

REPORT



Just Transition Negotiations at COP30

How We Arrived and How We Left Belém



**Climate
Emergency**



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When compared to the overall outcomes of this COP30, it can be said that the most significant wins of this year were around the negotiations on just transition. The two main outcomes [in the decision that emerged](#) from this negotiation can easily be highlighted as among the main achievements of the negotiations in Belém. On the one hand, parties agreed to ‘recognise’ specific guidance on just transition; on the other, they have committed to developing a new institutional arrangement to continue and strengthen this work.

The path to COP 30 showed increasing attention from civil society around the just transition negotiations and the social dimensions of climate action. At COP 27 in Sharm el-Sheikh, parties established the Just Transition Work Programme, formalising a commitment to embed equity and social protection into climate policy implementation. This decision catalysed ongoing debates about how ambitious decarbonisation pathways could safeguard workers, communities, and vulnerable populations. Throughout its short duration, the structure of the mandate of the Just Transition Work Programme showed its limitations and need for higher ambition. The 2025 regional climate weeks in Latin America served as a space for civil society to discuss potential pathways in the road ahead and the circulation of the proposal to establish a new mechanism with broader functions, objectives and mandate. By the time negotiators gathered at the Bonn Climate Conference (SB62) in June 2025, just transition had become a key demand from civil society, in particular the demand to establish a new institutional arrangement tasked with advancing just transition. This, in turn, also started to gather traction with some States that began to push for the establishment of a new mechanism on just transition within the structure of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Belém represented a critical juncture for translating just transitions into actionable commitments capable of achieving change on the ground. Besides deciding on the principles to guide just transition policies, negotiators arriving in the Amazon had to decide on the potential establishment of that new mechanism set to work on just transitions within the UNFCCC. As COP 30 concluded, the outcomes reveal significant progress during 2025 and challenges that demand further engagement from civil society to ascertain that the gains achieved in Belém actually turn into reality.

In this publication, we seek to explain in detail the process that led to this achievement and that unfolded throughout 2025. We highlight the main actors involved, as well as the key points of debate and

contestation. We hope that this account of the behind-the-scenes dynamics of the just transition negotiation track helps demonstrate the importance of sustaining a high level of civil society participation and coordination in 2026, as this marks only the beginning of the construction of the Belém Action Mechanism (BAM), ideally a robust mechanism that will be capable of genuinely monitoring the actions of States in terms of rights and equality as they transition towards more sustainable energy solutions.

Where Were We Coming From?

Since the establishment of its mandate at COP27, the Just Transition Work Programme (JTWP) has aimed to create spaces for knowledge sharing and encourage conversations with different stakeholders to develop promising practices for just transition frameworks and strategies. In the last two years, the JTWP has held a number of dialogues where it has covered issues ranging from whole economy approaches to the just transition, adaptation, and climate financing, among others.

The negotiations around just transition are key to advancing climate justice and guaranteeing human rights on the road towards sustainability. The concept of a just transition, originally rooted in the labour movement's efforts to ensure that the shift away from fossil fuels does not harm workers and communities dependent on them, has become central to discussions on the social justice dimensions of climate action. Over time, it has evolved to encompass not only workers' rights but also the broader systemic transformations required to build fair, inclusive and sustainable societies and economies.

The mandate of the JTWP is coming to a close in 2026, and this COP30 was poised to decide on how to continue the work on just transition within the UNFCCC. In June, at the SB62 meeting in Bonn, there was an agreement to recommend the consideration and adoption of a decision on just transition at COP30. The agreement in Bonn included an [informal note](#) from the JTWP, prepared by the co-chairs, which gave us some clues as to where the negotiations would start in Belem. That draft informal note included: the recognition of specific guidance on just transition based on the dialogues held by the JTWP; and a determination of how the just transition work would continue from 2026.

As to the recognition of **specific guidance on just transition** based on the JTWP Dialogues, the informal note included elements highlighting that just transition pathways have to be integrated into Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), and Long-Term Low Emission Development Strategies (LT-LEDS); the

importance of social dialogue, labour rights and decent work; inclusive participation of all stakeholders, including affected workers, Indigenous Peoples and people in vulnerable situations; the need for whole-of-society and whole-of-economy approaches; the integration of adaptation and resilience; and the protection of ecosystems and biodiversity. In particular, the draft text included the recognition of the importance of facilitating universal access to clean, reliable, affordable energy for all. The inclusion of this element is pivotal, as transition policies must not only reduce emissions but also address the root causes of the climate emergency and the structural inequalities that persist between and within countries. The transition to environmentally sustainable societies should generate social and economic benefits for all, with a particular focus on those living in energy poverty, ensuring their access to clean, renewable, efficient and safe energy sources. Equitable access to sustainable energy is essential for the realisation of human rights and for ensuring that no one is left behind.

Moreover, the draft informal note also included the recognition of the necessity of adopting a gender and human rights-based approach to just transition policies. Such a recognition is fundamental to achieving truly just and equitable transitions that do not replicate existing inequalities or create new forms of exclusion. A rights-based approach ensures that all stages of the energy transition — from the extraction of critical minerals to the generation, transmission and consumption of renewable energy — uphold international human rights standards, including the rights to equality and non-discrimination and build just and equal societies. In practice, this means that States must design and implement transition policies that respect, protect and fulfil human rights, with particular attention to gender equality and the empowerment of women and gender-diverse people. Overall, the initial draft for the negotiations in Belém was a balanced foundation that reflected many of the key dimensions of a rights-based and inclusive just transition. It will be important for Parties to preserve and, where possible, further strengthen this language in the final decision.

The negotiations at the SB62 also discussed the continuation of the work on just transition. In that regard, States left the door open for the **potential establishment of an institutional arrangement focused on the implementation of just transitions**, which would continue and enhance the work of the JTWP. In other words, an opportunity arose to create a strong mechanism to tackle just transition and ensure its effective implementation. At the same time, [the draft text adopted in Bonn to subsidise the negotiations at COP30](#) also left open two potential

alternatives: improving the existing modalities of the Work Programme or deferring the decision for the following year.

Against this backdrop, civil society understood it was necessary for Parties to establish a robust mechanism, actually capable of providing guidance and support to countries transitioning to low-carbon economies without leaving anyone behind and, at the same time, upholding the principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities. The new mechanism should help ensure a rapid and equitable phase-out of fossil fuels and a shift towards sustainable economies and societies that create better conditions for the well-being of people and the planet. The new mechanism should go beyond providing spaces for the exchange of best practices and present concrete, actionable recommendations for national climate policies to accelerate, consolidate and achieve a holistic just transition, within and between countries, through national action and international cooperation, including knowledge, technology, and resource transfers. This new mechanism was given by Civil Society a name: the Belém Action Mechanism, or BAM.

COP30: A Zoom into Two Weeks of Negotiations

Between 10 and 21 November, the COP 30 took place in Belém, Brazil, at the heart of the Amazon, a symbolically charged location underscoring the urgency of protecting frontline ecosystems and communities. The just transition negotiations unfolded during those two weeks within the Blue Zone, and accredited participants, both party delegates and observers, were allowed into the formal negotiations. Speaking rights were reserved primarily for Party representatives, though observer organisations occasionally intervened. Additionally, party delegates continue to negotiate the resolution during informal negotiations, besides the formal setting, where observers were not able to engage.

At the beginning of the negotiations, the Chairs – from Italy and Singapur - proposed to prioritise the work on three issues left most open in the Bonn draft: the specific guidance on just transition (also referred to as “key messages” or “principles”), the institutional arrangement to continue the just transition work within the UNFCCC and unilateral trade measures.

The discussion on unilateral trade measures had been introduced by some parties in Bonn. In particular, a placeholder was included in the draft to address the “concerns with climate change-related trade-restrictive unilateral measures”. Nevertheless, this issue was specifically included in the negotiations around the Mutirão Decision, in an attempt by the Presidency to create a space for highly contentious issues that could easily block progress within the existing processes on the working agenda. This meant that although there were discussions on unilateral trade measures within the JTWP negotiations, the text did not end up reflecting any outcome or agreement on this issue.

As to the more substantive part of the negotiations related to the guidance on just transition pathways, this was the part of the resolution that saw more changes throughout the two weeks of negotiations. Parties gave particular attention to the formulation of specific points on human rights, the effects of critical mineral extraction, so-called “transition fuels”, among many other issues included among the

guidance or principles based on the Dialogues held by the JTWP. The paragraph conveying the relevance of human rights law for just transition pathways was rewritten to eliminate “gender- and human rights-based approaches” that sparked debate as vague language. Although at first this raised alarms, eventually, parties opted to maintain language grounded on human rights obligations (“respect, promote and fulfil all human rights” and “gender equality”), which still strongly conveys the importance of respecting human rights while pursuing just transition pathways. Additionally, by the end of the first week of negotiations, the [circulated draft](#) included a specific paragraph on the rights of Indigenous Peoples, including their right to free, prior and informed consent. This specific recognition was a substantial gain won during the negotiations in Belém, which stayed in the [final text gavelled](#) at the end of the negotiations.

During the first week of negotiations, there were also two additions included as guidance on just transition pathways related to critical minerals and so-called transitional fuels. As to the first, this addition noted the risks arising from the extraction and processing of critical minerals—a crucial recognition given the scale of the growth of demand for transition minerals, often extracted and processed, replicating the patterns of exploitation and environmental degradation that just transition seeks to address. This inclusion, which was maintained in [subsequent drafts circulated](#) during the second week, was eventually eliminated from the final text. The second addition referenced “the role of transitional fuels in achieving just transitions that align with different national priorities and circumstances”—language that was equally eliminated in the [final decision](#). This deletion was critical, as the vague framing of “transitional fuels” would have opened a dangerous loophole for expanded liquefied natural gas (LNG) infrastructure and prolonged fossil fuel dependence under the guise of just transition.

Another significant development during the first week of negotiations was the addition of provisions addressing international cooperation and means of implementation, which survived into the final text. These paragraphs acknowledged “the importance of strengthening international cooperation on mobilizing finance, technology and capacity-building support” for just transitions and emphasised efforts that “avoid exacerbating debt burdens and create fiscal space for countries to advance on pathways towards low emissions and climate-resilient development.” This inclusion represented a crucial recognition that a just transition cannot be achieved without addressing the financial barriers preventing equitable climate action, particularly for

countries bearing the brunt of climate impacts while lacking resources to fund their own transitions.

Notably absent from the final text was any explicit reference to fossil fuel phase-out—an omission that significantly weakens the just transition framework agreed in Belém. This silence was not surprising given parties' divergent positions and the weak support for the Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuels (TAFF) Roadmap, which itself was dropped from the broader Mutirão Declaration text.

As to the institutional arrangement, early in the negotiations, the establishment of the mechanism, popularised by civil society as the Belém Action Mechanism (BAM), gained significant momentum. Most importantly, the G77 and China kicked off the discussions proposing to shift the agenda to discuss the institutional arrangement first and backing the proposal conceived within civil society. Soon after, other States and negotiating groups joined and openly expressed support for the proposal to establish the mechanism. That was the case for AILAC, the African Group, the LDCs, AOSIS, the Arab Group and the LMDCs. However, this broad coalition faced some resistance from developed countries, including the United Kingdom, Norway, Australia, Canada, Japan and the EU, which expressed reservations about creating a new institutional arrangement, preferring instead to strengthen existing UNFCCC bodies and mechanisms to avoid potential duplication.

This initial strong push that gained considerable support among States implied that by the end of the first week, [the circulated draft](#) included a specific provision on the establishment of the mechanism. This was a significant step that recognised where the negotiations were moving towards. Not only was there the addition of the specific proposal on the establishment of the mechanism, but also the possibility of deferring the decision to 2026 had been eliminated. In addition, the new draft included less ambitious alternatives to the establishment of the mechanism: the improvement of existing modalities, the creation of a policy toolbox to support just transition pathways, or the development of guidance for UNFCCC constituted bodies on how to implement just transition.

As the discussions on the institutional arrangement became central and the mechanism gained traction, the European Union put forward an alternative proposal, the Just Transition Action Plan (JTAP). This was presented as an alternative approach to operationalising just transition within the UNFCCC framework and as a concrete enabler for strengthening 1.5°C-aligned climate policies by addressing the social and economic dimensions of the transition. The plan emphasised

knowledge-sharing, capacity-building, and enhanced stakeholder participation—including social dialogue and meaningful engagement of affected communities in the design and implementation of climate policies. The EU proposed that the Subsidiary Bodies develop the JTAP by 2026 for adoption at CMA 8, positioning it as a non-prescriptive, action-oriented complement to existing Paris Agreement workstreams rather than a new standalone mechanism. Although this was a less ambitious proposal, building on existing institutional architecture rather than creating a new mechanism, it also meant that parties originally opposed or non-committal were open to dialogue and potentially starting to veer towards supporting the mechanism. This counterproposal was subsequently included in [the draft decision](#) that was circulated at the beginning of the second week of negotiations. From then on, although the alternatives for the development of the policy toolbox or guidance for UNFCCC constituted bodies remained on the draft, the mechanism and the action plan appeared as the two main potential outcomes for the institutional arrangement decision.

Finally, in the draft Proposal from the Presidency, the text retained the mechanism option, deciding to develop a just transition mechanism, the purpose of which will be to enhance international cooperation, technical assistance, capacity-building and knowledge sharing, and enable equitable, inclusive just transitions. Notably, the language shifted from "establish" to "develop," a distinction with considerable implications for the timeline and certainty of implementation. While "establish" would have created the mechanism immediately with a clear mandate, "develop" defers its operationalisation to a future design process, leaving key questions about structure, governance, and resources to be negotiated in subsequent sessions. This softer formulation represented a compromise that maintained the mechanism on the table while accommodating diverging views from parties seeking more time to define its parameters and relationship to existing UNFCCC bodies.

Where Did We Land and What Comes Next?

The adopted COP30 decision includes critical principles to guide just transition pathways. These encompass the recognition that just transition pathways must respect, promote and fulfil all human rights and labour rights, the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, the right to health, the rights of Indigenous Peoples (including their right to free, prior and informed consent and self-determination), people of African descent, local communities, migrants, children, persons with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations, as well as gender equality and women's empowerment. The principles acknowledge the centrality of the care economy, often undervalued and disproportionately carried out by women, as a fundamental component of just transitions, alongside provisions for social protection systems. The text also emphasises the importance of facilitating universal access to clean, reliable, affordable and sustainable energy for all, and recognises the need to avoid exacerbating debt burdens and create fiscal space for countries.

Parties also agreed to develop a mechanism that will provide concrete guidance and support to countries transitioning to low-carbon economies, monitoring the implementation of just transition commitments and obligations by member States. This represented a significant victory for civil society mobilisation, which had coalesced around the Belém Action Mechanism (BAM) proposal well before COP 30 and sustained coordinated advocacy throughout the negotiations. Despite facing opposition and counterproposals aimed at diluting ambition—including attempts to defer the decision to 2026 or limit action to mere "policy toolboxes" and guidance for existing bodies—civil society successfully pushed for the creation of a dedicated mechanism with monitoring functions. While the shift from "establish" to "develop" in the final text represented a compromise, the inclusion of the mechanism itself marked a breakthrough that civil society had fought hard to secure against considerable resistance.

Few, if any, previous COP decisions have ever carried such ambitious and comprehensive language on rights and inclusion. While this

represents a major victory and demonstrates that more ambitious climate action is possible when social justice is centred, it is necessary to continue working on the development of a strong mechanism. Civil society must secure a seat at the table within the mechanism to guarantee that just transitions are indeed participatory and make sure that the adopted structure is effective to achieve its goals.

The timeline established in the final text creates critical intervention points for advocacy: parties and non-party stakeholders are invited to submit views on the operationalisation process by 15 March 2026, followed by deliberations at the sixty-fourth sessions of the Subsidiary Bodies in June 2026, with a final decision expected at CMA 8 in November 2026. This compressed timeline means that there is a short window of opportunity to keep pushing for a robust mechanism that can provide guidance and support to countries transitioning to low-carbon economies. In the coming months, it will be necessary to keep advocating for this mechanism to be actually capable of presenting concrete, actionable recommendations for national climate policies that accelerate a rapid and equitable phase-out of fossil fuels and support shifts towards sustainable economies. Without sustained pressure throughout 2026, there is a real risk that the mechanism's operationalisation could be watered down to a weak coordinating body that lacks the authority, resources, and mandate to drive transformative change through knowledge, technology, and resource transfers.

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