COP 31

9-20 November 2026 | Antalya, Turkiye

COP31 Opens in Antalya: "Implementation" Rhetoric Meets a Brutal Agenda Fight on Finance



Antalya, 9 November 2026 – COP31 officially opened today with world leaders and UN officials declaring this the "COP of Implementation." Yet, by the end of the first day, the true battle lines were drawn: the fight for implementation is fundamentally a fight over who pays, who controls the money, and whether wealthy nations will allow the systemic financial reforms needed to address the climate crisis.

The Opening Ceremony: Acknowledging the Injustice

The opening plenary featured stark admissions about global inequality, which we at YTJN argue are fundamentally fiscal justice issues.

André Corrêa do Lago (COP30 President, Brazil) set a confrontational tone in his farewell speech, directly pointing the finger at the wealthy. He stated that the poorest people are the least responsible for climate change and are the main victims, adding that the wealthiest individuals are driving emissions and consumption. He warned that the transition cannot create or strengthen inequalities.

Murat Kurum (COP31 President, Türkiye) framed Antalya as a bridge between the Global North and South, acknowledging the deep gaps between those who can reach finance and those who cannot. He argued that trust is an infrastructure of the economy and reiterated the Baku finance goals of $300 billion annually for developing countries.



L-R: André Corrêa do Lago (COP30 President, Brazil) and Murat Kurum (COP31 President, Türkiye) at the opening ceremony of COP 31

Photo: UNFCCC

Chris Bowen (COP31 President of Negotiations, Australia) delivered the most stark admission of the day: "The countries that need climate finance the most are getting it the least." He acknowledged that credible national plans are stalled because finance is not arriving at the speed, scale, and terms required.

Simon Stiell (UNFCCC Executive Secretary) noted that while 90% of large renewable projects are now cheaper than fossil fuels, progress is "nowhere near far enough or fair enough." He stated that fairness must be at the heart of the global shift, noting that the fossil fuel cost crisis is spreading inflation "like a cancer."

The Agenda Fight: What Was Adopted and What Was Dropped

The procedural adoption of the agenda exposed the deep divides between the Global South and developed nations. The African Group of Negotiators (AGN) came with a clear message: "Implementation depends on means of implementation."
After a tense standoff, here is exactly what the adopted agenda contains:

What Was Adopted



Climate Finance Work Programme (CFWP) – Agenda Item 11G: This was the single biggest win for developing countries. It created a standalone agenda item to discuss the implementation of Article 9.1 of the Paris Agreement, which obligates developed countries to provide financial resources. This allows scrutiny of not just the quantity of finance, but its quality and predictability–a crucial distinction for us, because it opens the door to challenging loans and debt-creating instruments.



Contact Groups on Key Funds: Formal contact groups were established for the Green Climate Fund (GCF), the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Adaptation Fund, and the Fund for responding to Loss and Damage. These are the spaces where we will push for youth-specific indicators and direct access.



Mountains and Climate Change (Compromise): A dialogue on mountains and climate change was integrated, but only as a research dialogue alongside SBSTA 66, not as a standalone negotiating item. Nepal noted the compromise "falls short of our expectations."

What was dropped



Tripling Adaptation Finance: The AGN requested a standalone agenda item on tripling adaptation finance. This was not adopted. India explicitly expressed regret that the proposal was excluded.

Trade and Climate Change Dialogue: The AGN requested a formal dialogue on trade and climate change, arguing that measures like the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) shift the burden of the transition onto developing countries and threaten industrialisation. This was also dropped.



The Trade-Off: The compromise averted a procedural crisis, but it exposed the continuing divide: developed countries secured the agenda structure they wanted (no standalone items on adaptation or trade), while developing countries got the CFWP but lost the formal spaces to challenge trade-related tax measures and demand concrete adaptation finance commitments.

The "Cover Decision": Our Biggest Strategic Lever

The cover decision is the headline political text that wraps up a COP—a short, focused statement that captures the conference's main political messages and is adopted by consensus. COP31 President of Negotiations Chris Bowen confirmed there will be one this year, but he has been clear it will not be a "lengthy political statement."

The Process and the Pushback: The cover decision is being led by the Presidency but must be party-driven and built "from the ground up." Russia raised a procedural objection on Day 1, questioning the mandate for a decision not formally on the agenda. President Kurum defended the process, stating the Presidency will take all views into account and will not force a decision without consensus.

Why the Cover Decision is Critical for Us at YTJN:

Because tax and youth finance are not formal COP agenda items, the cover decision is our single most important strategic lever.

1. It is our entry point for tax justice: We can push for language on fair taxation, wealth taxes, and illicit financial flows. If we get even a paragraph into the cover decision, we create a political hook to use in the UN Tax Convention negotiations in Nairobi (Nov 30–Dec 10) and in our national advocacy with MoFPED.
2. It is our accountability check on the NDC synthesis: We will be watching whether it acknowledges the gap between current NDCs and the 1.5°C pathway, and whether it calls for youth-inclusive implementation—not just youth participation in dialogue.
3. It tests the "consensus ceiling": Bowen stated the text will be the most ambitious decision "that consensus will allow." We will be watching whether it explicitly mentions Article 9.1 and public, grant-based finance as a distinct obligation, or if it dilutes this into broader "financial flows" language. We will also track whether the EU's success in keeping trade off the agenda is reflected in the political text.



A youth taking part in the Civil Society Actions at COP 31.

Photo: UNFCCC

Why This Matters for Youth

Tax and finance are not abstract concepts for young people; they are the difference between a livable future and one defined by debt, lost livelihoods, and climate disasters.

1. Trade & Carbon Taxes: The AGN's failure to get a trade dialogue on the agenda means that unilateral tax measures like the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) will not be formally scrutinized. For young people in Uganda, this could mean fewer jobs and less industrial growth as our exports are taxed at the border.
2. The EU's "Expiry Date": The EU's insistence that the CFWP "ends automatically" in two years shows a desire to limit discussions on Article 9.1 (public, grant-based finance). This makes domestic resource mobilization and ending illicit financial flows even more critical. For youth, it means we cannot rely solely on international pledges; we must also fight for fair tax systems at home that fund our own climate solutions.
3. Access to Funds: As billions of dollars flow through the GCF, GEF, and Loss and Damage Fund, the contact groups established today are the exact spaces where we must demand youth-specific, age-disaggregated indicators. Young people are not just beneficiaries; we are implementers and innovators, and we need direct access to these funds.

🔍 WHAT TO WATCH ON DAY 2 (Tuesday, 10 November)

Day 2 shifts the spotlight to Energy and Transport, but the finance fight that defined Day 1 will continue in the contact groups. Here is what we at YTJN should track.

The Thematic Focus: Energy and Transport

The day is built around energy security, electrification, grid infrastructure, and sustainable transport, with roughly 370 sessions scheduled, including 140 under the energy and transport theme.

Key sessions to monitor:

- Ministerial meeting on the Azerbaijan–Kazakhstan–Uzbekistan green energy partnership in the Blue Zone.
- Panel on green energy security and Ukraine's energy transition.
- Sessions on financing the energy transition and expanding renewable energy infrastructure.
- Green Zone sessions on sustainable mobility, clean energy investment, and industrial decarbonisation, including a "Redefining Sustainable Mobility" session organised by Turkish electric carmaker Togg.

Our Angle

The Presidency has set a goal of raising electricity to 35% of final energy consumption by 2035. The question for us is who finances that shift, and whether youth-led enterprises and MSMEs can access the grid, storage, and e-mobility value chains. This connects directly to the GCF/GEF project preparation pathway we are tracking.

The Finance Fight Continues in Contact Groups

Day 1 settled the agenda; Day 2 starts the real negotiations.

- **Climate Finance Work Programme (CFWP) contact group:** We will be watching whether the EU continues to argue that the programme has a fixed two-year mandate, and whether developing countries can lock in a scope that covers public grant-based finance.
- **Article 2.1c contact group:** This is the space on aligning financial flows with climate goals. It is a prime entry point for our tax justice language.
- **Adaptation Fund and Loss and Damage Fund contact groups:** Watch for any movement on access modalities, direct access, and whether community and youth-led organisations get a dedicated window.

Plenary Statements and the Cover Decision

Day 2 will continue to hear national statements. Ethiopia's Foreign Minister Gedion Timotheos has already urged countries to close the climate finance gap. We will be listening for statements from other African delegations and the G77 and China regarding Article 9.1. Furthermore, we will be watching for any Presidency consultations on the cover decision–and whether it includes language on fair taxation and illicit financial flows.

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