

(a) What are the most critical barriers — whether physical, economic, financial, institutional, technological or social— preventing a transition away from fossil fuels?

The Center for Earth Ethics (CEE) welcomes the efforts of the COP30 Presidency to develop a roadmap on transitioning away from fossil fuels in a just, orderly and equitable manner, and looks forward to the First Conference on Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuels in Santa Marta as a significant contribution to building the multilateral cooperation this moment requires.

In our view, the most critical barriers preventing the transition are structural, financial and cultural, and they are interconnected.

The financial barriers are substantial. Renewable energy is now cheaper than fossil fuels in most contexts: the [July 2025 IRENA report](#) found that solar PV was 41% cheaper than the lowest-cost fossil fuel based energy sources, and onshore wind was 53% cheaper, yet public finance continues to flow in the wrong direction. According to the [International Energy Agency](#) (IEA), Governments spent \$620 billion on direct fossil fuel subsidies in 2023, nearly nine times what was spent on consumer-facing clean energy support, including grants or rebates for electric vehicles, efficiency improvements or heat pumps, representing a fundamental misalignment of public finance with stated climate commitments. [International funding mechanisms](#) continue to incentivize lower-income countries to invest in fossil fuel infrastructure, locking in dependence at high cost to public health, the environment and long-term economic resilience. Financial institutions, including universities, remain complicit: major fossil fuel corporations donated or pledged at least [\\$677 million](#) to 27 U.S. universities between 2010 and 2020. In turn, universities that are financially supported by the fossil fuel industry are incentivized to create research programs that legitimize fossil fuel interests. Taken together, these financial relationships constitute a system of structural lock-in that is among the most significant impediments to meaningful transition.

The promotion of false solutions compounds these barriers. Narratives framing fossil gas as a "bridge fuel" or carbon capture as a substitute for phasing out production are often products of fossil fuel industry lobbying. Ongoing geopolitical instability is similarly invoked to justify continued fossil fuel investment, despite the long-term energy security case for renewables. Market-based mechanisms, including carbon offsets and the financialization of ecosystem services, risk commodifying the natural world in ways that have the potential to reify objectifying worldviews that undergird the ecological crisis and are also inconsistent with Indigenous rights and values, and may further delay genuine transition.

Less acknowledged, but equally consequential, are the cultural and ethical barriers. As highlighted by the Global Ethical Stocktake, the dominant framing of the transition remains technocratic, neglecting the values-based, cultural and spiritual dimensions that drive or obstruct

political will. The harms of fossil fuel extraction extend beyond the physical and economic to include cultural suppression, displacement from sacred sites, and documented mental health impacts on people around the globe, most profoundly on Indigenous and frontline communities. Without a shift in the underlying value systems that have normalized extraction and high-carbon consumption as the foundation of prosperity, implementation gaps will persist regardless of the instruments adopted.

CEE therefore urges the COP30 Presidency to ensure that the Roadmap addresses not only the technocratic and economic dimensions of the transition, but the cultural, ethical and spiritual dimensions that shape public and political will, without which implementation will remain insufficient.

(b) What potential levers, whether economic, financial, institutional, social or technological, exist for accelerating the implementation of the transitioning away commitment?

The Center for Earth Ethics (CEE) identifies several underutilized levers for accelerating the transition: legal, financial, cultural and governance-based.

On the legal front, the July 2025 International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion affirmed that “failure of a State to take appropriate action to protect the climate system from GHG emissions—including through fossil fuel production, fossil fuel consumption, the granting of fossil fuel exploration licences or the provision of fossil fuel subsidies—may constitute an internationally wrongful act.” This provides a significant new basis for accountability that should be actively operationalized through the UNFCCC and UNGA processes.

The legal case for accountability extends beyond states to fossil fuel producers themselves. The Principles of Environmental Justice affirm the right of victims of environmental injustice to full compensation and reparations, and demand that all past and current producers be held strictly accountable for the harms caused at the point of production. These principles, long established within environmental justice movements, are now finding resonance within international legal frameworks.

Reform of international financing is equally urgent. The ICJ affirmed that the duty to cooperate requires good faith implementation of financial and technology transfer commitments, rather than voluntary contributions immune from scrutiny. Climate finance must reach developing countries at scale, at concessional rates and without conditions that entrench fossil fuel dependence, particularly in Africa and other regions with considerable renewable energy potential that remain underserved by current mechanisms.

The cultural and governance dimensions of transition represent perhaps the most underutilized lever of all. At the North America Regional Dialogue of the Global Ethical Stocktake, Robin

Wall Kimmerer, enrolled member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation and SUNY Distinguished Teaching Professor of Environmental Biology, identified the deeper challenge: "We know what to do, but we don't do it. Something is missing." What is missing is a values shift — a story that prioritizes ecological health and wellbeing over profit and reciprocity over extraction, one that couples scientific knowledge with the wisdom of Indigenous and spiritual traditions. Moral leaders, Indigenous knowledge holders, spiritual communities and the culture sector are indispensable partners in building the public and political will the transition requires, yet remain largely absent from the international frameworks governing it. CEE calls on the COP30 Presidency to ensure that the Roadmap formally recognizes the role of moral leadership in catalyzing the cultural narrative shift the transition requires, drawing on the findings and momentum of the Global Ethical Stocktake.

Meaningful inclusion of Indigenous peoples and frontline communities is both a rights obligation and a practical lever. Their governance authority, territorial knowledge and long-term relationships with ecosystems are indispensable to a transition that is effective and just. The July 2025 Inter-American Court of Human Rights Advisory Opinion affirms that states must guarantee the significant participation of persons subject to their jurisdiction in climate decision-making, as well as prior consultation of Indigenous and tribal peoples. Their systematic exclusion from transition frameworks is not only a human rights violation but a practical impediment to implementation. Establishing Free, Prior and Informed Consent as a binding requirement in all transition planning and financing, consistent with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, is essential: transitions imposed without Indigenous consent generate legal contestation, social conflict and implementation failure.