AN ELECTRIFICATION GOAL FOR A FOSSIL-FREE FUTURE

Momentum is growing for a “35 by 35” electrification goal. As a critical pillar of the just transition away from fossil fuels, this focus is both welcome and necessary. A well-designed electrification goal can accelerate a just transition globally - and in developing countries in particular - by expanding affordable energy access, strengthening energy security and sovereignty, reducing exposure to “fossilflation” cost of living impacts, while supporting economic development by powering industry, transport and essential public services. Many developing countries possess some of the world's strongest renewable energy potential but remain constrained by limited investment, grid infrastructure and access to affordable finance.

To truly accelerate the transition, the goal must do more than set an ambition for electrification. It must drive renewable-based electrification that actively displaces fossil fuels as part of an equitable, affordable and people-centred transition. And the goal must serve as a floor, not a ceiling for ambition.

COP31 presents an opportunity to advance an electrification goal that is 1.5°C-aligned, in line with equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR-RC), and accompanied by scaled-up public climate finance, technology transfer and capacity building needed for developing countries to realise its benefits. A well-designed goal, anchored in national roadmaps to transition away from fossil fuels, can advance a shared global objective while supporting national development priorities and reinforcing confidence in multilateral cooperation.

Summary

COP31 must deliver concrete action to accelerate a fast, fair, funded, just transition away from fossil fuels, responding to communities facing a fossil fuel-driven energy, cost-of-living and escalating climate crisis.

A voluntary “35 by 35” electrification goal under the Action Agenda is welcome, as a minimum global benchmark. But COP31 must both elevate this ambition into a formal COP outcome and commit to electrification powered by renewable energy. Electrification must end fossil fuel dependence - not be an end in itself. Its ultimate success depends on ensuring electricity comes from renewable sources that displace fossil fuels and align with a 1.5°C pathway.

COP31 should commit to accelerating the phase-out of fossil fuel power while rapidly scaling renewable electricity generation to at least 75% by 2035. Developed countries should lead by phasing out coal-fired electricity by 2030 and gas-fired electricity by 2035, at the latest.

A “35 by 35” goal must be underpinned by justice, build community resilience and tackle extractivism and historical inequities. It should be backed by finance flowing from polluters

to the people, technology transfer and capacity building for developing countries. Renewable expansion must advance universal access to affordable electricity, respect communities, human rights and ecosystems while avoiding false solutions that prolong fossil fuel dependence or exploit people and nature.

What does a well-designed electrification goal entail?

The electrification goal must be 1.5-aligned and accelerate the transition away from fossil fuels

- **Electrification must be a pathway to ending fossil fuel dependence - not be an end in itself.** A “35 by 35” goal is only as good as the electricity behind it. It must be focused on renewables-based electrification that displaces fossil fuels in line with the 1.5°C temperature limit.
- **COP31 must therefore agree that by 2035, at least 75% of electricity will be supplied by renewables.** This is consistent with the IEA NZE report - which underpins the 35% goal and specifies 77% renewables and 58% solar and wind shares within electricity by 2035.
- **Energy efficiency and demand reduction must be first-order priorities.** These measures lower system costs, strengthen energy security and enable renewable scale-up to displace fossil fuels faster.
- **Renewables must outpace demand growth.** Electrification will only accelerate the transition if renewable generation grows faster than total electricity demand and replaces fossil fuel use.
- **The Global Stocktake commitments to triple renewables and double energy efficiency by 2030 are critical stepping stones** towards the “35 by 35” electrification goal; further target-setting for 2030-35 will also be essential.

The electrification goal must be equitable and backed by means of implementation for developing countries

- **Around 90% of energy transition investment is concentrated in advanced economies and China**.
    - This disparity is stark in installed capacity: developed countries average over 1,100 watts of renewable capacity per person, while low income countries/Sub-Saharan Africa have only around 40 watts despite huge solar potential.
- **Many developing countries cannot make required electrification investments without international support.** Finance, technology transfer and other means of implementation are essential for the goal to benefit developing countries that need support. A huge financing gap constrains investment in renewables, grids, storage, and energy efficiency.
- **Developed countries need to urgently scale-up predictable, accessible and affordable climate finance** - especially grants and concessional finance - progressing towards the US$300 billion goal, increasing it to reflect actual needs, and also scaling up towards US$1.3 trillion investment goal. Developed countries' commitments to electrification must be measured both by their domestic targets and by international support provided.

- **Governments should implement top-up taxes on fossil fuel profits and taxes on high net worth individuals** to raise public climate finance for the transition and incentivise fossil fuel phaseout.

The electrification goal must avoid false solutions and dangerous distractions

In addition to fossil-free electrification, focus needs to be on renewables not "clean energy", which potentially includes false solutions that must be avoided, including:

- nuclear which is inherently high cost and high risk;
- Carbon Capture and Storage which distracts from rapid, absolute emissions cuts now and delays the phase-out of fossil fuels;
- biomass that causes deforestation and forest degradation; and
- characterising fossil gas as a transition fuel.

The electrification goal must center justice and avoid perpetuating fossil fuel related inequities

- **Generation expansion should prioritise the 660+ million people without basic energy access** - through distributed solar, wind and mini-grids to large-scale renewable power systems.
- **Renewables must expand affordable electricity access while strengthening energy security and sovereignty** - reducing peoples' exposure to fossil fuel price shocks and easing the cost of living impacts of "fossilflation".
- **Electricity systems must be designed for people** - households, communities, cities - enabling active participation in decarbonisation.
- **Strong social and environmental safeguards are essential, such as respecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities as well as preventing negative consequences**, including land grabs, displacement, biodiversity loss, impacts on food security and human rights abuses. This includes the sourcing of minerals needed for electrification including lithium, cobalt, copper and rare earth elements for renewable energy systems, batteries and storage.
- **"Critical minerals" should be governed and prioritised for just transition away from fossil fuels**. Governments must ensure that mineral use is prioritised for renewable energy and sustainable transport. While electric vehicles (EVs) play a central role, there are also significant challenges when it comes to the projected mineral demand from EVs and resulting extractive pressures such as deep sea mining. Rather than prioritising private transport modes, governments must focus on improving and investing in public and active transport while also reducing mineral demand through battery innovation, circularity, and recycling.

How can COP31 and national action make the "35 by 35" electrification goal a reality?

COP31 should connect a global electrification goal, national roadmaps and international support into a coherent implementation framework. Done well, this can turn electrification

from a headline global target into nationally owned pathways that deliver the transition away from fossil fuels while advancing energy access, resilience and sustainable development; and demonstrate how international cooperation can translate collective ambition into mutually beneficial implementation.

A formal COP outcome to cement the "35 by 35" goal and accelerate the transition away from fossil fuels

- **COP31 needs to secure concrete action to accelerate the just, orderly and equitable transition away from fossil fuels**, building on momentum from the global TAFF conference in Santa Marta, Brazil's TAFF roadmap process and the growing imperative to respond to the fossil fuel-driven energy crisis.
- **COP31 needs to elevate the ambition of the "35 by 35" electrification goal from the Action Agenda into a formal COP outcome** that commits to accelerating the phase-out of fossil fuel power while rapidly scaling renewable electricity with a goal of at least 75% renewable generation by 2035.

National roadmaps to drive implementation, in line with CBDR-RC and backed by means of implementation

- **The "35 by 35" goal should be a global minimum benchmark, not a uniform national target.** National pathways should reflect different starting points, national circumstances, development needs, capacities and renewable energy potential, in line with equity and CBDR-RC. Electrification should not look the same everywhere. In countries with energy access challenges, bringing affordable power to remote areas should be prioritised, including through decentralized renewable energy systems and mini grids.
- **National transition roadmaps should translate the global goal into credible implementation pathways that enable developing countries to leapfrog fossil fuel dependence.** These should set out how countries will scale renewable-based electrification alongside grids, storage and energy efficiency while reducing fossil fuel dependence, and identify the investment, infrastructure, technology and capacity needs required for delivery. Roadmaps should integrate wider priorities to enable just economic transformation, supporting resource-rich developing countries to move beyond extractivist models based on raw materials exports to greater domestic value addition and local content.
- **For developing countries needing support, ambition must be matched by means of implementation.** Roadmaps should identify the finance, technology transfer and capacity-building required to deliver national pathways, with developed countries providing scaled-up, predictable and accessible public climate finance, particularly grants and concessional finance. Applying CBDR-RC therefore means both differentiated national implementation and differentiated responsibility for enabling it: those with greater historical responsibility and capacity must lead in reducing fossil fuel dependence while supporting developing countries to realise their renewable energy and electrification potential.