COP 31

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COP31 Day 3: World Leaders Summit Opens as Türkiye Pushes Zero-Waste Agenda and Finance Fights Continue

Antalya, 11 November 2026 – Day 3 of COP31 combined the opening of the **World Leaders Climate Action Summit** with the Zero Waste thematic day. Heads of state and government arrived in Antalya to deliver national statements, while the Presidency used the day to launch new international initiatives on circular economy and methane reduction. Behind the high-level rhetoric, the finance disputes from the first two days continued to simmer in the contact groups and on the streets.

The High-Level Events: Leaders' Summit and the Zero-Waste Push

The day's high-level programme was anchored by the **World Leaders Climate Action Summit,** which runs from 11–12 November, bringing heads of state and government together to set out national priorities and demonstrate political commitment. The day also featured the Zero Waste thematic focus, with the Presidency framing waste reduction as a climate issue, not simply a waste-management issue.

Key outcomes and statements from the Leaders' Summit:

- **UN Secretary-General António Guterres** opened the Summit by calling for a **new Pact for Climate Justice** based on shared responsibility. He warned that **science must serve as the absolute "outer limit" for political action,** meaning negotiators cannot bargain with the laws of physics. Acknowledging that a temporary overshoot of 1.5°C is now likely based on current trajectories, Guterres stressed that science demands we limit its severity and duration rather than surrender to it: "Science tells us an overshoot above that level is now inevitable. But science is not telling us to surrender. It's telling us to fight harder."



UN Secretary-General António Guterres addresses Day 3 opening session
Photo: **UNFCCC**



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan addresses the High-Level Leaders' Summit
Photo: **UNFCCC**

- **Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan** used the Summit to urge developed countries to take greater responsibility. "Developed countries that have historically consumed the global carbon budget should assume greater responsibility for emissions reductions and financing," he said, stressing that funding must become more **accessible, predictable, and responsive to countries' needs**. He warned that despite 31 years of COP summits, **implementation had fallen short.** He reaffirmed **Türkiye's commitment to net-zero emissions by 2053** and outlined 10 priority areas, including clean energy transition, zero waste, food security, climate-resilient cities, and ocean protection.

- **Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese**, whose country leads the formal negotiations, struck a tone of cautious optimism. "There is hope. And the good news is that real and rapid progress is possible," he said, noting that projections have moved from around **4°C of warming before Paris to about 2.6°C today**. He acknowledged the world will likely **overshoot 1.5°C** but insisted that "every fraction of a degree of warming we prevent will matter". He framed COP31's task in concrete terms: "unlocking investment in clean energy technologies, accelerating electrification, intensifying action to protect the ocean, and ensuring climate finance for those who need it most".
- **Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed** raised the question of **when support will actually reach those who need it,** according to summit reporting, reflecting the wider frustration among developing countries about the gap between pledges and delivery.
- **UNFCCC Executive Secretary Simon Stiell** addressed the Summit later in the day, warning that "participants in the COP31 climate summit have no right to leave Antalya without achieving a lasting result through negotiation or meaningful outcomes in the action agenda". He acknowledged that the benefit of actions taken so far is **distributed unevenly,** and that vulnerable countries "who have done virtually nothing to cause the climate crisis" need far greater support.

The Zero Waste initiatives:

Türkiye used the day to announce **two international initiatives** aimed at promoting the circular economy and reducing methane emissions from the waste sector. The first focuses on strengthening knowledge exchange and international cooperation on the circular economy; the second seeks to boost collaboration between countries to reduce methane emissions generated by waste. Türkiye's recycling rate has risen from about **13% in 2017 to about 40% by the end of 2025**, bringing some **90 million tons of waste back into the economy.** Türkiye also aims to increase electricity consumption by 50% over the next decade, **halve the growth in waste generation, and expand the use of circular materials in industry.**

Outcomes from the Priority Spotlight sessions:

- **Food Waste Breakthrough**: The **Food Waste Breakthrough initiative**, launched by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) at COP30 last year, is coordinated by Clémentine O'Connor and supports network expansion in countries including Brazil, Colombia, and Mauritius. The initiative links the goal of **halving food waste by 2030 (SDG 12.3)** with the **Global Methane Pledge** commitment to reduce methane emissions. Food loss and waste account for approximately **8–10% of global greenhouse gas emissions** and when food waste decomposes in landfills, it emits methane, a gas **84 times more potent than CO_2** over the short term. O'Connor described the goal as ambitious but "achievable," noting that some countries, including **Japan**, have already achieved substantial reductions.
- **Limiting Overshoot through Food Waste and Methane Reduction:** The session emphasised that the **circular economy** is not simply about better recycling, it is about changing how we produce, consume, and manage resources. UNEP's **Global Waste Management Outlook** projects that municipal solid waste could increase from **2.1 billion tonnes in 2023 to 3.8 billion tonnes by 2050** without significant changes.
- **Green Zone discussions:** The **Zero Waste Application and Workshop Centre** hosted discussions on **deposit return systems, marine ecosystem protection, and circular economy practices.** Türkiye's "Zero Waste Blue" initiative has cleaned hundreds of thousands of tons of waste from the seas, expanded deposit systems, and planned the phase-out of single-use plastics. As of August 2026, deposit return points had been rolled out across all 81 provinces, with more than **100 million packaging items** returned through the scheme.

YTJN's Angle

The Presidency's focus on zero waste and methane is welcome, but it raises a critical question for us at YTJN: **who finances the transition to circular economies in the Global South?** Youth-led enterprises are already innovating in waste collection, organic composting, and plastic recycling. The waste sector is a prime opportunity for **youth-led MSMEs**, but only if the finance and policy frameworks including the GCF/GEF project preparation support we have been tracking are designed to reach them. We will be watching whether the zero-waste initiatives translate into **accessible, grant-based finance** for community-level solutions, or remain top-down, technology-heavy projects that bypass local innovators.

The Finance Fight: Africa Secures an Early Win on the Climate Finance Work Programme

The **Climate Finance Work Programme (CFWP)** contact group continued its work, and the **African Group of Negotiators (AGN)** secured a significant early victory. After negotiations stretched into the opening of the summit, African negotiators overcame resistance from wealthy nations to secure **formal talks on developed countries' climate finance obligations** under the Paris Agreement.

AGN Chair Nana Dr Antwi-Boasiako Amoah confirmed that developed countries initially opposed including the CFWP on the agenda, then proposed conditions that African negotiators rejected. "So all the night, the work we did was to make sure that the agenda item, as it was presented, is adopted, and we got that one," he said.



AGN Chair Nana Dr Antwi-Boasiako Amoah , chair of the African Group of Negotiators at COP 31
Photo: **UNFCCC**

The decision gives developing countries a forum to **examine how wealthy nations fulfil Article 9.1 of the Paris Agreement.** The EU, however, has argued that giving the CFWP a separate agenda item risks reopening the Belém compromise, favouring instead to discuss Article 9.1 alongside the wider finance provisions of Article 9. For African negotiators, the distinction is critical: the wider framework covers funding from a range of sources, **including private investment and loans**, while Africa pushes for **public, grant-based finance.**

A related development: the Just Transition Mechanism. Negotiators also outlined their preferred structure for a **Just Transition Mechanism,** with broad support for a political oversight body and a separate technical arm. However, deep divisions remain **over financing arrangements.** The African Group emphasised that the mechanism must address **informal economies and limits on public spending**, while the EU proposed a work plan covering policy dialogue and technical assistance. Sohanur Rahman of YouthNet Global called for participation to be matched by resources: "The mechanism should connect that participation with accessible finance, skills and social protection, especially for informal workers, women and young people."

Protests and Demands: LDC Group Pushes for $120 Billion in Adaptation Finance

Ahead of the Leaders' Summit, **the Least Developed Countries (LDC) Group,** representing 44 countries across Africa, Asia-Pacific, and the Caribbean issued a strong demand for adaptation finance. The group called for adaptation funds to be scaled up to **at least $120 billion annually,** to be achieved **before 2035**, and for new contributions to the **Fund for responding to Loss and Damage.**

LDC Chair Adão Soares Barbosa, Timor-Leste's special envoy on climate change, stated: "*With decades of inadequate response, the rise in global average temperature is imminent to exceed 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels. This is a serious betrayal of our countries, who are least responsible for causing the climate crisis.*" The AGN's push to include tripling adaptation finance as a standalone agenda item was not adopted, but the group continues to press its case.



Ambassador Adão Soares Barbosa, Chair of the Least Developed Countries (LDC) Group on Climate Change
Photo: **UNFCCC**

Loss and Damage Fund: A Fund Still Finding Its Way

The **Fund for responding to Loss and Damage** remains a central issue at COP31, with its co-chairs acknowledging to **Agence France-Presse (AFP)** that the fund is **still figuring out how to provide assistance after disasters**. In a first, the fund set aside **$20 million** in October to help Nepal rebuild after deadly floods in August, but only after a special request and pressure from developing countries.

Co-chair Georg Børsting cautioned that the Nepal decision did not set a precedent: "*The precedent that was set was that the board proved that it was able to do this type of extraordinary meeting.*" **Co-chair Camila Minerva Rodriguez Tavarez** added: *"We are not an emergency response fund. This is not humanitarian aid."*



The fund's financial reality is stark: **wealthy nations have pledged $822 million, but no money has yet been disbursed. Of 176 requests submitted this year for a total of $2.8 billion,** only projects in four countries were deemed ready for approval, and the board postponed its first funding announcements until December, pledging to award a total of **$92 million.** "*The needs are absolutely in the billions*," Rodriguez Tavarez said. "*Everyone needs to acknowledge that one single fund is never going to be able to meet all of that demand."*

Why This Matters for Youth

1. **The Zero-Waste Opportunity:** The Presidency's zero-waste agenda is a potential opening for **youth-led MSMEs** in waste management, recycling, and circular economy. But the finance must be accessible. We will be watching whether t**he two international initiatives** announced today create concrete funding windows for youth innovators, or remain high-level pledges.
2. **The CFWP and "Quality" Finance:** The African Group's win on the CFWP is a significant step, but the battle is now over scope. We must support the push to anchor the programme in **Article 9.1** (public, grant-based finance), not the broader "all-sources" framing that includes loans and private investment. For young people, **the quality of finance** is a matter of survival.
3. **The Loss and Damage Gap:** The Loss and Damage Fund's slow disbursement **$822 million pledged, $0 disbursed** is a stark reminder that pledges are not the same as delivery. For youth in climate-vulnerable regions like Karamoja, this gap is a direct threat. We will continue to push for **direct access for youth-led organisations** and **age-disaggregated indicators** to track whether finance reaches those who need it most.
4. The Just Transition and Youth Jobs: The discussions on the Just Transition Mechanism are directly relevant to young people. The mechanism must connect participation with resources–accessible finance, skills, and social protection especially for **informal workers, women, and young people.**



WHAT TO WATCH ON DAY 4 (Thursday, 12 November)



The Thematic Focus: Resilient Cities and Built Environment

Day 4 shifts to **Resilient Cities and Built Environment**, focusing on climate-friendly buildings, urban resilience, disaster risk management, local governments, smart cities, nature-based solutions, and smart mobility.

Our angle: Urban resilience is a critical issue for youth, who are increasingly migrating to cities in search of livelihoods. We will be watching whether the discussions on **green buildings and smart cities create space for youth-led enterprises** in construction, mobility, and urban services, and whether **municipal climate finance** is accessible to community-level innovators.

- **CFWP contact group:** We will be tracking whether the procedural impasse over the co-chairs' workplan is resolved, 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.

The Finance Fights Continue

1. **CFWP contact group:** We will be tracking whether developing countries can lock in a scope that covers **public, grant-based finance** under Article 9.1, and whether the EU continues to push for an "all-sources" framing.
2. **Just Transition Work Programme contact group:** Watch for further discussions on the **financing arrangements** for the mechanism, and whether youth participation is matched with **accessible resources.**
3. **Loss and Damage Fund contact group:** The board's first funding decisions are expected in December. We will be watching for any signals on **access modalities** and whether **community and youth-led organisations** will get a dedicated window.

The Leaders' Summit Continues



The **World Leaders Climate Action Summit** continues into Day 4, with more heads of state and government delivering national statements. **The UK Prime Minister** is expected to attend tomorrow, making the UK the only G7 country represented by its head of government at this year's summit, a notable absence that raises questions about the political priority being given to international climate action by the world's largest economies. We will be listening for commitments on **adaptation finance, loss and damage, and youth inclusion** from African leaders and major economies.

Civil Society Actions



Following the LDC Group's demands on adaptation finance, we expect **further civil society actions** and pressure on developed countries to deliver on their financial commitments. We will be monitoring how the Presidency responds.