, Brazil from academic staff and Earth Fellows and looks ahead towards COP31 in Antalya, Turkey.

Katherine's work is the latest in an ongoing series of COP publications supporting University of Edinburgh partners, academics and students to engage with global climate negotiations and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process.



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"Reflections on COP30" follows "Advancing Action" - a collection of opinion pieces from climate experts across the University of Edinburgh, which was published just ahead of COP30 in November 2025.

We hope both publications help to unlock the complexities of the UNFCCC process and illustrate how University of Edinburgh experts are facing up to the climate crisis in all of its form. We also hope that they emphasise why we must collectively continue to keep the climate crisis at the top of the global agenda and support efforts to turn political commitments into action.

Report Overview

This report was written by Katherine Taylor, a PhD student at the University of Edinburgh, as part of an Earth Fellowship scheme hosted by the Edinburgh Earth Initiative based at the University of Edinburgh. The delivery of the report was supported by Lucy Young and Chloe Francis from the Edinburgh Earth Initiative.

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Framed as a 'COP of implementation' with a focus on realising solutions to meet existing agreements and commitments, the world had high expectations ahead of COP30¹. However, was the annual meeting a success? Did COP30 succeed in furthering climate action to keep the aims of the Paris Agreement within reach?

Six months on from negotiations, University of Edinburgh Earth Fellow, Katherine Taylor, and members of the University of Edinburgh, reflect on the outcomes of COP30, the progress that has been made since, and what's next for global climate negotiations in the lead-up towards COP31.

1. COP30: What Happened?

Ultimately, the outcomes of COP30 were mixed, with both successes and missed opportunities resulting from the discussions. Progress was made in key areas such as the Just Transition Work Programme, where the agreement of the Belém Action Mechanism will ensure workers' rights as we transition to a greener economy. Parties also agreed to increase the funding of adaptation efforts, committing to at least tripling adaptation finance by 2035. Several billions of pounds were pledged for the conservation of tropical rainforests, helping to protect some of the most biodiverse places on the planet and their large carbon stores. However, despite these agreements, all of which represent steps in the right direction, there is a feeling the pace of action and level of ambition displayed at COP meetings do not match the scale of the climate challenge.

At COP28, parties agreed to transition away from fossil fuels. Two annual meetings later, despite rising temperatures and increasing climate extremes, a clear way forward for implementing this commitment is yet to be agreed. Calls for a roadmap to transition away from fossil fuels gained support from parties and civil society, however during negotiations the topic quickly became contentious and parties left Belém without agreement. For several parties, particularly those most exposed to the impacts of climate change, this was a disappointing outcome, and raises questions over how, as a global community, we can further climate action.

2. COP30: The Background



COP30 took place between the 10th and 21st of November, 2025. Hosted in the city of Belém, considered the ‘gateway to the Amazon’, the choice of location provided a poignant reminder of the urgency of climate crisis and the cost of the inaction. Despite concerns over the availability and cost of accommodation delegates attended the meeting in the force – with close to 60,000 individuals registered, COP30 was the second largest annual meeting of the UNFCCC, only exceeded by COP28, held in Dubai in 2023². Attendees included delegates representing 193 countries and the European Union, and marked the largest participation of indigenous leaders in the history of the COP meetings³. Notably the US did not send an official delegation to the meeting, although representatives of subnational governments from across the country were in attendance^{4,5}.

Unlike COP29 the previous year where the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) on climate finance was agreed, there was no single issue on the agenda for COP30. However, this did not limit the ambitions of the Presidency who identified several areas of focus ahead of the conference. These included increasing adaptation efforts, the conservation of tropical forests, scaling-up climate finance, and implementing the findings of the first Global Stocktake^{6,7,8,9}.

Ahead of COP30, the presidency invited stakeholders from across society to join the global ‘mutirão’ against climate change⁹. ‘Mutirão’, originally ‘Motirõ’ in Tupi-Guarani, means a community coming together to work towards a shared goal^{10,11}. In the lead-up to the meeting, this initiative served as an important reminder of the power of collective action and the role to be played by actors from across all areas of society in realising change.

3. The Key Outcomes of COP30

The Global Mutirão

The primary outcome of COP30 was the adoption of the Global Mutirão¹². The Global Mutirão covered a range of measures to accelerate climate action, although in the agreement parties largely restated their commitment to existing agreements and initiatives as opposed to establishing new ones. In the text, parties reaffirmed their commitment to the 1.5°C and 2°C targets initially specified in the Paris Agreement, emphasised the need for scaling up of climate finance, and encouraged greater ambition in nationally determined contributions (NDCs)¹².

The increasing need for action was reflected in the launch of the Global Implementation Accelerator (GIA) as a component



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of the Global Mutirão. This voluntary initiative, which will be coordinated by the Presidencies of COP30 and COP31 will support parties in implementing both their NDCs and their National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) in order to accelerate action to 'keep 1.5°C within reach'¹². The agreement of the GIA demonstrates that parties were able to collectively recognise the need for global coordinated action. However, how effective this commitment will be, remains to be seen. The COP30 and COP31 Presidencies will report on their progress at the next COP meeting in November, where we will see if the GIA has been successful in shifting focus towards implementation.

Notably absent from the Global Mutirão were roadmaps to support the transition away from fossil fuels and the halting of deforestation, both of which had been called for by Brazil in the run-up to COP30¹³. In particular, the movement to agree a roadmap outlining how countries may transition away from fossil fuels gained momentum during the conference, and if agreed would signal tangible progress in collectively addressing the primary driver of the climate crisis^{13, 14}. However, parties left Belém unable to reach a consensus on either issue.

The COP30 Presidency therefore launched two voluntary initiatives, the first aiming to tackle deforestation and the second to facilitate the fossil fuel transition, which will be progressed outside of the formally negotiated outcomes.

The Belém Action Mechanism

As part of the Just Transition Work Programme (JTWP), parties agreed to develop a Just Transition mechanism, widely referred to as the Belém Action Mechanism¹⁵. This was initially proposed by Civil Society groups to ensure a shared understanding of the Just Transition, facilitate coordination of efforts and knowledge sharing, and provide finance and capacity building where they are required^{16,17}. The mechanism was put forward during negotiations by the Group of 77 (G77) coalition and China, and although it faced opposition from some parties who instead proposed using existing initiatives to deliver JTWP, was eventually agreed^{18,19}.

This has been hailed as a landmark agreement which will ensure workers' rights and promote equitable outcomes as the global community transitions away from fossil fuels. Further discussions on how to operationalise the mechanism are expected to take place at the 64th meeting of the Subsidiary Bodies to the UNFCCC in June¹⁵.

The Paris Agreement states that climate finance should be balanced between both mitigation and adaptation²⁰. However, historically mitigation has received far greater financing than adaptation, leaving communities already vulnerable to the impacts of climate change²¹. In the Glasgow Climate Pact of COP26, developed countries committed to doubling annual adaptation finance relative to 2019 levels, reaching \$40 billion by 2025^{22,23}. With this agreement reaching the end of its term, a focus on scaling up adaptation finance and a new agreement were anticipated at COP30^{24,25}.

At COP30, parties agreed to ‘at least triple adaptation finance by 2035’¹². The \$40 billion target from Glasgow has been interpreted as the baseline for this target in the media, meaning the overall target for adaptation funding by 2035 would be equivalent to \$120 billion²⁶. The increase in adaptation funding that this represents will be crucial to addressing the imbalance between mitigation and adaptation, and in helping those countries most vulnerable to climate change in addressing its impacts. However, meeting this target will be a challenge. In 2023, public finance for adaptation in developing countries was \$26 billion, marking a decrease of \$2 billion from the previous year, in spite of the increasing urgency for adaptation measures²⁷.

In addition, whilst the tripling of adaptation finance may seem like a large increase in support, it remains insufficient to meet adaptation needs^{27,28}. In their adaptation gap report, the United Nations Environment Programme estimate that by 2035, developing countries will require at least \$310 billion of adaptation finance, a figure approximately twelve times greater than current levels of public support²⁷.

Roadmaps on the Fossil Fuel Transition and Deforestation

At the World Leader’s Summit held prior to COP30, the President of Brazil, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, called for parties to agree on roadmaps to transition away from fossil fuels and halt deforestation. Although the two initiatives gained support across the negotiations, the roadmap on fossil fuels in particular became a contentious issue and neither initiative was directly referenced in the final text. Both roadmaps will be taken forward by the COP30 Presidency outside of the official negotiation process.

Despite the inability of parties to agree on either roadmap at COP30, it appears that a ‘coalition of the willing’ are making real progress on furthering the fossil fuel transition outside of the official UNFCCC process²⁹. In April of 2026, Colombia and the Netherlands jointly held the First Conference on the Transition Away from Fossil Fuels. Such a meeting may

present an alternative to the traditional COP process, capable of delivering change with greater urgency. The outcomes of this meeting and its implications for the process of global climate negotiations are considered in section 6.



4. A Decade Since Paris

The global community approached COP30 with a real sense of anticipation. The meeting marked the 10th anniversary of the Paris Agreement, serving as an important reminder of the progress that has been made so far in addressing climate change, and the emissions avoided, but also of the substantial progress that is urgently required but yet to be made. In signing the Paris Agreement, parties committed to holding increases in global average temperatures well below 2°C above the pre-industrial baseline, and preferably to below 1.5°C²⁰. This was a landmark negotiation, committing parties to collectively addressing the causes and impacts of the climate crisis whilst reflecting the principle of common but differentiated responsibility²⁰. However, a decade on, it is important for the global community to ask, what has the Paris Agreement achieved so far?

Over the last ten years, global average surface temperatures have continued to rise and the impacts of this are increasingly felt via extreme events. 2025 marked another year of global climate extremes – wildfires in California, Turkey, Cyprus and Greece^{30,31}; extreme heat in parts of South Sudan, Uganda and Kenya^{32,33}; and heavy rainfall leading to flooding in Pakistan and Mexico^{34,35}. These events demonstrate that the global community needs to continue to pursue ambitious mitigation measures; however, adaption to more frequent and intense extremes events is increasingly necessary. The impacts of global warming on the climate are clear, and every tenth of a degree of warming matters to minimise future losses.

However, whilst the future ahead may look daunting, it is important to recognise what the Paris Agreement has achieved and the warming avoided through the action that parties have taken since it was put in place. The Paris Agreement has helped us to avoid the worst impacts of climate change – in the absence of the agreement, estimates of warming by the end of the century were just below 4°C³⁶. However, if the most recent round of NDC's were to be implemented, this number decreases to between 2.3-2.5°C³⁶. Whilst this represents substantial progress, warming at the lower range of this estimate remains far above the 'safe' limits of climate change, and highlights the remaining shortfalls between our ambitions and actions.

Parties therefore need to reflect this ambition, not only in their commitments via their NDCs, but also via the implementation of these policies and commitment to collective action.



What about the 1.5°C Target?

In the Global Mutirão, parties reiterated their commitment to the 1.5°C goal as initially stated in the Paris Agreement. However, this statement increasingly feels at odds with reality. In 2024, temperatures were $1.55^{\circ}\text{C} \pm 0.13^{\circ}\text{C}$ above the 1850-1900 average, marking the warmest year in the instrumental record³⁷.

It is important to remember in interpreting this number that analysis of the climate considers change over several years, and that a single year exceeding the 1.5°C threshold does not therefore mean we have breached the Paris Agreement³⁷. However, it is evident that the temperatures of 2024 are not an anomaly. According to the World Meteorological Organisation, the last 11 years were the 11 warmest on record³⁸. This observed warming trend is set to continue. At the time of the Paris Agreement, it was projected that humanity would cross the 1.5°C target in 2045; however, the Copernicus Climate Change Service now project that this milestone will be reached by just 2029³⁹. It is well established that the consequences of a 1.5°C world are less than those one in which we see 2°C of warming, however with this lower threshold fast approaching, it is necessary for us to ask what happens when we cross 1.5°C?

Overshooting the 1.5°C Target

According to the Global Carbon Budget 2025, 'the remaining carbon budget from the beginning of 2026 for a 50% likelihood to limit warming to 1.5°C is nearly exhausted'⁴⁰. Only 170 gigatons of CO₂ remain in the budget in order to limit warming to 1.5°C, equivalent to only four years of emissions at 2025 levels⁴⁰, breaching the Paris Agreement threshold therefore increasingly seems inevitable.

The potential overshoot of the 1.5°C target was for the first time acknowledged in an official COP text, with parties resolving 'to limit both the magnitude and duration of any temperature overshoot'^{12,18,41}. This would mean a temporary exceedance of 1.5°C followed by a subsequent decrease of temperatures enabled through carbon dioxide removal (CDR) technology, such as afforestation, peatland restoration, and direct air capture of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere^{42,43}. However, CDR beyond 1.5°C does not prevent dangerous climate change – several parts of the Earth system, including ice sheets and the permafrost, may have tipping points at approximately this level of warming. Crossing such tipping points has the potential to trigger irreversible changes to the earth system⁴⁴.

What are Tipping Points?

Climate change can cause abrupt and irreversible changes in, for example, ocean currents, ice sheets, forests or permafrost, and this may occur rapidly relative to how this system normally changes. This is because the change, once underway, self-reinforces. These outcomes are captured under the term of tipping points. It is uncertain at what temperature tipping points may be breached; however, if these thresholds are crossed, it is thought the impacts will lead to widespread socioeconomic consequences.



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One of the most well studied examples is a key current in the North Atlantic, which could sharply reduce due to warming and freshening of the surface water. This then changes the seasonal temperature in the North Atlantic area and the location of rainbands in the tropics, and such ocean current shutdowns have occurred in past climates. Other examples are accelerated melting of ice sheets, which causes accelerated global sea level rise; accelerated thaw of permafrost; or dieback of tropical forests and a transition to mixed savanna forest biomes. The latter has implications for regional climate, carbon release and large scale water cycling. The key issue around tipping points is that they are difficult to reverse, once triggered. Some of them also involve release of carbon and hence can work against mitigation efforts.

5. The Action Agenda - A Bottom-Up Approach to Climate

In the months preceding COP30, the Brazilian Presidency made it clear that this was to be a COP of implementation. The Action Agenda was put forward as a mechanism to facilitate accelerated implementation of climate action through the involvement of non-party stakeholders from all areas of society¹. In particular, the Action Agenda aims to implement and scale initiatives for climate action in line with the findings of the first Global Stocktake⁴⁵. This includes initiatives which facilitate emissions reductions, adaptation to the impacts of climate change, and aid the transition towards sustainable economies through capacity building and technology transfer⁴⁵.

The History of the Action Agenda



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The importance of non-party stakeholders has long been recognised in the UNFCCC – the concept of the Action Agenda was first introduced as the ‘Lima-Paris Action Agenda’ (LPAA) in 2014 to facilitate ‘universal mobilisation’ that extended the impetus for climate action beyond national-level governments⁴⁶. This initiative crucially recognised the importance of non-state actors, from NGOs, to local and regional governments, to investors, and individuals in driving societal change⁴⁶.

The LPAA was later followed by the Marrakech Partnership for Climate Action which was launched at COP22 and aimed to support collaboration between party and non-party stakeholders for climate action. The Improved Marrakech Partnership for Climate Action set out to further the impacts of this initial agreement through to 2025. At COP29 parties agreed to continue the Marrakech partnership for a further five years^{47,48}, leading to the development of the Global Climate Action Agenda 2026-2030 (GCAA). Guided by the Paris Agreement and the Global Stocktake, this initiative is focused on moving from negotiations to implementation; by aligning existing initiatives with the policy targets that they can help to address, the Action Agenda is intended to provide increased support for and therefore opportunities to scale climate solutions, accelerating progress⁴⁹.

The Global Climate Action Agenda 2026-2030

The Action Agenda has been structured around the following six thematic axes: transitioning energy, industry and transport; stewarding forests, oceans and biodiversity; transforming agriculture and food systems; building resilience for cities, infrastructure, and water; fostering human and social development; and, unleashing enablers and accelerators for climate action⁴⁵. Between them, the axes cover the sectors most in need of widespread decarbonisation, and some of those most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

Organised under the six thematic axes, the GCAA also has thirty key objectives, ranging from tripling renewable energy capacity to ensuring adequate access to energy and food, and reducing non-CO₂ greenhouse gases⁴⁵. Each objective will be addressed by a dedicated activation group, made up of a ‘coalition of actors’ which will identify barriers to progress and opportunities for collaboration, catalysing climate action^{49,50}. The progress of the activation groups will be reviewed in an annual cycle, helping to inform future areas of focus⁴⁹. As of December 2025, 482 voluntary initiatives had been organised into 30 activation groups to facilitate progress towards the objectives of the GCAA⁵¹.

What did the Global Climate Action Agenda Achieve at COP30?



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The [Global Climate Action Agenda at COP30 Outcomes Report](#) details the initiatives which are being supported by the GCAA. These span across national borders and sectors of the economy, and are helping to address some of the most significant barriers to climate action⁵¹.

For example, under axis 1 'transitioning energy, industry and transport', is the 'Belém Declaration for Green Industrialization'⁵¹. The 12 countries who signed the agreement have committed to support and enhance green industrialisation, focusing on areas such as aligning finances and technical assistance to where it is needed, enabling the co-development of technology, and sharing technical outputs⁵².

Under axis 2, 'stewarding forests, oceans and biodiversity', the Call to Action on Integrated Fire Management and Wildfire Resilience was signed by over 50 countries and organisations⁵³. Climate change has increased the frequency and severity of wildfires, and these risks will continue to rise with global temperatures. This initiative will promote a proactive and prevention-focused approach to fire management helping to protect biodiversity, support restoration of landscapes affected by wildfires, and minimise their impacts on people and the environment⁵⁴.

The Strengthening Higher Education for Accelerated Climate Action collaboration, an initiative included under axis 5 of the GCAA, aims to enable the higher education sector to play a greater role in facilitating climate action. Higher education institutions represent hubs of knowledge with great value in addressing both the causes and impacts of climate change. Increasing the reach of this knowledge and promoting collaboration can increase the influence of the education sector in facilitating climate action. The Strengthening Higher Education for Accelerated Climate Action collaboration initiative will be delivered via actions such as increasing connectivity across the sector, ensuring funding for education as a form of climate action, and ensuring that education supports climate literacy and public engagement⁵⁵.

The [University of Edinburgh Advancing Action publication](#), which identified relevant research taking place at the University under the six themes of the action agenda, exemplifies how research can help to increase our understanding and manage the impacts of global environmental challenges.

The Global Climate Action Agenda is facilitated through an annual five-step implementation cycle – review, coordinate, measure, showcase and scale⁴⁹. According to the GCAA COP30 outcomes report, activation groups had submitted 117 plans to accelerate solutions, which aim to address barriers to scaling climate action via ‘systems change levers’ such as supply, demand and capacity building⁴⁹.

The activation groups working to address the objectives of the GCAA met for the first time in January of this year, and will meet a further three times before COP31. The review step of the annual implementation cycle is underway, taking stock of the progress made in the first year of the GCAA and opportunities as it enters its second, increasing the impact of the GCAA each year⁵⁶.

6. Climate Finance — A Cross-Cutting Issue

The provision of adequate climate finance has long been a contentious topic at UNFCCC negotiations, and this remained the case in 2025. The NCQG on climate finance was agreed the previous year at COP29; parties agreed to triple the previous target, therefore aiming to provide developing nations with \$300 billion in climate finance by 2035 with developed nations ‘taking the lead’^{57,58}. Parties also agreed to the more ambitious target of mobilising \$1.3 trillion in climate finance for developing nations from all public and private sources^{57,58}. However, with developed nations historically not meeting the agreed climate finance target and the core goal significantly less than developing nation’s estimated finance needs, several parties criticised the lack of ambition in the agreed numbers.

This feeling persisted into 2025 – at the 62nd meeting of the subsidiary bodies in June, disappointment in the NCQG and the approach of developed nations to article 9.1 of the Paris Agreement, was clear. The like-minded developing countries (LMDCs) group therefore requested that implementation of article 9.1 of the Paris Agreement and unilateral trade measures were both added to the agenda, leading to an agenda fight that delayed the mid-year negotiations for close to two days⁵⁹. Neither climate finance nor unilateral trade measures were included as items on the agenda for SB62 and were instead considered within discussions relating to the JTWP.

The Baku to Belém Roadmap

Prior to COP30, the Presidency presented the Baku to Belém roadmap, which outlines how the \$1.3 trillion annual climate finance goal might be met by 2035⁶⁰. The report states that mobilising such a level of finance is achievable, however will necessitate ‘the development of new and innovative sources of capital’ in addition to traditional funding mechanisms⁶¹. The report identified five action fronts which should be priorities for the scaling up of climate finance⁶². These include *replenishing* available climate finance including grants and other forms of low-cost capital, *rebalancing* unsustainable debt burdens via schemes such as debt-for-nature swaps, and *reshaping* financial systems to enable capital flows.

The report also identifies short-term actions that could be taken with a view of meeting the 2035 target. Some of these include developing concrete pathways outlining how to reach the \$1.3 trillion goal, developed countries establishing a delivery plan for the \$300 billion that they are committed to provide annually by 2035, assessing the potential to expand debt-for-nature and debt-for-climate swaps, and increasing reporting from companies and investors on how they are helping to meet national NDC’s and NAP’s⁶¹. Throughout 2026, the Presidencies of Azerbaijan and Brazil will be holding sessions with stakeholders to assess how the action fronts identified in the Baku to Belém roadmap can be progressed.

However, several developed economies have recently announced cuts to their international aid budgets and in January 2026, the US announced it’s withdrawal from the Green Climate Fund^{63, 64}. Mobilising the level of funding set out in the NCQG requires large-scale action, making these current trends concerning at a time where accessible climate finance is increasingly needed.

Climate Finance at COP30 and a Look Forward

COP30 in Belém delivered a mixed but consequential set of climate finance outcomes. Countries reaffirmed the pathway set in Baku to mobilise at least \$300 billion annually for developing nations by 2035, alongside the broader \$1.3 trillion goal from public and private sources. The agreement to triple adaptation finance by 2035 was also a meaningful step forward after years of stalled conversations though many vulnerable nations had pushed for 2030, and that five-year delay matters to communities already living with climate impacts.



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The most pressing question hanging over these commitments is delivery. Existing funds remain slow and difficult to access, and many developing countries have questioned whether pledged resources can be mobilised without the full engagement of all major economies. COP31 in Antalya must focus on closing that implementation gap. For those of us working on country readiness to mobilise and access climate finance, Belém was a reminder that ambition at the negotiating table means little without the institutional capacity, pipelines, and simplified pathways that allow resources to actually reach the countries that need them most.

7. Fossil Fuels — Where do we go from here?

The outcome of the first global stocktake, agreed at COP28, called upon parties to ‘transition away from fossil fuels in energy systems, in a just, orderly, and equitable manner’^{65,66}. However, despite this landmark commitment, little action has so far been taken on the global stage to realise this ambition and the wider goals which depend on it. With the Presidency’s emphasis on implementation, this commitment took centre stage at the COP30 negotiations.

During COP30, parties showed their support for the idea of a fossil fuel roadmap to lay out a clearer strategy to enable the COP28 commitment. Although not on the official agenda for the meeting, the proposal quickly gained momentum during its course; over 80

Countries from across the socioeconomic spectrum including Colombia, the UK, Germany, and Kenya expressed their support for the roadmap^{18,67}.



Although an early draft of the Global Mutirão contained a reference to the roadmap, the proposal quickly became a point of contention and was subsequently removed from the text. Over 80 parties were initially listed as opposed to the fossil fuel roadmap, however it has since become clear that the reported figures were inaccurate, with some parties listed as both in favour and against the initiative¹⁸. Parties opposed to the roadmap reportedly felt that this issue had been addressed at COP28 and further discussion around the issue impinged upon national sovereignty⁶⁸.

A Roadmap to Transition Away from Fossil Fuels

Whilst many parties and the international community voiced their frustration and disappointment at the lack of progress made in delivering the fossil fuel roadmap, this widespread support it received from such a significant number of parties demonstrates a willingness for change⁶⁹. Although the roadmap may not be included in the final negotiating text, the initiative will instead be taken forward by the Brazilian Presidency outside of formal negotiations, as part of a voluntary process.

The fossil fuel roadmap, which will be presented at COP31, will identify barriers to the energy transition, enabling factors, and best practices, helping to accelerate progress in this area whilst recognising different national circumstances and constraints⁷⁰. The Presidency is currently holding consultations with parties and wider stakeholders discussing these areas. The initiative marks an important milestone in moving the UAE Consensus towards implementation. How the findings of the roadmap are received and built upon at COP31 will play a key role in determining how the international community manages the fossil fuel transition, and whether this is a collective effort or instead led by the 'coalition of the willing' who attended the First Global Conference on Transitioning Away From Fossil Fuels that took place earlier this year⁷¹.

An Outlook on the Phase-Out of Fossil Fuels

COP30, held in Belém, Brazil, in November 2025, was a conference of mixed results, commendable for its contribution to the strengthening of multilateral climate cooperation in such a turbulent geopolitical dispensation, yet deeply frustrating in its failure to deliver on the energy transition.

The decisions taken in Belém delivered important advances in scaling up climate finance, accelerating the implementation of the Paris Agreement, and capitalisation of the loss and damage fund. The adopted text calls for mobilising at least \$1.3 trillion per year by 2035 for climate action, alongside tripling adaptation finance. These are noteworthy outcomes.

Yet on the most pressing issue, fossil fuels, the conference left much to be desired. Expectations were high for a concrete, time-bound roadmap to phase out fossil fuels, but the outcome document avoided any firm commitment on exiting them. The stand-off on fossil fuels places significant pressure on the remainder of the Brazilian COP presidency to deliver roadmaps and bring more countries on board by COP31.

Looking ahead, COP31 is scheduled for November 9–20, 2026, in Antalya, Türkiye. Around 80 countries are backing fossil fuel phase-out language, and key moments, from the Petersberg Climate Dialogue to the First Conference on the Transition Away from Fossil Fuels held in Santa Marta, Colombia, and the Bonn climate meetings have offered opportunities to build consensus ahead of COP31. The energy transition cannot wait for another deferred roadmap. Antalya must be where ambition catches up with the urgency of our time.



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8. Dealing with Deforestation

The Brazilian Presidency made it clear that tackling deforestation would be one of the key priorities of COP30. Not only did President Lula call for the roadmap to reduce deforestation ahead of the meeting, but Brazil first proposed the Tropical Forest Forever Fund (TFFF), which was launched at COP30, back in 2023 at COP28. The TFFF was

proposed with the intention of encouraging tropical forest nations to reduce deforestation and maintain existing areas of forest, building on the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) scheme launched in 2013 at COP19.



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Whilst the REDD+ framework provides a financial incentive to developing countries for reductions in deforestation, the TFFF aims to promote the protection of existing forests by providing payment to tropical forest countries for the conservation and restoration of forested landscapes⁷³. In this way, the TFFF helps to address some of the previous issues identified with REDD+.

The TFFF was founded on the basis of a unique funding model for conservation, which relies on investment returns as opposed to grants⁷⁴. The initial capital raised from a mix of sovereign, private and philanthropic investors will be invested and generate returns that will be paid out to tropical forest countries where the deforestation rate is below 0.5% and the trend in deforestation is decreasing⁷⁵.

Over 50 countries, made up of 19 potential investors and 34 tropical forest nations endorsed the TFFF at COP30⁷⁶. Initial pledges to the fund were equivalent to over \$5.5 billion, and Germany has subsequently pledged a further \$1 billion over the next ten years subject to approval from the parliament^{77, 78}. Whilst this is a significant sum of money, it is significantly less than the ambitious target of \$125 billion initially set by the Presidency who hoped to raise \$25 billion from government investments in order to secure a further \$100 billion investment from private markets⁷⁴.

However, can economic growth, which typically relies on greater consumption of resources, really be used to finance effective conservation? Hannah Wauchope, from the School of GeoSciences, considers this question in the [University of Edinburgh's Advancing Action](#) publication.

9. What's Happened Since COP30?

The Fossil Fuel Roadmap Makes Progress — The Global Conference on Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuels

For those frustrated by the collapse of the fossil fuel roadmap at COP30, the first Global Conference on Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuels offers a sense of hope. Organised by the governments of Colombia and the Netherlands, an invited 'coalition of the willing'

made up of 57 countries⁷⁹, met in Santa Marta, Colombia, in April of this year to 'identify and advance enabling pathways to implement a progressive transition away from fossil fuels'⁸⁰. The meeting took place between the 24-29th of April and included a science-focused pre-meeting between the 24-25th, attended by 400 academics⁷⁹.

Whilst key players, such as the United States, India, and China may have not been in attendance at these talks, the countries that were present represented a third of the global GDP, and therefore the potential to make substantive change⁸¹. The conference was centred around three key themes, of 'reducing economic dependence on fossil fuels, transforming supply and demand, and advancing international cooperation'⁸¹, all of which will be key factors in enabling the fossil fuel transition.

The meeting seemed to produce some concrete outcomes in kickstarting the process of collectively moving away from fossil fuels. Countries agreed that a second summit would be held in Tuvalu in 2027, co-hosted by the governments of Tuvalu and Ireland, and the countries established three workstreams to focus on going forwards⁸¹:

- Developing national fossil fuel roadmaps aligned to countries NDC's
- Adjusting the finance system to support the fossil fuel transition
- Working towards a fossil fuel-free trade system

Progress against the workstreams will be assessed at the second meeting next year.

Over the course of the meeting, both Colombia and France announced that they had developed roadmaps to support their transition away from fossil fuels, hopefully inspiring others to do the same⁷⁹. In addition, a collection of scientists identified '12 Action Insights', representing priorities and opportunities for the fossil fuel transition.

Following the collapse of the fossil fuel roadmap talks at COP, the outcomes of this conference, which are accompanied by clear next steps, provide a renewed sense of action. Whether countries will action the discussions that took place at the conference remains to be seen. However, the shared understanding of the need for change surely played a role in the delivery of substantive outcomes. Turning promises into action is increasingly important if we are to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. By bringing together parties with a shared desire for change, the Global Conference on Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuels may present a turning point in delivering effective change by stepping outside of the

of the constraints of the COP negotiation process. However, this raises questions over how climate action should be negotiated and delivered going forward, and whether the UNFCCC process remains effective for bringing about change at the pace that is required.



10. The Road to COP31

COP31 will be hosted in Antalya, Türkiye between the 9-20th of November 2026. With both Türkiye and Australia vying for the Presidency of COP31, the agreed arrangement is a compromise between the two nations. In this unique agreement, Türkiye will hold the Presidency of COP31 whilst a representative from Australia will act as the 'President of Negotiations at the meeting'⁸².

In its bid for COP31, Australia intended to co-host the meeting with Pacific Island nations, highlighting how the impacts of climate change are already being felt in one of the most exposed regions in the world⁸³. As part of their arrangement, Türkiye and Australia have instead agreed to host a pre-COP meeting in Fiji, and a leaders' meeting in Tuvalu, in October of 2026^{84,85}. These meetings will play a role in shaping the agenda for COP31⁸⁶.

What's on the Agenda for COP31?

Murat Kurum, the President-Designate for COP31, emphasised in his first letter that Türkiye's presidency would be guided by the principles of 'dialogue, consensus and action'⁸⁵. Following on from the implementation-focused approach of the Brazilian Presidency, Türkiye would like COP31 to be the 'COP of the Future', similarly aiming to progress commitments into action⁸⁵.

The Action Agenda for COP31 will be focused around nine key areas including⁸⁵:

- Strengthening the approach to zero waste and the circular economy
- Increasing youth participation
- Accelerating the clean energy transition
- Improving the financial mechanisms to support climate change
- Increasing the resilience of vulnerable areas
- Promoting a cross-sectoral approach to address climate change

In addition, given that COP31 will be co-hosted with Australia, the vulnerability of Small Island Developing States (SIDs) is anticipated to be another key area of focus. COP31 will include a dedicated session on the financial requirements of SIDs, providing an opportunity for pledges to be made to the Pacific Resilience Facility⁸⁷, a funding mechanism to increase the resilience of communities in the Pacific⁸⁸.

A Focus on Zero Waste?

Zero waste so far appears to be a top priority for COP31, with several press releases on the official website concerned with the work of the Zero Waste Foundation⁸⁹. The Zero Waste Forum 2026 will be held in Istanbul between the 5-7th of June this year. The theme of the meeting is the 'Road to Antalya: Zero Waste as Climate Action' and will be focused on the role of zero waste as a tool for climate action, and will provide an opportunity for dialogue ahead of COP31 later in the year⁹⁰.

It is hoped that the Zero Waste Forum will facilitate the development of solutions tackling issues such as city-scale initiatives and the management of organic waste that can be built upon at COP31. In particular, reducing food waste and methane emissions have been highlighted as a critical area ahead of the November meeting⁹⁰. However, Türkiye appears to be adopting an economy-wide view of zero waste, calling on sectors including transport and housing to consider sustainable development in their operations^{91,92}.

Reflections Ahead of COP31

Reflecting on COP30, it is clear that the outcomes of the meeting are mixed. The Bélem Action Mechanism is one example of success which will help to ensure any transition away from fossil fuels is implemented in a just and equitable way. Similarly, the Global Climate Action Agenda Outcomes Report details countless solutions already working to accelerate climate action.

Whilst the 1.5°C and 2°C targets identified in the Paris Agreement represent what should be limits to warming, crossing the 1.5°C goal feels increasingly inevitable and stresses the need for rapid transformation. Whilst the inability of parties to agree on a roadmap to transition away from fossil fuels at COP30 undermines these targets, the progress made at The First

Global Conference on Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuels suggests there may be an alternative path forward for those



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countries who want to move with more urgency than recent COP meetings have allowed. As we increasingly feel the impacts of climate change, the need for rapid cuts to greenhouse gas remains clear. COP31 should therefore take forward the approach of COP30, focusing on delivering key tangible outcomes as opposed to more commitments.

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