



April 10, 2026

André Corrêa do Lago
President of COP30
COP30-TAFF-Roadmap@unfccc.int

Re: Submission to the COP30 Presidency Roadmap on the Transition Away from Fossil Fuels in a Just, Orderly and Equitable Manner

Dear COP30 Presidency,

Introduction

Waterkeeper Alliance welcomes the COP30 Presidency's initiative to operationalize the outcomes of the Global Stocktake (GST) under the Paris Agreement, including the call to transition away from fossil fuels "in a just, orderly, and equitable manner" (as outlined at COP28 in the GST, paragraph 28.d). Drawing on the experience of our global network of water defenders, Waterkeeper Alliance is acutely aware that the phase-out of fossil fuels is not only a climate imperative, but also essential to protecting water resources, public health, and the rights and livelihoods of frontline communities. The climate crisis is a water crisis; from droughts, floods, and other climate impacts, to oil spills and shipping traffic, fossil fuels are a critical threat to clean water globally.

Waterkeeper Alliance is a global movement uniting more than 300 community-based Waterkeeper groups worldwide, who collectively work to protect their local rivers, lakes and shorelines. Waterkeeper groups are on the front lines of the planetary environmental crisis, patrolling and protecting nearly six million square miles of rivers, lakes, and coastal waterways on six continents. Together, we fight every day on behalf of the common good to protect public health, the environment, and sustainable livelihoods.

Barriers to Progress

Significant barriers continue to impede progress toward the fossil fuel transition. Political and institutional lock-in remains a central challenge, as fossil fuel subsidies persist, regulatory systems are often influenced by energy companies, and new fossil fuel projects continue to be

approved despite governments' stated climate commitments. In many regions, foreign corporate actors reinforce extractive development pathways that are misaligned with long-term sustainability goals. At the same time, global financial flows remain disproportionately invested in fossil fuel expansion. Lower income countries in particular face high costs of capital and significant debt burdens, limiting their ability to invest in renewable energy systems and enabling infrastructure.

Social and equity considerations also present major obstacles. Frontline communities, Indigenous Peoples, and small-scale resource users are frequently excluded from decision-making processes, even when they bear the greatest risks. Narratives that frame fossil fuel development as a pathway to economic growth often obscure the long-term environmental damage and the disruption of traditional livelihoods. These dynamics are compounded by the physical and environmental pressures associated with fossil fuel extraction, including water contamination, ecosystem degradation, and growing climate-related disruptions to infrastructure. In addition, technological and infrastructure gaps, such as limited grid capacity, insufficient storage, and unmanaged legacy fossil assets, continue to slow the pace of transition in many regions.

Pathways to a Transition

Despite these barriers, there are clear and actionable pathways to accelerate progress. Governments must adopt clear, science-aligned, and time-bound commitments to phase out fossil fuels, including an immediate halt to new exploration and expansion. Financial systems must be reoriented to support this transition by redirecting subsidies toward renewable energy and energy access, scaling up grant-based climate finance, and reforming international financial institutions to better serve developing countries. Stronger accountability and transparency mechanisms are also needed, including mandatory disclosure of emissions and fossil fuel financing, as well as robust regulation of methane emissions.

Equally important is the need to center communities in the transition process. Legal recognition of Indigenous and local rights, including free, prior, and informed consent, must be upheld, and direct financing should be made available for community-led renewable energy initiatives. International institutions must implement such legal standards, and penalize states and corporate actors who infringe upon peoples' rights.

Experiences from Waterkeeper groups in different regions offer important lessons for the development of effective transition pathways. In The Bahamas, sustained civil society advocacy led by Waterkeepers Bahamas successfully opposed offshore oil drilling and contributed to the government's decision to halt the renewal of offshore drilling licenses, demonstrating how small island states can resist new fossil fuel expansion despite external pressures. For a small island nation, the risk of an oil spill is catastrophic to marine ecosystems, freshwater resources, tourism, and fisheries, while the effects of sea-level rise, ocean warming and intensifying storms are

already being felt acutely. National polling showed that over 80% of Bahamians support a ban on offshore oil and gas drilling, clearly demonstrating strong public support for the fossil fuel transition. The government has since joined the global call for a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty, and ongoing efforts are focused on securing a permanent legislative ban on offshore drilling, alongside advancing policies that support climate resilience. This example illustrates how advocacy, public engagement, and political leadership can prevent fossil fuel expansion and align national policy with climate and environmental goals.

In contrast, recent developments in Senegal highlight the risks associated with continued fossil fuel expansion. New offshore oil and gas projects, driven largely by foreign investment, have been promoted as engines of economic development. However, local advocacy efforts by Waterkeeper groups such as Bargny Coast Waterkeeper and Hann Baykeeper have emphasized that these projects threaten marine ecosystems, fisheries, and traditional livelihoods, while overstating their long-term economic benefits, as demonstrated in a [new report](#). The fossil fuel infrastructure impacts not only marine ecosystems but onshore water systems as well, through spills, explosions, pollution, and salinization of freshwater resources. In contrast, advocates have demonstrated that solar energy systems can provide more affordable, reliable, and sustainable energy access. The experience in Senegal underscores the importance of challenging dominant development narratives, strengthening political will, and investing in renewable infrastructure that reflects local needs and priorities.

In the Pacific Northwest of the United States, Columbia Riverkeeper and community advocates are fighting back against dangerous pipeline expansions. Energy companies' proposals to expand pipeline infrastructure would funnel gas directly through low income and rural communities, with immediate risks to air quality, water quality, human and environmental health. Advocates are taking companies to court for failing to adequately account for environmental risks, and coalitions are raising local awareness; however, with safety regulations lacking at the state and federal level, the harms and burdens of fossil fuel infrastructure fall to local communities.

A just, orderly, and equitable transition must be grounded in the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, with developed countries taking the lead in rapidly phasing out fossil fuels and providing financial and technical support to developing countries. At the same time, national governments must demonstrate the political will necessary to end fossil fuel expansion and establish enabling frameworks for renewable energy deployment. The roadmap must consider clean water access as a key concern and hold fossil fuel polluters accountable while encouraging a renewable buildout that does not threaten waterways. Central to this transition is the meaningful participation of communities, who must be empowered to determine their own energy futures, particularly where livelihoods are closely tied to natural resources.

Conclusion

The COP30 Presidency Roadmap should establish a clear benchmark of no new fossil fuel expansion and prioritize investment in renewable energy infrastructure, particularly in underserved and vulnerable regions. Aligning transition pathways with human rights obligations, ecosystem protection, and community-led development will be essential to ensuring that the transition is both effective and enduring.

Ultimately, the success of the global transition away from fossil fuels will be measured not only by emissions reductions, but by its ability to deliver tangible improvements in environmental quality, water security, and human well-being. Embedding human rights, justice, accountability, and community leadership into the COP30 Roadmap will be critical to achieving these outcomes.

Sincerely,

Waterkeeper Alliance