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COP31 Fossil Fuel Phase-out

Global Divide Over Climate Commitments

COP31 – Latest News

With just one day left in the two-week COP31 climate conference in Antalya, Türkiye, the latest draft of the cover text (dated November 19, 2026) dropped all references to fossil fuel phase-out and net-zero dates, triggering anger among negotiators.

This marks a stark regression from the conference's opening draft and echoes a similar failure at last year's Brazil summit, where over 80 countries had pushed unsuccessfully for the issue's inclusion.

What Changed in the Draft?

The first draft had called for "accelerated action to phase out fossil fuels" and an "immediate transition away from fossil fuels in energy systems."

Later, the revised draft removed every single mention of fossil fuels — not just these two phrases.

Experts called it a glaring regression, stating: "You cannot solve a fossil fuel crisis by pretending we don't need to phase out fossil fuels."

The cover text itself is a broad political framing document for the summit's outcome, finalised last and requiring consensus of all Parties.

The revised cover decision shrank from 144 paragraphs (November 16) to 80 paragraphs (November 19), indicating significant paring down of contested provisions.

Why Fossil Fuels Remain the Core Sticking Point

Burning fossil fuels (coal, oil and gas) accounts for nearly three-quarters of global greenhouse gas emissions, yet they still meet over 80% of global energy needs.

For almost three decades, climate negotiations avoided using the term "fossil fuels" entirely in COP decisions.

It was only at COP28 in Dubai (2023) that "fossil fuels" was mentioned for the first time in a main agreement.

Divergent Interests

- **European Union:** Has led calls for a fossil fuel phase-out roadmap.
- **Major oil-producing economies:** Oppose such mechanisms, given their dependence on fossil fuel revenues.
- **Major energy consumers:** Countries such as India and China are also not enthusiastic, reflecting their energy security concerns.

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- **National transition plans:** At least eight European countries have announced their own national roadmaps for transitioning away from fossil fuels, independent of the COP process.

The 1.5°C Target: A More "Realistic" Tone

Two scientific reports earlier in 2026 concluded that the window to keep warming within 1.5°C (the Paris Agreement target) is no longer firmly open — a rise to 1.7–1.8°C now appears inevitable.

The first draft had called to return to 1.5°C "as early as possible" and proposed a 'work programme' to study pathways back to 1.5°C after overshoot.

Later, the draft softened this significantly — it merely "resolves to continue pursuing efforts" toward 1.5°C and to limit the duration and magnitude of overshoot; the proposed 'work programme' was dropped entirely.

What Survived in the Draft

- **Electricity's share:** A target to raise electricity's share in global final energy consumption to 35% by 2035, up from 23% currently. This proposal, championed by host nation Türkiye, was elevated from a voluntary pledge to a negotiated decision.
- **Carbon capture:** Scaling up carbon capture utilisation technologies.
- **Early warning systems:** Making early warning systems universal by 2027.
- **Adaptation finance:** A broad, non-specific commitment to triple adaptation finance.

India's Perspective

India's electricity use rose 13% in 2025 due to the Hormuz crisis alone.

While 35% electrification by 2035 is ambitious, India's growing renewable energy mix should bring it to 32–34% by then.

What Was Dropped – A Blow to Developing Nations

- **Adaptation finance target:** A firm $120 billion annual adaptation-finance target, which developing countries sought as a "legally binding financial obligation" on developed nations, was eliminated.
- **Trade measures:** The proposal to phase out unilateral trade measures like the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) by 2027 — a major developing-country concern — was also removed.

Analysts criticised rich nations, particularly EU countries, for resisting the $120 billion commitment: "Some countries seem willing to push negotiations toward failure."

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The Bigger Picture

The removal of both the fossil fuel phase-out demand (developing and climate-vulnerable nations' key ask) and the firm adaptation-finance target (developed nations' key resistance point) suggests the most ambitious demands of both blocs have been diluted — a classic COP compromise-through-dilution pattern.

Climate conferences rarely end on schedule; despite an official November 20 end date, negotiations often overshoot into the weekend.

Key Issues for Discussion

- **Climate ambition versus energy security:** How can countries reduce fossil fuel dependence while ensuring reliable and affordable energy?
- **Climate finance and equity:** Should developed countries accept stronger financial obligations to support vulnerable developing nations?
- **Global consensus:** Do consensus-based COP negotiations encourage compromise at the cost of ambitious climate action?
- **Trade and climate policy:** How can climate-related trade measures be designed without creating unfair barriers for developing economies?
- **India's transition:** How can India balance development needs, energy security and its renewable-energy ambitions?

Conclusion

COP31's watered-down draft reveals persistent fault lines in global climate diplomacy — between fossil-fuel producers and climate-vulnerable nations, and between developed countries' reluctance on finance and developing nations' demand for accountability. With the 1.5°C target now described in the supplied material as effectively unreachable and key commitments diluted, the summit risks reinforcing scepticism about whether COP negotiations can still deliver meaningful and equitable climate action.