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GREENPEACE

COP31: MID-POINT MEDIA BRIEFING

Greenpeace's assessment of the first week of COP31 highlights a number of key concerns

Strong rhetoric, weak overall ambition - The Leaders Summit delivered familiar declarations about the urgency of climate action, but little evidence of the political ambition necessary to change the current trajectory. Despite strong calls for action, most leaders focused on existing commitments, national achievements and voluntary initiatives rather than new collective commitments and accelerated implementation commensurate with the scale of the crisis.

The world is heading beyond 1.5°C, but the response remains inadequate - Growing acknowledgement of the likelihood of exceeding 1.5°C has not translated into the urgency needed to limit the magnitude and duration of overshoot. Governments have yet to demonstrate a credible collective response to the emissions gap. Acknowledging overshoot must not become a way of normalising failure or an excuse for delaying stronger near-term emissions reductions.

Fossil fuel transition faces a critical political test - The Presidency's reflections document on the cover decision currently includes references to transitioning away from fossil fuels, but whether these survive in the final negotiated outcome remains uncertain. The main opportunities lie in an electrification goal anchored in renewables that displaces fossil fuels, alongside taking forward Brazil's TAFF roadmap through a process that maintains space for advancing implementation on TAFF. Without progress, COP31 risks failing to deliver one of the most important steps needed to limit the magnitude and duration of 1.5°C overshoot.

Tensions on formalising the '35 by 35' electrification goal and ensuring it is anchored in renewables and displacing fossil fuels - Negotiators are discussing whether to bring Türkiye's Action Agenda '35 by 35' electrification goal into the formal COP31 outcome. Despite growing momentum on electrification this year, countries are split: several countries back the target while pushing for it to specify clean, renewable power, whereas others strongly oppose new targets tied to specific energy sources. To contribute to reducing emissions, the goal must be anchored in renewables that displace fossil fuels, supported by international finance for developing countries, and explicitly aligned with delivering universal energy access.

Push for a cover decision risks sidelining core COP31 mandates – There's growing concern that the Australian Presidency's heavy focus on crafting a cover decision could come at the expense of the leadership and bandwidth needed across other essential negotiations. Most notably operationalising the Just Transition Mechanism and delivering on the commitment to triple adaptation finance, which are critical priorities for developing countries and civil society at this COP.

Climate finance continues to undermine trust - The difficult opening negotiations over the Climate Finance Work Programme exposed persistent divisions over developed countries' financial obligations, following repeated cuts in public finance that have hugely eroded trust. Developing countries continue to demand predictable,

adequate and accessible grant-based public finance, while developed countries emphasise the need to expand the contributor base and private finance solutions. This cannot substitute for the delivery of public finance provision obligations under the Paris Agreement.

Hints of useful language around making polluters pay - following growing political pressure and another reiteration of support from UN Secretary-General António Guterres around making polluting fossil fuel corporations pay for climate damages, the latest text for the Climate Finance Work Programme includes four potential hooks to advance the agenda of taxing polluters to close the finance gap. Whether this language lands will depend on the extent to which it is grounded in the delivery of developed countries' obligations to provide public finance.

The Presidency faces a critical test: breakthrough or lowest common-denominator compromise - Despite commitments to dialogue, consensus and action, deep disagreements remain over the substance and even the necessity of a cover decision. There is a real danger that the pursuit of consensus becomes an exercise in removing difficult issues until governments reach an agreement that everyone can accept precisely because it demands so little.

MEDIA CONTACTS

Aaron Gray-Block
WhatsApp/Phone: +61 437 845 150
Email: aaron.gray-block@greenpeace.org

Franck Mithieux (week 1)
WhatsApp/Phone: +33 619 766 606
Email: franck.mithieux@greenpeace.org

Reka Hunyadi (week 2)
WhatsApp/Phone: +36 205 253 500
Email: reka.hunyadi@greenpeace.org

Greenpeace International Pressdesk
24/7 hotline: +31 (0)20 718 2470
Email: pressdesk.int@greenpeace.org