

COP31 PRIORITIES AND EXPECTATIONS

Urgent action for a world facing 1.5°C overshoot

The case for COP31 ambition

Developments in 2026 leave no doubt about the urgent need to cut emissions and stabilise a rapidly changing climate. Climate change, compounded by an [intensifying El Niño](#), has brought unprecedented heat extremes worldwide. August 2026 tied with July 2023 as the [warmest month](#) in recorded history, averaging 1.65°C above pre-industrial levels. Temperatures exceeded [50°C in Australia](#) in January, tens of thousands of excess deaths were estimated following a summer of historic heat in [Europe](#), and [India](#) experienced some of the highest temperatures on modern record. In August, extreme temperatures helped trigger the sudden glacial collapse of [Langtang Lirung](#), causing horrific loss of life and widespread destruction in Nepal and Tibet.

Simultaneously, the human tragedy of the US/Israel war on Iran has been compounded by a severe global energy crisis. Fossil fuel dependency has led to [“fossilflation”](#), leaving people worldwide paying higher bills as energy and commodity prices surge. In contrast, for the already ultra-rich fossil fuel giants the war has been a goldmine, with six oil and gas corporations alone expected to report close to [US\\$94 billion](#) in combined profits in 2026.

In August, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) issued a heartbreaking declaration: that the world has passed the threshold of climate stability and is [heading beyond 1.5°C](#) with far worse climate extremes to come. This must not become a declaration of defeat. It must spark an immediate, far reaching response by political and corporate leaders alike to ensure overshoot is as low and short as possible, and to ensure that the countries and communities most vulnerable and least responsible receive the public finance support they are owed to build resilience. Higher and longer overshoot increases adaptation needs, ecosystem damage, and the likelihood of irreversible loss and damage.

A path back to 1.5°C is achievable and necessary. And with it comes the promise of a renewable energy system that strengthens security and sovereignty, increases affordable energy access and supports development. As well as through protecting and restoring the integrity of forest ecosystems to safeguard their crucial role in stabilising Earth systems that support livelihood security for all humanity. But getting there demands concerted action: above all to accelerate the just transition away from fossil fuels, the single biggest driver of the climate crisis; as well as action to end deforestation and forest degradation by 2030; and to scale public finance from developed to developing countries for climate action and nature protection, funded in a large part through progressive polluter taxation.

Priorities

Urgent action to accelerate the transition away from fossil fuels

Despite record growth in renewable energy deployment, the amount of fossil fuels the world produces and consumes is still increasing, pushing emissions to dangerous new highs. In 2025, oil, gas and coal consumption increased, even as a record [800 GW of renewable capacity](#) was added globally. And governments, in aggregate, still plan to produce more than [double the amount of fossil fuels in 2030](#) than would be consistent with limiting long term warming to 1.5°C. Tackling climate change means tackling fossil fuels - and fast.

The continued failure to curb the production, supply and use of fossil fuels demands urgent, stronger and more proactive measures through both national action and multilateral cooperation to accelerate a just transition.

In the wake of the perils fossil fuel dependency has brought this year, COP31 must signal a firm commitment to a new path - one anchored in renewables-based electrification and an active wind-down of fossil fuels. Crucially, this includes a focus on the “35 by 35” electrification goal - a vital pillar of the global shift away from fossil fuels. A well designed goal can accelerate a just transition globally, particularly in developing countries, by expanding affordable energy access, strengthening energy security and sovereignty, while supporting development. But to truly accelerate the transition, the goal must do more than set an ambition for electrification: it must drive renewable-powered electrification that actively displaces fossil fuels as part of an equitable, affordable and people-centred transition, serving as a floor for ambition, not a ceiling.

Capitalizing on momentum from the [Santa Marta](#) conference, COP31 needs to also serve as a pivotal moment for countries to deliver national roadmaps for transitioning away from fossil fuels. Developed nations must lead by producing their own roadmaps and committing the finance needed to support developing countries in the transition. So far, governments including France, the Netherlands and Germany have taken the first step in putting forward fossil fuel transition roadmaps. But these plans need to go further, with greater ambition to accelerate the transition away from coal, oil and gas and a focus on addressing the scale of global finance needed to support developing countries in delivering it. And to ensure these transition plans deliver in practice, COP31 must establish the Just Transition mechanism agreed to at COP30, to support and drive equitable, inclusive and just transition globally and nationally.

What COP31 must deliver on fossil fuels?

- **Reaffirm and accelerate action towards the headline [first Global Stocktake \(GST1\)](#) energy goals:** tripling renewable energy and doubling energy efficiency by 2030, and accelerating a just, orderly and equitable transition away from fossil fuels this critical decade.
- **Embed a global "35 by 35" electrification goal in the COP31 outcome** - to scale renewable power generation to at least 75% by 2035 and phase down fossil fuels, backed by finance, technology and capacity building support tailored to developing countries' sectoral and infrastructure needs.

- **Establish a Just Transition Mechanism** to coordinate fragmented global efforts and accelerate international finance and capacity support for just transition.
- **Present national action and roadmaps to transition away from fossil fuels** - building on the landmark Santa Marta conference, COP31 should serve as a key milestone for governments to present national roadmaps, with developed countries taking the lead.
- **Advance means of implementation** - To unlock action in developing countries, COP31 must deliver concrete progress on essential implementation enablers, particularly climate finance, as detailed below.
- **Set informal expectations for a robust Global Plastics Treaty** - Ahead of the next negotiations in March, COP31 is a critical opportunity for governments to underscore the climate dimensions of plastic pollution and defend a strong and effective Treaty that contributes to the transition away from fossil fuels.

Beyond deforestation: the need to preserve ecosystem integrity

Forest governance has entered a period of legal and political transformation. Scientific evidence demonstrates that halting and reversing deforestation and forest degradation by 2030, protecting at least 30% of terrestrial areas, and restoring at least 30% of degraded terrestrial ecosystems by 2030 are not just environmental aspirations, but are necessary to return global warming to below 1.5°C and prevent irreversible ecosystem collapse, biodiversity loss and destabilisation of critical Earth systems. Given the crucial role of forest ecosystems, the Rio Conventions' 2030 deforestation, degradation, protection and restoration targets should be viewed as a hard climate and biodiversity boundary.

After the global community's failure to reach ambitious decisions on forests in last year's COP30 negotiations, the Brazil-led 2030 Forest Roadmap presents a critical opportunity to translate commitments and agreed targets into operational implementation. Importantly, the Roadmap and a 2030 Forest target implementation process should embrace the unique opportunity to create an inclusive, participatory, multi-stakeholder implementation coordination process, to reduce fragmentation across the forest governance landscape, strengthen coordination, improve accountability, and bridge the gaps between finance and delivery. The voluntary nature of existing and new multilateral efforts is not an excuse for the urgent need for accountability of political and corporate leaders to protect and restore forest ecosystems by 2030.

Forests also stand at the crossroads of climate change, biodiversity loss and land degradation, three facets of a single, interconnected planetary emergency. Yet, they are governed by multiple multilateral agreements and three separate Rio Conventions - the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), each with its own set of national implementation plans. This [siloed approach](#) is a fundamental flaw in the architecture of global environmental governance, leading to conflicting policies, duplicated efforts and missed opportunities for synergistic action. However, the issue of reshaping the collaboration and coordination between the Rio Conventions has gained momentum. After CBD and UNCCD COPs called upon the UNFCCC to respond to their offer to enhance collaboration, it is now up to COP31 to

respond constructively with a clear vision on how synergies can be maximised to attain more effective implementation of the obligations under the Rio Conventions. To boost synergies for more ambitious implementation, COP31 should adopt a decision to provide the Joint Liaison Group of the Rio Conventions with a new, enhanced mandate, transforming it from a liaison body into an active facilitator of synergistic implementation.

What COP31 must deliver for forests

- **Strengthen legal frameworks and recognise the 2030 forest & biodiversity targets as a benchmark for due diligence:** States should establish legal and regulatory frameworks that demonstrate due diligence to achieve the 2030 targets, including enforceable mechanisms for monitoring, transparency, accountability and remediation.
- **Establish an implementation and accountability framework:** Governments, corporations, Indigenous Peoples, local communities and all stakeholders should work collaboratively to establish implementation and accountability architecture capable of delivering the 2030 forest and biodiversity targets. The Roadmap should provide a platform to coordinate implementation across the climate, biodiversity, trade, finance and human rights regimes. It should further support the development of common standards, metrics, and reporting frameworks for ecosystem integrity, forest degradation and restoration, and ensure that emissions and ecological impacts associated with forest degradation, including from commercial logging and extractive industries, are fully recognised and accounted for in international governance systems.
- **Fully operationalise Article 5 of the Paris Agreement:** a UNFCCC [Action Plan](#) under the SBI is needed within the formal negotiations to strengthen ecosystem integrity, align climate, biodiversity and forest governance, and improve coordination, finance, accountability and international cooperation across the Rio Conventions. States should integrate the 2030 forest target into Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), Biennial Transparency Reports and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), and ensure the second Global Stocktake adopts a forward-looking approach to implement the 2030 forest target of the [first Global Stocktake](#).
- **Mandate institutional synergies:** A COP31 decision to enhance the mandate of the Joint Liaison Group of the Rio Conventions will build the essential institutional architecture to support the synchronised implementation of the Paris Agreement, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and the UNCCD Land Degradation Targets, ensuring a holistic and effective response to the interconnected climate-biodiversity crisis.

Climate finance and making polluters pay

Devastating climate change impacts have significantly intensified in 2026, while Global North countries have cut back, rather than stepped up their public finance support to Global South countries. For example, the Government of Nepal estimates [\\$5 billion](#) in recovery costs from the [climate change-exacerbated](#) glacier collapse in August. Meanwhile, net official development assistance is projected to fall to its [lowest level since 2014](#), public climate finance was reported to [drop for the first time ever](#) (based on 2024 numbers), and the Fund for Responding to Loss and

Damage is [disastrously underfunded](#), with less than US\$1 billion pledged, and less than US\$500 million received.

COP31 must urgently address the disconnect between developed countries' international climate finance obligations and their inadequate contributions. Developed countries' requirements under the New Collective Quantified Goal to provide high quality, grant-based public finance for mitigation, adaptation and loss and damage to meet the US\$300 billion a year goal by 2035 at a minimum must be reinforced, implemented and monitored - with the understanding that the target is grossly insufficient and must be increased.

Substantial progress towards closing the finance gap can be made through progressive environmental tax reform at the national, regional and global level, in line with developed country obligations to provide climate finance under Article 9.1 of the Paris Agreement. This would see wealthy polluting corporations and high-net worth individuals being held to account for their climate damages, capitalising on growing political momentum against [surging](#) fossil fuel company profits in the wake of the war on Iran. Endorsing progressive taxation at COP31 is vital to supercharging action.

What COP31 must deliver on climate finance and making polluters pay?

- **Developed country governments need to announce ambitious multi-year post-2025 climate finance commitments** that reflect their country's fair share in delivering the US\$300 billion goal: prioritising grant-based finance; clarifying their contribution to tripling adaptation finance by 2035; and providing substantial contributions to multilateral climate funds, including the Fund for Responding for Loss and Damage.
- **The Climate Finance Work Programme must be adopted on the COP31 agenda, focused on advancing implementation of Article 9.1 obligations, and including a dedicated workstream on equitable and additional sources of international climate finance.** This should identify pathways to deliver, in line with Common But Differentiated Responsibility and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC), progressive environmental taxation at the national and regional level in developed countries, as well as at the global level under the UN Framework Convention for International Tax Cooperation, in line with obligations under Article 9.1.
- **Developed countries must commit to at least triple adaptation finance by 2035, primarily through public grant-based finance, aligning as closely as possible to developing countries' demand for \$120 billion by 2030.** A delivery plan for this must be agreed, especially on how parties will operationalize means of implementation for the Global Goal on Adaptation.
- **A permanent agenda item on loss and damage should be agreed, and the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage's long-term resource mobilisation strategy must set out a clear plan for progressive environmental taxation** in developed countries and internationally, in line with the polluter pays principle and CBDR-RC.

- **The Veredas Dialogue must drive tangible action towards aligning global finance flows with the goals of the Paris Agreement** - addressing structural economic inequalities (debt, tax and trade), equitably phasing out fossil fuel subsidies, and advancing innovative sources of public climate finance through progressive environmental taxation and polluter-pays measures, in line with CBDR-RC.

Other priority issues for COP31

- **COP31 must launch a second Global Stocktake (GST2) that is inclusive, equity centred, incorporates the best available science from the IPCC, and focuses on delivering the Paris Agreement goals and GST1 outcomes.** GST2 must track implementation progress - critically on the just, equitable and orderly transition away from fossil fuels and halting and reversing deforestation and forest degradation by 2030. To drive a course correction, GST2 must be forward looking: setting new goals and expectations by assessing whether current policies, finance flows, means of implementation, equity and justice considerations, and international cooperation are sufficient to deliver the Paris Agreement goals across mitigation, adaptation, and loss and damage.
- **Agriculture must remain high on the climate agenda and inform the next GST. And to guarantee healthy food for all, the UNFCCC must drive the transformation of food systems into agroecological and low carbon models.** Once the Sharm el-Sheikh Joint Work on Agriculture and Food concludes, discussions should continue beyond COP31 - with an implementation-oriented framework that directly links adaptation, mitigation, and food security, with particular attention to vulnerable countries and small-scale farmers. The next phase should help countries integrate measures into NDCs, NAPs and other national planning frameworks to drive action on the ground. Agroecological transformation should have the primary objective to strengthen climate resilience of food systems and cut emissions by transitioning out of industrial meat and dairy production.
- **COP31 must ensure that climate action and the next round of NDCs are grounded in the best available science and Indigenous knowledge to keep 1.5°C within reach.** Science provides an essential foundation for global climate cooperation and equitable action. COP31 must ensure that climate action, including the next round of NDCs, is informed by the latest comprehensive peer reviewed science, including the recent UNEP [Limiting Overshoot](#) report and the upcoming International Panel on Climate Change [Seventh Assessment](#) - while strengthening equity and Global South literature as well as Indigenous, local and practitioner knowledge in the assessment process. This includes reaffirming 1.5°C as a fundamental imperative, including the need to minimise the magnitude and duration of overshoot and return warming to below 1.5°C as soon as possible; accelerating the just transition away from fossil fuels; rejecting false solutions and alternative accounting for biogenic methane emissions (e.g. global warming potential star, GWP*); and avoiding dangerous tipping points in the climate system.
- **Protecting oceans and halting marine extractivism** - The world can no longer afford to ignore the critical role of oceans within Earth's climate system, and of healthy marine and coastal ecosystems in maintaining resilience against climate change. The [shared Ocean](#)

[priority](#) of the COP31 Presidencies offers a major opportunity to advance action. Continued offshore oil and gas extraction not only maintains fossil fuel dependency and drives additional carbon emissions, but also threatens the ocean's ability to provide critical ecosystem services. This threat extends to broader forms of marine extractivism, including the emerging threat of deep-sea mining, which poses severe risks to benthic ecosystems, potentially disturbing seafloor carbon sinks and long-term ocean resilience. Halting these activities in the transition away from fossil fuels is necessary. Equally important is the recognition of risks and unknowns associated with marine carbon dioxide removal (marine CDR). Techniques that are highly uncertain in their efficacy and carry potential risks for nature, people and the role of the ocean in the climate system - as well as being unproven at scale and having high potential to undermine decarbonisation efforts.

Related Greenpeace policy briefs and resources:

- [Policy brief: A just transition away from fossil fuels](#)
- [Policy brief: An electrification goal for a fossil free future](#)
- [Beyond Deforestation: Ecosystem integrity and the emerging legal paradigm](#)
- [Greenpeace submission on the UNFCCC Climate Finance Work Programme](#)
- [Blog: 5 reasons Greenpeace calls for new global tax rules at UN Tax Convention negotiations](#)

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