Policy summary

From Belém to Antalya: Closing the climate delivery gap

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Executive summary

Over the past decade, international climate negotiations have delivered the essential architecture of global action: a global goal on climate finance; indicators to guide adaptation; agreement on the need to transition away from fossil fuels; and a cyclical process to ratchet up ambition in a nationally determined manner. What has not yet been delivered is a credible way to turn these commitments into outcomes at the pace and scale needed.

COP30 marked the end of the Paris Agreement's first decade and exposed a core weakness in the global climate regime. The targets, frameworks, and goals exist. Yet emissions, deforestation and climate vulnerability continue to rise. Commitments are accumulating on paper, while delivery mechanisms remain fragmented or politically stalled. To keep the multilateral process credible, the system must confront two interlocking problems: the speed of a consensus-based, negotiation-led model in the face of accelerating climate impacts; and the widening divergence between national policy pathways and real-economy action.

This analysis offers practical guidance to embed a stronger implementation focus in international climate processes, including through non-Party stakeholders. It focuses on how to harness whole-of-government, whole-of-society and whole-of-economy momentum where countries remain engaged, and how to accelerate delivery where national disengagement is slowing progress.

This is essential because while you cannot take the politics out of climate policy, you can try to take the politics out of implementing climate solutions.

"This is the COP we finally transition from negotiation to implementation, so the results and the measure of success are going to be different as well." – Túlio Andrade, COP30 Strategy Director [1]

Implementation vs. negotiations

First the "real economy" actors - companies, cities, states and regions - talking about money spent, projects delivered and emissions avoided. These stakeholders are increasingly clustered under the "Action Agenda", coined at COP20 to organise and accelerate voluntary real-world action. As the COP30 Presidency's "one-stop shop" illustrates, this is often where local and subnational governments actions on climate is accounted for.[2] And then there are the national governments and their negotiating teams - the "Parties" - trading not in capital but in language, painstakingly negotiating the words that will make up the final legally binding text.

Currently, there's limited formal interactions between the two. As climate politics continue to impede and slow negotiations, there continues to be strong implementation momentum from real economy actors. Ahead of COP31, it is imperative to assess how this can be scaled across borders and the relationship between negotiating parties and real-economy progress strengthened.

Governance pathways for closing the implementation gap

Within COP30 negotiations on closing the ambition gap, attention is shifting from what Parties have agreed to how those agreements are delivered. The debate is not about technical ability alone but about governance. Where responsibilities should sit, how coordination may occur, and what trade-offs are acceptable. Three differing governance scenarios stood out.

Scenario 1 – Hardwiring Implementation into the UNFCCC

This pathway would formalise implementation as a core function of the UNFCCC. Rather than treating delivery as solely a nationally managed process, it embeds implementation oversight within the multilateral system. Signalling that ambition without execution is no longer sufficient.

In practice, this would involve establishing a mandated annual implementation forum focused on the levers of climate action (finance, regulation, and institutional capacity) rather than sectors. Its outputs would inform future COPs and the Global Stocktake, strengthening feedback loops between commitments, delivery, and accountability.

The strength of this approach lies in its legitimacy and coherence. By anchoring implementation within the UNFCCC, it creates a shared space to identify common bottlenecks and systemic solutions. It also creates clearer lines of engagement with non-state actors whose investment and innovation are recognised as essential to closing the gap to 1.5°C. In the case of the US, where federal backsliding is impeding climate action, this type of approach could forge real progress in terms of state-level or trillion-dollar technology companies' participation.

Taking this path forward comes with political and procedural costs. Mandating a new forum would require consensus and centralising implementation risks exacerbating concerns about bureaucratic inertia. A proponent of this idea, Australia, where 10% of energy comes from household solar, sees

[1] As reported in Carbon Brief, COP30 Press Conference. 2025. Available at: Week1 COP30 Presidency Press Conference
[2] COP30 Brazil. 2025. Repository maps milestones and decisions on climate change to guide cities towards a more resilient future. Available at: COP30 Presidency One-Stop-Shop

connecting negotiations more directly to everyday economy actors as an extension of domestic practice.[3] Scaling this logic multilaterally would, however, test the limits of consensus-based governance.

Scenario 2 – Bridging negotiations to the action agenda

This pathway prioritises speed and political feasibility over formal authority. Rather than reshaping the UNFCCC's institutional architecture, it seeks to strengthen implementation through coordination that can move faster than consensus-based reform.

In this model, a non-mandated, Party-led cooperation platform would operate alongside formal negotiations, building on the Action Agenda. It would focus on practical exchange around national climate plans, transparency reporting, and domestic delivery challenges. Bridging Parties bottlenecks with real-economy solutions. COP troikas would steward the process, with outputs informing negotiations but carrying no legal force.

The value of this approach lies in flexibility. It lowers barriers to participation, adapts more easily to political realities, and keeps implementation closely connected to national contexts. The trade-off is authority. Without a mandate or compliance mechanism, impact would depend on sustained political leadership across COP cycles. Kenya's support of this type of approach reflects their framing of climate action as a multibillion-dollar opportunity.[4] As a leader on climate finance internationally (co-leading COP30 negotiations and co-founding the Global Solidarity Levies initiative) and domestically (through the Financing Locally Led Climate Action programme) they are a credible host for such a space. It is less clear how many other Parties would be as willing or able to champion it.

Scenario 3 – Equity-first conditionality

This pathway reframes the implementation debate by asserting that new expectations cannot be set without first addressing long-standing gaps in finance, capacity-building, and other support for developing economies. Its importance lies not in proposing new mechanisms, but in setting the political conditions under which any implementation architecture can succeed. Implementation is not a uniform challenge. Domestic enabling environments and investor appetite vary widely, making delivery structurally more difficult in many contexts. In this light, negotiations to implementation pushes can be read as shifting burdens not enabling action.

The end COP30 outcome agreed a two-year work programme on climate finance, a tripling of adaptation finance, and a ministerial roundtable on COP29's finance goal. Gambia, which tabled this on behalf of the Africa Group and in alignment with Least Developed Countries, might feel this has now been partially addressed. However, the underlying question remains whether these steps materially improve finance access and delivery conditions at the scale required.

The implication of this pathway is both constraining and clarifying. It establishes a clear political threshold that any new implementation approach - mandated or voluntary - will only be viable if it demonstrably improves development and finance outcomes for vulnerable and developing economies. Highlighting the importance of mobilising capital to the right places.[5] Equity and common but differentiated responsibilities therefore remain central to all governance pathways.

The emerging compromise: Another building block

The final COP30 mutirão text offered a tentative starting point for moving the process from negotiation to implementation.

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[3] Clean Energy Council. 2023. Rooftop solar and storage report. Available at: https://cleanenergycouncil.org.au/rooftop-solar-and-storage-report-h2-2023.pdf
[4] Republic of Kenya. 2023. Speech. Available at: https://www.president.go.ke/ruto-africa-must-position-itself-to-exploit-climate-action-opportunities/
[5] LSE. 2025. Delivering an integrated climate finance agenda in support of the Baku to Belém Roadmap to 1.3T. Available at: https://www.lse.ac.uk/granthaminstitute/publication/delivering-an-integrated-climate-finance-agenda-in-support-of-the-baku-to-belem-roadmap-to-1-3t/

Paragraph 41 introduces a voluntary 'global implementation accelerator', centred on information sessions at upcoming UNFCCC meetings and a high-level event, with outcomes synthesised into a report for COP31. Its aim is to improve coordination and accelerate implementation of national climate and adaptation plans across actors. Notably, it anchors this effort in the UAE consensus, which references the transition away from fossil fuels and the end of deforestation, providing a temporary apolitical landing place for issues that remain deeply political within the formal process.

At present, however, the initiative is lightly specified. While its placement within UNFCCC spaces keeps it Party-centred, it is not mandated, which just echoes elements of a more voluntary, facilitative approach. As a result, it risks becoming either a useful standing resource for implementation or a last-minute device to shore up a fragile COP outcome.

Two conditions will largely determine which path it takes. First, it must consolidate rather than duplicate. The 5th Interagency Meeting with Partners Supporting NDC Implementation, held at COP30, is regularly convening key organisations supporting national plan delivery. Linking this work more systematically with Action Agenda initiatives, while integrating political insights from negotiating rooms, is something only a COP Presidency is well placed to do and would represent a genuine acceleration of implementation.

Second, the focus must be sharpened. Rather than spreading attention across sectors, the accelerator should concentrate on politically salient levers with the greatest emissions reduction potential, particularly where cross-border cooperation can unlock scale. Selectivity, not comprehensiveness, will be critical to maintaining credibility and momentum.

Paragraph 42 takes a different approach. It establishes a mandated, COP29–30–31 Presidency-led 'Belém mission to 1.5°C', explicitly designed to support ambition and implementation. Here too, a report prepared by the Presidency troika will be delivered ahead of COP31, focused on identifying the enabling conditions needed to accelerate action.

The scope of the Belém mission remains broad, but the key distinction lies in the word 'mandated'. In a context where the drivers of urgency around 1.5°C remain politically contentious, the mission offers a way to keep ambition and implementation visibly on the agenda within the formal process.

Experience, however, offers a cautionary note. The COP29-mandated Baku to Belém roadmap was intended to inform COP30, yet the final outcome merely 'took note' of its findings. This was a weak landing that reflected both a limited input process and insufficient political prioritisation by the Presidency.[6] The Belém mission must avoid a similar fate.

Doing so will require a more inclusive and iterative approach to both substance and follow-through, as well as early clarity on how its findings will shape future decisions. The relationship across the COP29-30-31-32 Presidencies will be central. The Azerbaijan/Brazil/Turkey/Australia–Pacific/Ethiopia configuration, could offer a relatively inclusive political base if there is early alignment. This could significantly strengthen the mission's impact.

Taken together, these two initiatives represent a cautious but creative attempt to navigate the political divides exposed in Belém, while keeping the 1.5°C objective alive. Both are time-bound, lending them potential political bite. Whether they become meaningful building blocks for implementation, however, will depend on the policy choices made now.

[6] Heinrich Boll Stiftung. 2025. COP30: Can the Baku-To-Belém Roadmap Put Global Climate Finance on the Right Path? Available at: https://www.boell.de/en/2025/10/20/can-baku-belem-roadmap-put-global-climate-finance-right-path

Recommendations: How the COP machinery can support implementation

To bridge the implementation gaps identified in this policy summary, and to better enable real economy actors, we propose the following recommendations:

1. Create an annual implementation forum

Establish an annual, non-mandated implementation forum, shaped by COP Presidency norm-setting rather than new l[7]egal obligations. To address a clear structural gap: there is no coherent space where national governments, subnational authorities and other real-economy actors jointly problem-solve around implementation. COP30's approach that saw stakeholder convenings in São Paulo (primarily the private sector) and Rio de Janeiro (subnational leaders) led to fragmented discussions.

A single implementation forum that brings these actors together, alongside Parties, and is explicitly framed as supporting rather than substituting the negotiations, would directly tackle that weakness. It would build on existing pieces by turning them from parallel showcases into inputs to a recurring process whose primary purpose is to mobilise finance and support for implementers.

To be credible, the forum needs a tightly defined remit: diagnose implementation and finance barriers, facilitate matchmaking, and track progress aligned with the Global Stocktake. It must also consolidate, rather than multiply, existing initiatives such as the Blue and Green Zone events, UNFCCC Climate Weeks, the revised Action Agenda and UN-Habitat's ministerial processes, to avoid duplication.

Finally, it should have a clear pathway for feeding structured outputs into the negotiating rooms, via synthesis reports or targeted inputs to dialogues and work programmes, so that it shapes priorities inside the formal process rather than operating as a parallel reassurance mechanism.

2. Initiate a structured multilevel governance dialogue

A second, related proposal is to establish a mandated dialogue on multilevel, cooperative and urban climate action within the UNFCCC, delivered in partnership with relevant constituencies and on a time-bound basis. COP30 delivered some of the strongest recognition yet of subnational efforts, but there is still no structural entry point whereby these political leaders can formally contribute to international progress on climate. With the IPCC Special Report on Cities due in 2027, multilevel governance requires an institutional home to ensure it is properly recognised and reflected as an enabling tool in the second Global Stocktake in 2028.

This is at odds with how climate action happens. In Denmark, aggregated municipal climate plans are on track to cut national emissions by around 73% by 2030, overshooting the current 70% target through thousands of local measures.[7] In Nepal, the National Framework for Local Adaptation Plans translates national priorities into community-led programmes, aiming to channel at least 80% of adaptation finance to the local level and already driving action in multiple sectors across ten pilot districts.[8] These examples show that subnational and national governments, working together on mitigation and adaptation, are already making climate policy more effective.

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[7] C40 and GCoM. 2025. From Paris to Belém: A Decade of Local Climate Leadership. Available at: https://www.globalcovenantofmayors.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/From-Paris-to-Belem-A-Decade-of-Local-Climate-Leadership-.pdf

[8] GoN. 2011. National Framework on Local Adaptation Plans for Action. Government of Nepal, Ministry of Environment, Singhdurbar. Available at: http://climate.mohp.gov.np/downloads/National_Framework_Local_Adaptation_Plan.pdf

A formal dialogue with a clear mandate and explicit interfaces with nationally determined contributions, national adaptation plans and long-term strategies would stop cities and regions being treated as peripheral delivery agents and instead recognise them as the regulators, taxers, investors and rule-setters they are. Without such a space, a key implementer of climate action remains structurally underused.

3. Give teeth to the Implementation Accelerator and Belém mission to 1.5°C

Finally, the global implementation accelerator and the Belém mission to 1.5°C will only matter if taken forward with clear conditions. The shift towards implementation will depend on whether these instruments can change incentives for governments, markets and coalitions.

The accelerator should start from the 120 Plans to Accelerate Solutions that emerged from the refined Action Agenda, focus sharply on those with the greatest emissions-reduction potential, and treat national governments themselves as "accelerators" responsible for connecting initiatives to domestic and cross-border policy levers, regulatory reforms and public finance.[9] The PAS on power grids, for example, would significantly benefit from stronger cross-border collaboration, unlocking interconnector issues and easing renewables integration.[10]

The Belém mission should function as connective tissue between political commitments inside the UN process and country-led coalitions outside it. It can keep fossil fuels and deforestation on the mandated agenda, even in a hostile political climate. All while setting waypoints that move gradually from political signalling to more concrete outcomes.

Together, the Belem mission and voluntary accelerator must operate with the central function of connecting existing initiatives with the formal process. For example, initiatives on fossil fuel finance, demand, supply, treaties, and just transition. In the near term, the accelerator should legitimise and amplify initiatives like these. Over time, the Belem mission must connect these dots, helping coalitions drive clearer UN decisions on fundamental priorities like a managed decline away from fossil fuels and protecting forests.

Conclusion

The Paris Agreement is working. Real-economy actors are its delivery infrastructure. But as we look to the next phase of climate negotiations, the links between these two worlds need to be far stronger. As Simon Sharpe has observed, coal's share of global electricity generation had already been falling for eight years before UN talks formally agreed to reduce coal.[11] Momentum was built outside the negotiating room before it was reflected inside it. That sequence has delivered progress. But it is too slow to rely on alone.

COP30 made it clear that the UNFCCC now needs to institutionalise mechanisms that both absorb and amplify real economy action. An annual implementation forum would bring real-economy actors and Parties into a shared space geared towards solving implementation problems. A multilevel governance dialogue would recognise, align and leverage the work of cities and regions within national and global

[9] Global Climate Action. 2025. COP30. Available at: https://climateaction.unfccc.int/CopsAndSummits/COP30
[10] Global Climate Action. 2025. Plan to Accelerate Expansion and Resilience of Power Grids. Available at: https://climateaction.unfccc.int/assets/documents/110_.pdf
[11] Simon Sharpe. 2025. COP30: Never mind the roadmap; the road is made by walking. Available at: https://fivetimesfaster.org/blog/cop30-never-mind-the-roadmap-the-road-is-made-by-walking/

architectures. A sharpened implementation accelerator and Belém mission would connect high-level political signals with initiatives that already drive change in investment, regulation and behaviour, further scaling action.

Together, these reforms would create a clearer double materiality: progress outside the UNFCCC unlocks bolder outcomes inside it, while decisions taken inside the process accelerate action on the ground. The task ahead of COP31 is to better align the groundswell of climate-conscious real-economy actors with coalitions of willing national governments - and in doing so, expand the multilateral system's sense of what is possible.