COP 31

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COP31 Day 8: Science, Industry and Technology Day in the Spotlight as First Draft of the Cover Decision Drops

Antalya, 16 November 2026 – The second and final week of COP31 opened with the release of the Presidency's first draft of the political cover decision, an 18-page, 144-paragraph text that immediately drew fire from across the negotiating blocs. While ministers arrived for the high-level segment, the day's substantive work was dominated by the fallout from the draft, alongside technical negotiations on adaptation, carbon markets, finance, and a deeply contested Just Transition Mechanism. The private sector also made its presence felt, pushing for market mechanisms, AI integration, and industrial decarbonisation.

The First Draft of the Cover Decision

Late on Monday, the Australian Presidency of Negotiations released the first draft of the **cover decision**–the overarching political statement that sums up what countries have agreed and sets the course for future climate action. The text was issued earlier than usual to allow "plenty of time for conversation and negotiation," according to **COP31 President of Negotiations Chris Bowen.**

What the draft contains:

- Fossil Fuels: The text "calls for accelerated action to phase out fossil fuels, including through the immediate transition away from fossil fuels in energy systems"–language that goes beyond the COP28 Dubai agreement and is expected to face fierce resistance from oil-producing nations.
- Adaptation Finance: A call for developed countries to triple annual adaptation finance to at least $120 billion by 2035, a figure that would cover only about 30% of developing countries' actual needs, according to 350.org.
- Electrification: A target to raise electricity's share of final energy demand to 35% by 2035–but the text notes that "electrification can provide co-benefits regardless of the electricity mix," a provision that has proved deeply divisive.
- Overshoot and Science: The draft expresses "deep concern" that the 1.5°C target is now out of reach and stresses the need for "accelerating action to minimize both the magnitude and duration of any temperature overshoot."
- Mountains: A dedicated work programme and high-level dialogue on mountains and climate change, a proposal backed by Andorra and Nepal.



The Reaction

"This first draft will look different to the final draft... I expect there will be at least one more draft before the end of the week, but we will keep working until we have a document which receives a consensus.

CHRIS BOWEN
COP31 President of Negotiations

350.org and the Centre for International Environmental Law (CIEL) said the draft "weakens commitments on transitioning away from fossil fuels, promotes potentially harmful technological distractions and fails to provide adequate guarantees for renewable-energy-based electrification." **Andreas Sieber of 350.org** said: "Türkiye and Australia seem to want to keep the transition away from fossil fuels in the diplomatic waiting room but drop any reference to the work going forward in the current draft text."

An African delegation source told Anadolu Agency that the cover decision risked becoming a "distraction" from concrete negotiations on climate finance. "We're running away from accountability by all means, and the cover decision is one of them," the source said. "No one knows what 'tripling adaptation finance' means."

The Arab Group and Russian Federation rejected the draft outright, opposing language that targets specific energy sources, introduces top-down sectoral targets, and sets the 35% electrification goal. Azerbaijan said the draft was inconsistent with the UNFCCC process. The LMDCs (Like-Minded Developing Countries) said the draft crosses their red lines, including the electrification target and the fossil fuel transition roadmap that singles out methane.

Just Transition Mechanism: Structure Agreed, Funding Disputed

On Monday, the Just Transition Mechanism was a central focus of the high-level ministerial segment. The day's events clarified the proposed structure of the mechanism, but also exposed the deep divisions over its funding and mandate.

The High-Level Ministerial Roundtable: India Sets the Tone

The Fourth Annual High-Level Ministerial Roundtable on Just Transition, held under the United Arab Emirates Just Transition Work Programme, was the main platform for political statements. India's Environment Minister, **Bhupender Yadav**, used the platform to forcefully outline the developing country vision for the mechanism. He called for a "**two-tier, Party-guided**" structure and stressed that the mechanism must respect national sovereignty and diverse national circumstances. His key demands were:

- It must **not prescribe uniform sectoral pathways or create new obligations.**
- It must focus on **practical support** through technical assistance, capacity-building, and cooperation.
- Crucially, it must facilitate access to **adequate means of implementation**–finance, technology transfer, and capacity-building–without adding to debt burdens.

- **The Funding Question:** This was the central unresolved issue. The **Environmental Integrity Group (EIG)** called for a voluntary, country-driven approach and explicitly warned **against creating a new fund. The African Group**, conversely, stressed the need for practical support and said the mechanism must address the constraints of **informal economies and limits on public spending.**
- **Institutional Concerns: Japan** cautioned against creating additional bodies and favoured using existing programmes. **The EU** proposed a work plan covering policy dialogue, implementation, and coordination with external bodies.
- **Sovereignty and Technology: The Arab Group** stressed national sovereignty and **technological neutrality,** arguing against prescribing countries' choice of technology and opposing conditions attached to support.





Explainer: What Is the Just Transition Mechanism?



For readers unfamiliar with the term, the **Just Transition Mechanism** is a proposed global framework designed to help countries, workers, and communities shift away from fossil fuels (like coal, oil, and gas) toward a green economy **without leaving anyone behind.**

As the world transitions to renewable energy, jobs in traditional fossil fuel sectors will change or disappear, and the communities that depend on them can face severe economic disruption. A "just" transition means ensuring that these workers are not abandoned. It involves creating new green jobs, providing social safety nets (such as retraining programs and income support), and ensuring that vulnerable groups–including youth, women, and informal workers–are protected during the shift.

At COP31, negotiators are trying to establish a formal "Mechanism" to coordinate this process internationally. However, the core fight is over whether this mechanism will be just a platform for sharing knowledge and coordinating meetings, or a real institution with dedicated funding and the mandate to support workers and communities on the ground.

The Negotiating Reality: Structure Agreed, Funding Disputed

While the ministerial statements set the political tone, the technical negotiations revealed the practical deadlocks. A contact group on the Just Transition Work Programme had broadly converged on a **two-tier structure: a political/governing body** for oversight and a separate **technical arm** for implementation support. However, fundamental disagreements remained:







Civil Society and Youth Interventions

Civil society voices were clear that the mechanism, as drafted, was insufficient. **The Climate Action Network** argued that the text "breaks the promise of Belém" and should be sent back for redrafting.

A critical intervention came from S**ohanur Rahman of YouthNet Global,** who linked the mechanism directly to the youth agenda. He argued that **"participation must be matched by resources and fair financing"** and that the mechanism should connect that participation to **accessible finance, skills, and social protection**, especially for informal workers, women, and young people.

The day's proceedings did not produce a breakthrough on the core issue of funding. Instead, they formalized the battle lines: developing countries and civil society are demanding a mechanism with the **resources and mandate** to deliver tangible support, while key developed nations are pushing for a **coordination-focused body** that avoids creating new financial obligations.

Adaptation: The GGA and the Technical Taskforce Fight

The Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) negotiations exposed deep divisions over the composition of the technical taskforce that will develop methodologies for the 59 Belém Adaptation Indicators adopted at COP30.

Grupo Sur and Brazil preferred for UN regional groups to nominate experts. **The LDCs and AOSIS (Alliance of Small Island States)** stressed that LDCs and SIDS should be allowed to nominate three experts each. **The EU and Japan, opposed by the LMDCs,** preferred for taskforce members to be selected by the Subsidiary Body Chairs. **The African Group** stressed that a process led by international organisations or constituted bodies is a red line.

On means of implementation, **the G77 and China** stressed that means of implementation must run through the decision text and reiterated the call for the **tripling of adaptation finance**, urging work to agree on a baseline, methodology, and tracking. **The EU, EIG, and Japan** stressed that these discussions should take place in the finance negotiations.

Finance: CFWP Stalled, GCF and GEF Divisions

The **Climate Finance Work Programme (CFWP**) remained deadlocked. Parties reiterated their positions on whether the programme has started or needs to be elaborated at this **Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA)** , and whether it is about **Article 9.1** (developed countries' finance obligation) or **all of Article 9** (finance). Switzerland, supported by New Zealand, suggested procedural conclusions and called for adding a "no text" option–a move that would effectively kill the programme.

On the **Green Climate Fund (GCF) , the Arab Group and Russian Federation** underscored developed countries' obligation to provide finance. **On the Global Environment Facility (GEF) , the African Group** called for guidance directing the GEF to discontinue its use of blended finance, while the **LMDCs** said they could not welcome blended finance.

On **Article 2.1(c)** (aligning finance flows), the G77 and China stated they did not give a mandate for the co-facilitators to develop a text and would not engage with it.





Mitigation and Article 6: Integrity vs. Volume

In the **Article 6.4 mechanism (the Paris Agreement Crediting Mechanism, PACM) consultations,** observer constituencies underlined the importance of robust methodologies and stressed that **volume must not come at the expense of integrity. Youth NGOs** called for including youth and retaining term limits on Supervisory Body members. **Environmental NGOs** underlined that the Mechanism must not repeat historical errors and become another "overcrediting mechanism," stressing that "high volumes of hot air are still hot air."

On Article 6.8 (non-market approaches), parties diverged over the scope of activities that may be recorded on the Platform. **The African Group and LLDCs** supported broadening its scope to include non-market approaches involving a single Party, while **the EU** preferred retaining the Platform's existing scope.

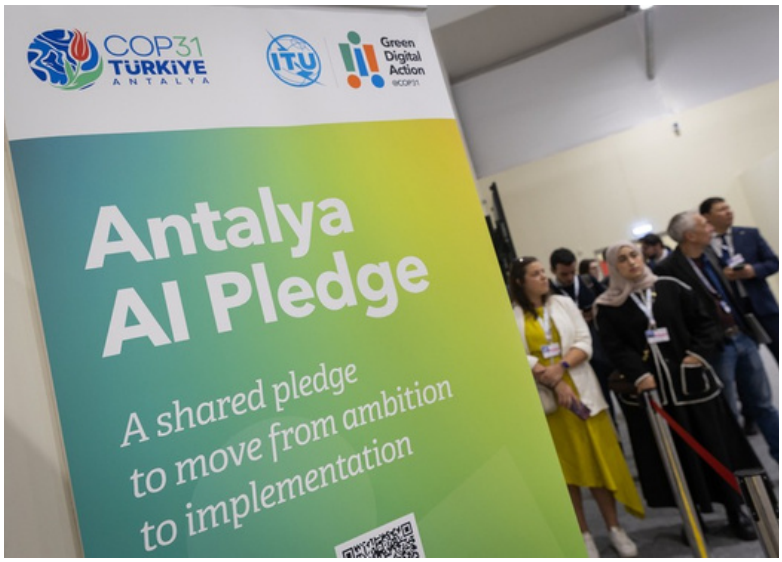
Science, Industry and Technology: The Private Sector Steps Up

The thematic day saw the private sector aggressively pushing its role as the engine of the transition, with interventions focused on carbon markets, artificial intelligence, and offshore wind.

Carbon Markets and Turkish Business:

On the sidelines of the summit, a carbon market conference hosted by **SEKA Investment** and financial services firm **StoneX** highlighted that mandatory global carbon trading volumes now top **$100 billion per year. Serhat Kisakurek, managing partner at SEKA Investment,** noted that carbon compliance has become a key factor in securing long-term deals and accessing affordable financing. However, he warned that while industrial giants have adapted, **small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are lagging behind,** urging them to follow suit to maintain their global competitive edge.

Alfredo Nicastro, global director of carbon markets at StoneX, argued that COP31 represented a turning point for Türkiye in becoming a central carbon trading hub for the EU.



AI and Green Industrialisation:

The COP31 Presidency launched the Antalya Artificial Intelligence Pledge, a voluntary framework attracting **80 endorsements and 271 commitments** from governments, companies, and civil society to make AI "sustainable" and "accessible to all." **UNFCCC Executive Secretary Simon Stiell** told the launch that AI offers both "great potential" and "great peril." The Presidency also launched the **Antalya Green Industrialisation Compact,** noting that industry produces about **a quarter of the world's greenhouse gas emissions.**

Private Capital and Offshore Wind:

A $600 million Asia green energy fund was launched at COP31 to back solar, wind, and battery developers across the region. At a panel organised by the Offshore Wind Energy Association (DÜRED), ***Veli Bilgihan Yaşacan*** *argued that Türkiye could become a regional hub, stating: "Once these investments are made in Türkiye, our main target should actually be neighboring countries. With the expertise we gain here, there is a market worth nearly $1 trillion to $2 trillion in neighboring countries for our manufacturers and civil engineers."*

The Counter-Narrative:

Civil society pushed back against the corporate framing. At an engagement on accountability in the Just Transition process, participants **questioned whether the transition could be considered just if communities lost control of their natural resources while corporations gained new commercial opportunities**. They expressed concern that **polluting industries were increasingly shaping the concept of just transition to protect commercial interests**, rather than redistributing power and resources to workers and communities.





Why This Matters for Youth

1. **The Cover Decision Is a Test of Political Will:** The first draft acknowledges the need to phase out fossil fuels and triple adaptation finance, but it is a wishlist, not a commitment. The battles over the next four days will determine whether the final text contains **binding, measurable commitments.**
2. **The Just Transition Mechanism Is Hollow:** The draft offers **no new funding, no mandate for resource mobilisation, and no seat at the table for workers and communities.** As YouthNet Global argued, participation without resources is just tokenism. For youth, a just transition without the means to deliver is not a transition at all.
3. **Adaptation Finance Is Still an "Orphan":** The $120 billion figure is a significant improvement, but it remains far below the $305–420 billion developing countries actually need. And as the African delegation warned, "no one knows what 'tripling adaptation finance' means" without clear baselines.
4. **The Private Sector Is Moving, But on Its Own Terms:** While the $600 million Asia fund and the offshore wind ambitions are welcome, the carbon market discussions revealed a warning: SMEs are lagging behind. For youth-led MSMEs in Uganda, this is a critical signal. If we do not have the capacity and compliance systems to participate in the new carbon economy, we will be left out of the $100 billion market entirely.



WHAT TO WATCH ON TUESDAY 17 NOVEMBER

Thematic Focus: Ocean, Seas, Nature and Land Use

- **The Ministerial Divan:** Ministers will begin their political consultations on the most contentious issues, including **fossil fuel transition, adaptation finance, and the cover decision.**
- **The CFWP Contact Group:** Watch for any movement on the scope and mandate, and whether the G77 and China can lock in a focus on **public, grant-based finance under Article 9.1.**
- **The Cover Decision:** The first draft will be **whittled down** over the coming days. Watch for whether the **fossil fuel phase-out language** survives, whether the **$120 billion adaptation finance** target is retained, and whether the **35% electrification goal is tightened to specify renewable energy.**