COP 31

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COP31 Day 10: Human and Social Development in the Spotlight as Ministers Convene "Divan" to Break Deadlock

Antalya, 18 November 2026 – The tenth day of COP31 placed Human and Social Development at the centre of the agenda, focusing on people, communities, equity, just transition, employment, and vulnerable groups. But behind the thematic events, the conference entered its final stretch with deep divisions still unresolved. While ministers convened an informal "divan" –a traditional council–to break the political deadlock, technical negotiators continued to clash over the fundamental mechanics of the Paris Agreement.



The "Divan" and the Cover Decision: A "Shopping List" Under Fire

With just two days remaining before the scheduled close, **COP31 President Murat Kurum** convened a "**divan**".

> "**Divan**" – a Turkish word for "council"–bringing ministers together for informal discussions

Monique Barbut, France's Ecological Transition Minister, described the mood: "There was a lot of listening from everyone... We arrive at something that will never be the ideal solution for anyone, but where everyone gets three things they want."

The central point of contention remains the **18-page, 144-paragraph draft cover decision**. **Soenke Kreft** of the United Nations University said it was "**way too long**" with countries "**entrenching in their positions.**"

The Electrification Pledge

The 35-by-35 electrification agenda faces opposition from the Like-Minded Developing Countries (LMDC) –a grouping that includes India, China, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia–who argue that countries should be free to determine their own transition pathways.

Explainer: The 35-by-35 Global Electrification Pledge

It is a voluntary, non-binding initiative advanced by the COP31 Presidency of Türkiye that sets a collective global objective to increase the share of electricity in global final energy consumption from around **23% today to 35% by 2035.** It aims to accelerate the transition to cleaner energy by expanding electricity use in transport, buildings, and industry.

The IPCC Timeline Battle

A fight over the timing of the next IPCC reports deepened divisions. **Danish Climate Minister Samira Nawa** said: "There is no compromise when it comes to science."

Explainer: The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

The IPCC is the UN body responsible for assessing the science related to climate change. It does not conduct its own research; instead, it reviews and synthesizes thousands of scientific papers to provide governments with a clear scientific view on the current state of climate change and its potential environmental and socio-economic impacts.

Why do vulnerable countries want the reports before 2028?

The Global Stocktake (GST) is the five-yearly mechanism to assess collective progress. The next GST is due in **2028**. **The LDCs and AOSIS (representing nearly 80 vulnerable nations)** argue the GST must be informed by the most up-to-date science to accurately assess if the world is on track for 1.5°C. Delaying the science delays accountability.

Why do others want it postponed to 2029?

A smaller number of nations, including **Saudi Arabia, India, and Russia,** argue for more time for scientific review. Observers suggest this is a tactic to prevent the 2028 GST from being informed by robust data on fossil fuels.

The Fossil Fuel Fight

The draft's call for "**accelerated action to phase out fossil fuels"** remains a red line for the **Arab Group, Russia, and the LMDC.**

Why is fossil fuel phase-out a red line for these groups?

For countries like Saudi Arabia and Russia, fossil fuel revenues are central to their national economies. For the **LMDC** bloc (including India and China), the objection is about **equity**: they argue that developed countries, which grew rich on fossil fuels, must lead the transition and provide finance for developing countries to follow a different path. They resist language that imposes uniform obligations without financial support.

Panama's Outburst: Panama's Climate Minister Juan Carlos Navarro accused some countries of delivering speeches full of "**BS and hot air"** while blocking progress. He said the world was being "**held hostage by the petroleum mafia**." "BS" stands for "bullshit," expressing profound frustration with what he described as "hypocrisy"—countries making ambitious speeches while blocking negotiations. He did not name specific countries, but targeted "*countries that produce fossil fuels.*"



Technical Battlegrounds: Red Lines and Deadlocks

Finance and Article 2.1(c)

The Presidency convened joint consultations on the Climate Finance Work Programme and **Article 2.1(c)** (aligning finance flows). The **G77 and China** stressed the separate mandates of the two agenda items, insisting the CFWP focus on **Article 9.1 (**developed countries' finance obligations).

Explainer: The Climate Finance Work Programme (CFWP)

The CFWP is a formal agenda item at COP31. Its purpose is to strengthen scrutiny of developed countries' legal obligations to **provide climate finance** to developing countries under **Article 9.1 of the Paris Agreement**. The core dispute is whether the programme focuses narrowly on public, grant-based finance or takes a broader "all-sources" approach that includes loans and private investment.









Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE)

The **Russian Federation** proposed replacing "gender-responsive" with "gender-sensitive" (opposed by Norway, the UK, EU, etc., as it is already agreed language). **Saudi Arabia, Paraguay, and Nigeria** opposed describing implementation as "transformative."

Explainer: Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE)

ACE is a framework under the UNFCCC that focuses on education, training, public awareness, public participation, public access to information, and international cooperation on these issues. It aims to empower all members of society to engage in climate action.

Why do these countries take this stance?

These positions often reflect domestic political or cultural considerations. Russia's push for "gender-sensitive" is viewed by many as an attempt to water down established rights language. Saudi Arabia's objection to "transformative" implementation reflects a broader concern about binding human rights obligations that could be used in climate litigation.

Mitigation Work Programme (MWP)

The Arab Group stated that enlarging the scope of the work programme was a red line. **The LMDCs, Arab Group, African Group, and Pakistan** supported inserting language recalling the principle of **common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR)**, specifying that the programme must be non-prescriptive and non-punitive.

Explainer: The Mitigation Work Programme (MWP)

The MWP is a dedicated workstream established to urgently scale up mitigation ambition and implementation in this critical decade. It provides a structured space for countries to share best practices, identify barriers, and scale up investments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Explainer: Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR)

CBDR is a cornerstone principle of international environmental law. It means that all States have a **common responsibility** to protect the environment, but the extent of each State's obligations is differentiated based on their historical contributions to the problem and their respective capabilities. Developed countries, which have historically emitted the most, are expected to take the lead.

Why this stance?

The LMDCs and Arab Group fear that a broader MWP scope could be used to impose emission reduction targets or sanctions on developing nations. Conversely, t**he EU, UK, AILAC, AOSIS, and Japan** supported a broader scope that references the IPCC's seventh assessment report, aiming to apply pressure on all major emitters.

National Adaptation Plans (NAPs)

The **G77 and China** agreed to forward the draft text to the next Subsidiary Body session. The **EU and UK** opposed this, saying the text is imbalanced and crosses red lines.

Explainer: National Adaptation Plans (NAPs)

NAPs are national strategies developed by countries to identify and address their medium- and long-term climate adaptation needs. They outline the actions required to build resilience against climate impacts like droughts, floods, and sea-level rise.

Why this stance?

G77 and China want to ensure the NAP text captures the urgent need for adaptation finance and support for developing countries. The EU and UK likely object to language that they feel places undue financial obligations on them without sufficient accountability mechanisms.



Just Transition and Agriculture: The Hardest Files

A member of the **Brazilian delegation** identified the **Just Transition Mechanism** as one of the hardest files: "The hardest files are the just transition mechanism... Finance cuts across everything."

Explainer: The Just Transition Mechanism (JTM)

The JTM is a framework designed to ensure that the shift to a green, low-carbon economy is fair and equitable. It aims to protect workers, communities, and vulnerable groups who might be negatively impacted by the transition away from fossil fuels, ensuring they have access to new jobs, social protection, and economic opportunities.

The **agriculture track** in the UN climate negotiations **failed to reach consensus** and was **kicked to intersessional discussions** in Bonn.

Why did the agriculture track fail?

Countries could not find consensus on a text full of political red lines, including t**rade measures and adaptation finance. Teresa Anderson of ActionAid** told Carbon Brief that the introduction of trade measures "railroaded the whole thing." Trade measures, like carbon border taxes, pit exporters in the Global South against importers in the Global North, derailing the fragile negotiation.

A Rare Win: Consensus on the Least Developed Countries

Amid the deadlocks, Parties reached consensus on a decision concerning **matters relating to the Least Developed Countries (LDCs).**

What was the decision?

The decision was to forward the **unbracketed draft text on Matters Relating to LDCs (document FCCC/SBI/2026/L.22)** to the COP and CMA for adoption. The key change was replacing a reference to "finance providers" with "**funding channels,**" following a request from the Arab Group. One delegate said: "This decision may not make the headlines, but it means a lot for the more than one billion most vulnerable people who benefit from the work under this agenda item."

YTJN SIDE EVENT

Who Pays, Who Benefits? Financing Youth-Led Implementation of Uganda's NDC Across the COP31 Thematic Agenda

On Human and Social Development Day, YTJN hosted its side event at the Uganda Pavilion. **Dr. Nqobizitha Mathanda Dube** argued the **Global North grew rich using the atmosphere as a dumping ground**, creating a "**climate debt**." He outlined the **$28.1 billion** NDC gap, noting that **52% of Uganda's climate finance came as loans** and **only 28% as grants.** He identified **three walls to youth access: the Accreditation Wall, the Debt Wall, and the Mindset Wall.**

Panelist Interventions:



Ms. Patriciah Roy Akullo

Social Safeguards and Gender Expert, Climate Finance Unit, MoFPED, Uganda

She clarified that the NDC gap has actually decreased to $22.4 billion after mobilizing $5.7 billion. She explained that the government is targeting **concessional debt between 2% and 3%** for infrastructure projects, noting that Uganda is pursuing this because **grant support is not enough to fulfill Uganda's development needs.**

She noted that before the Ministry clears or endorses projects, they review the beneficiaries, ensuring that the interventions specifically benefit young people, girls, and women. She encouraged young people to come up with concepts for green projects, stating the Ministry is ready to provide support to youth to apply for funds from the **Green Climate Fund (GCF), the Global Environment Facility (GEF),** and other mechanisms.

She announced two products of the Government of Uganda: a **digital climate finance tracking tool** that will be open-source and show how much is mobilized and for which sectors; and a **National Climate Finance Vehicle,** a specialized fund to receive green finance from carbon markets, debt swaps, and green bonds.

On the polluter pays principle, she said the government is in the process of putting in place mechanisms to ensure polluters pay. She noted that entities practicing what is in the **National Green Taxonomy** should be rewarded, while those not making efforts towards sustainable investments should be penalized, with the penalties going to the National Climate Finance Vehicle. She added that while the framework is still in the pipeline, they are working on advancing this instrument.



Muliisa Emmanuel

Member, Climate Mitigation Working Group of the Team of Negotiators for Uganda in UNFCCC processes.

He emphasized that **Uganda's 2025 carbon market regulations require benefit-sharing plans for youth:** "It is not just an incentive, but it is clearly agreed upon and written down in those benefit sharing plans."



Musinguzi Laban Joshua

Country Director, GRO Foundation Uganda

He delivered a blunt assessment: "There is no work coming... in the next 30, 40 years, you are the ones who are going to be paying this debt." He highlighted the **potential of the private sector** to employ young people, calling for the cutting of bureaucratic barriers: "In Africa, you must know who your father is." He also noted his work with the Ministry of Water and Environment to plant **40 million trees.**

He assessed the viability of the mechanisms, suggesting that **tax expenditures** could support youth green projects: "Where government forgives some tax, can we include some of this finance to say, let it be an offset so that young people can use that money elsewhere?" He also proposed that the **10% fee** on international carbon credit sales be **earmarked for the National Climate Finance Vehicle to benefit youth.** "I'm tired of us talking about this money when we cannot feel it in our pockets."



Allan M. Murangira,

Team Lead, Youth for Tax Justice Network - YTJN





Why This Matters for Youth

1. **The Debt Wall Is Real:** Dr. Dube's data confirms that if the $22.4 billion gap is financed by debt, today's youth will spend their working lives repaying it. Patricia's clarification that the government is targeting 2-3% concessional debt shows an attempt to manage this burden, but grants remain insufficient.
2. **Benefit-Sharing Needs Enforcement:** Uganda's carbon market regulations require benefit-sharing plans. The test is whether youth-led enterprises actually receive the revenues.
3. **Youth Have a Direct Pathway to GCF/GEF:** Patricia's invitation for youth to develop green project concepts and seek Ministry support for GCF/GEF applications is a concrete opportunity for YTJN's network to act on.
4. **The "Divan" Is the Last Chance for Compromise:** With just two days remaining, the ministers' informal council is the Presidency's final attempt to bridge the divides on fossil fuels, finance, and just transition.



WHAT TO WATCH ON THURSDAY 19 NOVEMBER

İmece: Enhancing Implementation Day

- **The New Cover Decision Draft:** A revised draft is expected. Watch for whether the language **on fossil fuel phase-out,** adaptation finance, and the **35-by-35 electrification target** survives.
- **Finance Consultations:** Watch the joint Presidency consultations on the **CFWP and Article 2.1(c).**
- **The IPCC Timeline:** Watch for a compromise on the **2028 vs. 2029 timeline.**
- **The Rules of Procedure Fight:** The Russian Federation has introduced a proposal on how objections are handled. The EU wants to conclude the item; Tuvalu and the Arab Group reject concluding.