The Climate Reality Project Submission on the COP30 Presidency Roadmap for Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuels in a Just, Orderly and Equitable Manner

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The Climate Reality Project is a global civil society organization founded by former US Vice President Al Gore, working to catalyze a global solution to the climate crisis by making urgent action a necessity across every sector of society. With a global movement of more than 3.8 million strong and a grassroots network of trained Climate Reality Leaders, we are spreading the truth about the climate crisis and building popular support for clean energy solutions.

The COP 30 Presidency, in a note communicated on 27 February 2026, invited submissions on:

- The COP 30 Presidency Roadmap on the Transition Away from Fossil Fuels in a Just, Orderly and Equitable Manner; and
- The COP 30 Presidency Roadmap on Halting and Reversing Deforestation and Forest Degradation by 2030.

The Climate Reality Project welcomes this initiative by the COP 30 Presidency. This submission addresses only the first roadmap, on the transition away from fossil fuels.

Furthermore, the COP 30 Presidency proposed four questions to address:

- What are the most critical barriers — whether physical, economic, financial, institutional, technological or social— preventing a transition away from fossil fuels?
- What potential levers, whether economic, financial, institutional, social or technological, exist for accelerating the implementation of the transitioning away commitment?
- What country, regional or sector roadmap experiences, best practices, and lessons learned can be shared?
- How can a just, orderly and equitable transition best reflect the diverse realities of countries at different stages of development and with different degrees of dependence on fossil fuels?

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Question 1: What are the most critical barriers — whether physical, economic, financial, institutional, technological or social— preventing a transition away from fossil fuels?

Fossil Fuel Influence

One of the primary and most avoidable barriers preventing a transition away from fossil fuels is the insidious influence of fossil fuel companies on multilateral negotiations and on governments at all levels. Fossil fuel companies have been influencing the multilateral processes related to climate change since the original Rio Earth Summit, sowing doubt on the science of climate change and questioning legitimate solutions.[i] More than 1,600 fossil fuel lobbyists attended COP 30, more than two-thirds more than all the delegates from the 10 most climate vulnerable nations combined.[ii] Nationalized fossil fuel companies have deep influence over their country's international climate change and plastics strategy. Lobbying efforts from companies and national fossil fuel companies have stalled progress at the UNFCCC, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, International Maritime Organization, and in negotiations for a global plastics treaty.[iii]

Misaligned incentive structures

The continued use of fossil fuel subsidies prevents a transition away from fossil fuels by artificially skewing the market in favor of fossil fuels despite the societal interest in taking climate action by shifting to clean energy. IMF estimates that explicit and implicit fossil fuel subsidies reached USD 7 billion in 2022.[iv] Fossil fuel subsidies are public money that is being used to artificially prop up polluting industries and lock in consumer behavior despite safer, less expensive alternatives. They also often disproportionately benefit the wealthy.[v]

Development finance still supports fossil fuels, locking in policies and projects that are counter to the principles of sustainable development. This is provided as direct support to fossil fuel projects, budgetary support that does not restrict spending on fossil fuels, direct spending on infrastructure that supports fossil fuel projects, and encouraging fossil-friendly policy changes and technical support.[vi]

Developing countries face a high cost of capital for clean energy projects. Developing countries' average interest cost on external borrowing is three times higher than that of developed countries.[vii] Clean energy projects tend to have substantial up-front capital costs that require borrowing in order to launch, and many countries in the Global South that are spending public funds on debt servicing and essential public services must look outside their borders for energy financing. The risk from these same circumstances, as well as limited market maturity, currency exchange, and other risks mean that Global South countries will pay a higher interest rate for private finance, further indebting the country or altogether preventing investment. As one example, for utility-scale solar power projects, the weighted average cost of capital in Kenya and Senegal is between 8.5% and 9% (and is higher elsewhere in Africa). In North America or Europe, rates are between 4.7% and 6.4%.[viii]

Governments have a significant policy gap to fill on climate action while competing mandates and crises, some of which are climate-fueled, continue to take precedence. African countries pay as much as 9% of their GDP on climate adaptation and responding to extreme weather events, and their external debt represents over 26% of their GDP.[ix] In these circumstances, policy priority must be put towards adaptation and basic public services aimed at poverty alleviation and food security, among others instead of transitioning away from fossil fuels.

Natural gas is not a transition or clean fuel

One of the most persistent barriers to moving away from fossil fuels is the political and institutional insistence on treating natural gas as a clean or "transition" fuel, despite mounting evidence that it delays rather than accelerates decarbonization. Natural gas infrastructure has long lifespans - pipelines, LNG terminals, and gas-fired power plants typically operate for 30–40 years, which means that every new investment creates carbon lock-in. Governments and financial institutions often justify these investments as temporary bridges, but in practice they commit countries to decades of continued fossil dependence. This is especially visible in Latin America, where several national energy strategies frame gas as a necessary complement to renewables.

Economically, the "transition fuel" narrative diverts scarce public and private capital toward gas infrastructure instead of accelerating investment in renewables, storage, and grid modernization. It creates a path dependency: once gas infrastructure exists, utilities and governments have strong incentives to keep it running to recover sunk costs. Technologically, the idea that gas is needed for reliability is increasingly outdated as storage, demand management, and regional interconnection become more viable. Yet institutional inertia, energy ministries, regulators, and state-owned companies built around fossil fuel systems, slows the adoption of these alternatives.

Socially and politically, the narrative of gas as a "cleaner" fossil fuel also weakens public pressure for structural change. It allows governments to claim progress while avoiding the harder reforms needed to phase out fossil fuels entirely. In short, the classification of natural gas as a transition fuel is not a bridge but a barrier: it entrenches fossil-based systems, absorbs investment that should go to renewables, and delays the structural transformations required for a genuine energy transition.

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

Roadmap process

The process of building the Transition Away from Fossil Fuels Roadmap, including its objectives, targets, and proposed recommendations should be guided by science and independent organizations. Expert input should be institutionalized within the process, and the process should be free from fossil fuel interests.

The roadmap should outline common global benchmarks with differentiated domestic pathways for meeting those benchmarks. Countries should use the call in paragraph 36 of the COP 30 Mutirão Decision to develop implementation and investment plans for their nationally determined contributions to map out the transition domestically in line with their differentiated responsibilities.[x] The Global Implementation Accelerator adopted at COP 30 should have a dedicated stream to share best practices and report back on transitioning away from fossil fuels.

Reforming international processes

The international community should not accept that implementation of the transition away from fossil fuels must be constrained to non-universal and voluntary coalitions of the willing, although these coalitions are encouraged in the near-term. Forums such as the UNFCCC should be strengthened so as to promote an ambitious implementation ecosystem.

The single most impactful reform for the UNFCCC is to adopt the Rules of Procedure with Rule 42 allowing for voting when consensus cannot be found. This reform would sideline the small subset of countries who are actively blocking ambition at the UNFCCC, including on implementing the transition away from fossil fuels.

That may be a long political process, however, so UNFCCC COP Presidencies should lead with voluntary acts of integrity, aimed at establishing norms that promote an ambitious process, thereby opening space to implement and accelerate the transition away from fossil fuels.

These voluntary acts of ambition for COP Presidencies include:

1. Maintain a national climate action plan that reflects the COP host country's highest possible ambition, is progressively more demanding over time, aligns with the goals of the Paris Agreement, including keeping temperature rise limited to 1.5C, and upholds the State's climate obligations under international law, as confirmed by the International Court of Justice in its advisory opinion on climate change.
2. Lead the implementation of the agreed-upon decision to transition away from fossil fuels in energy systems, in a just, orderly and equitable manner.
3. Take proactive measures to prevent the fossil fuel industry and other actors whose interests lie contrary to the goals of the UNFCCC and Paris Agreement from lowering ambition and blocking outcomes that will set the world on a path to transition away from fossil fuels. This can be done by ensuring Presidency staff and host country delegations do not include industry representation, using diplomatic engagement only to progress the objectives of the UNFCCC and Paris Agreement, supporting the establishment of a stringent Accountability Framework to protect against undue influence of polluting interests, and blocking sponsorships and contracts that could present such a conflict of interest. These steps will set examples that all Parties should follow over time.
4. Ensure the protection of human rights and civic space, including by putting measures in place to uphold the rights of freedom of expression and assembly in the context of COPs, and by advancing a stronger and more meaningful voice and

participation of those most affected by the climate crisis, through direct engagement in the negotiations themselves to provide constructive inputs and offer the localized solutions needed for implementation.
5. Support reform of decision-making procedures at COP, to allow for majority-voting when consensus is blocked, including by holding consultations on the matter in accordance with standing agenda items mandating the Presidency to do so.
6. Build on COP 30 inroads and continue to strengthen the role of science, including by giving science and scientists more prominent roles in the Heads of State Summit and throughout the COP.
7. Build a strong and clearly understood implementation ecosystem, which clarifies the purpose of implementation frameworks and governance systems and ensures accountability measures and guardrails across the entire eco system and its individual parts.

Phasing out fossil fuel subsidies

A near-term effort that can accelerate the energy transition is to phase out fossil fuel subsidies and repurpose the money for clean energy and support for communities affected by the transition. First, a country must make a detailed inventory of their subsidies, including where they inject incentives (for example, at extraction, production, or consumption), and then structure a phase out such that the most vulnerable consumers are least affected. This includes the gradual elimination of direct and indirect subsidies, such as tax exemptions and price controls, with clear timelines and sunset clauses. Subsidies benefiting fossil fuel production and high-income consumers should be removed first, while consumer subsidies addressing poverty and energy access should be phased out last and adjusted to price changes.

Savings from subsidy reform should be redirected toward renewable energy deployment, grid modernization, electrification, and energy efficiency, alongside just transition programs such as worker retraining and local economic diversification. Strong transparency and stakeholder engagement mechanisms, including public subsidy inventories and independent audits, are essential to ensure accountability and public trust in the reform process.

An example of action is the Coalition on Phasing Out Fossil Fuel Incentives Including Subsidies (COFFIS). This 17-member coalition provides international coordination in phasing out fossil fuel subsidies and offers best practices, dialogues, and a centralized registry of inventories and action plans.[xi]

Eliminating the concept of natural gas as a transition or clean fuel from government narratives and taxonomies

This lever consists of removing false “fossil gas as a transition fuel” narratives and any categorization of it as clean energy from public policy and finance, and replacing it with science-based, technology-neutral taxonomies that exclude fossil gas from being labelled “green”, “transition” or “sustainable”. It advances fossil phase-out by closing a loophole that currently channels public and private capital into long-lived gas infrastructure incompatible with a 1.5°C pathway. Clear taxonomies, aligned with IPCC and IEA net-zero

scenarios, prioritize energy efficiency, renewables, storage, grids, and demand-side flexibility, while only allowing narrowly defined, time-bound gas uses where no feasible alternative exists. This shifts risk perception, raises the cost of capital for fossil gas, and lowers it for clean solutions, accelerating the reallocation of investment, guiding industrial policy and preventing stranded assets and carbon lock-in in power, buildings and industry.

Support package for developing countries

The roadmap must also establish a wide-ranging support package for the Global South that includes lowering cost of capital, enhanced lending from multilateral development banks (MDBs) on clean energy and climate projects, and more. Roadmap writers should engage deeply with MDBs to implement reforms that have been called for in various COP decisions, including easing the burden of access, increasing capital expenditure on climate and ending all direct and indirect fossil fuel funding, reducing the cost of capital through expanded concessional loans or other methods. Also important are changes in the International Monetary Fund surveillance mechanism to ensure it properly values climate action.

Polluters should pay for as much of the support as is economically feasible, including through targeted taxation such as windfall profits taxes and taxes on high-net-worth individuals. The Global Solidarity Levies Task Force has done important work in building awareness of such taxes and coordinating their possible implementation.

There already exists architecture for technical support through first-mover coalitions/coalitions of the willing and adopted UNFCCC mechanisms, but this support architecture requires more robust linkages and coordination between the various bodies. Coalitions such as the aforementioned COFFIS, the Beyond Oil and Gas Alliance, and the Powering Past Coal Alliance, among others, already maintain technical support for their memberships and their progress should be aligned to the UNFCCC Technology Mechanism and new UNFCCC just transition mechanism as it is developed.

These coalitions of the willing require stronger accountability mechanisms to ensure compliance and ambition. The vast majority of COFFIS members, for example, are past due for their inventory and planning document commitments.

Just transition policies

The roadmap should aim to protect and promote workers, maintain cultures, and provide the opportunity for a decent life. It should share policy recommendations in line with International Labor Organization *guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all* adapted to an energy and society context.[xii]

(c) What country, regional or sector roadmap experiences, best practices, and lessons learned can be shared?

The United Kingdom's coal phase-out offers an example of a roadmap for moving away from fossil fuels. The UK combined a phase-out date with carbon pricing market reforms that rewarded clean flexibility, and targeted support for affected regions. This alignment of policies created a long-term signal that shifted investment toward renewables and storage. The key lesson is that transitions accelerate when governments articulate explicit timelines and back them with consistent regulatory and economic instruments. The UK experience also shows that reliability does not require substituting one fossil fuel for another; instead, diversified renewables, interconnection, and demand-side management can replace coal without expanding natural gas dependence.

Colombia's energy transition planning provides a different but equally instructive roadmap, especially for emerging economies.[xiii] The country has developed long-term strategies such as the PEN 2050, launched competitive renewable auctions, and begun to modernize its institutional architecture to integrate climate goals. These steps demonstrate how planning frameworks and transparent procurement mechanisms can attract investment even in contexts with fiscal constraints. At the same time, Colombia's experience highlights the challenges that arise when a country depends heavily on fossil fuel revenues and faces social conflict around renewable deployment. Weak consultation processes, territorial governance issues, and institutional fragmentation can slow implementation even when policy ambition is high.

Taken together, these cases show that effective roadmaps require more than technical planning—they depend on political credibility, institutional coordination, and social legitimacy. The UK illustrates the power of aligned policies and firm phase-out commitments, while Colombia underscores the importance of addressing structural constraints such as fossil-fuel dependence and community engagement. A cross-cutting lesson is that framing natural gas as a "transition fuel" tends to delay structural change rather than enable it; countries that avoid new gas lock-in and instead invest directly in renewables, storage, and grid modernization move faster and at lower long-term cost. These experiences offer valuable guidance for designing transition pathways that are both ambitious and feasible.

(d) How can a just, orderly and equitable transition best reflect the diverse realities of countries at different stages of development and with different degrees of dependence on fossil fuels?

The transition must occur with the recognition that there are multiple credible routes to Paris alignment. Domestic pathways should reflect domestic realities and follow the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR-RC).

Wealthy countries, especially large fossil fuel producers, should move first and fastest and provide technical and financial support. A global transition roadmap should aggregate, direct, and incentivize support through both financial and technical means, aiming to stimulate economic growth and wellbeing. Enhanced international support will be required. Financial architecture will need to change to enable a truly just transition, including debt reform, which could be conditioned on delivery of a transition plan.

[i] Jeremy K. Leggett, *The Carbon War: Global Warming at the End of the Oil Era (2000), page 83, accessed at: https://archive.org/details/carbonwarglobalwoooolegg/*

[ii] https://globalwitness.org/en/press-releases/fossil-fuel-lobbyists-flood-cop30-climate-talks-in-brazil-with-largest-ever-attendance-share/

[iii] https://www.politico.eu/article/saudi-arabia-us-drive-strife-global-climate-change-science-ipcc-aramco-oil-un/; https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/oct/17/shipping-emissions-levy-shelved-as-countries-bow-to-us-pressure ; https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cvgpddpldleo; https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/aug/07/more-than-200-lobbyists-at-uns-plastic-treaty-talks-will-limit-progress-campaigners-warn

[iv] https://www.imf.org/en/topics/climate-change/energy-subsidies

[v] https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2012/05/09/real-costs-fossil-fuel-subsidies

[vi] https://www.urgewald.org/world-bank-drives-billions-fossil-fuel-investments

[vii] https://www.brookings.edu/articles/bridging-the-great-finance-divide-in-developing-countries/

[viii] https://www.iea.org/commentaries/how-a-high-cost-of-capital-is-holding-back-energy-development-in-kenya-and-senegal

[ix] https://wmo.int/news/media-centre/africa-faces-disproportionate-burden-from-climate-change-and-adaptation-costs; https://data.one.org/analysis/african-debt

[x] https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma7_2c_Mutirao_auv.pdf

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