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Brazil's Fossil-Fuel Roadmap Says Low Oil Use Can Signal Energy Poverty. Sudan Fits That Description. It Should Take the Self-Test and Plan a Leapfrog.

3Bi Research Team | Analytical Article | 5 November 2026

Research Team

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Brazil's COP30 Presidency published a roadmap for moving away from fossil fuels on 3 November, with a self-test for countries. It warns that low fossil-fuel use can reflect missing energy access. That describes Sudan, which should take the test before fixing its five-year energy targets.

The COP30 Presidency presented its Roadmap for Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuels in Energy Systems in Brasília on 3 November 2026. Its Belém Readiness Approach lets each country assess its own exposure to fossil fuels and its capacity to move away from them. (Illustration: 3Bi)

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The Hook

On 3 November, the presidency of last year's UN climate summit in Belém published its roadmap for "transitioning away from fossil fuels in energy systems". COP30 President André Corrêa do Lago and CEO Ana Toni presented it in Brasília alongside a second roadmap, on halting deforestation by 2030. The fossil-fuel roadmap is voluntary and non-prescriptive, and it is not subject to negotiation. It drew on 267 contributions to an open call, 21 of them from Parties or groups of Parties representing 115 Parties (COP30 Presidency, 3 November 2026). The 182-page document names no countries and sets no deadline for cutting production. What it offers is a self-assessment tool, the "Belém Readiness Approach". Countries score their own exposure to fossil fuels, and their capacity to move away from them, across energy demand, energy supply and the wider economy, and then place themselves in one of 12 "archetypes", each with suggested first steps (Climate Home News, 3 November 2026).

The reaction was mixed. Joeri Rogelj of Imperial College London said the roadmaps "are valuable but fall short of clearly indicating the pace of change needed by including no timeline or key benchmarks" (The Guardian, 3 November 2026). Turkey, which hosts COP31 in Antalya from 9 November, and Australia, which will preside over the negotiations, have not said whether or how they will take the roadmap forward (Climate Home News, 3 November 2026).

Most commentary has read the roadmap as a message to oil and gas exporters. We read it differently. One passage describes Sudan's situation better than most documents written about Sudan. Our argument is that Sudan should take the self-test now, while its energy ministry is still setting five-year targets, and use the result to argue for a leapfrog rather than a lock-in.

The Argument

First, Sudan's energy statistics look green for the wrong reasons, and the roadmap says so. By the usual measures, Sudan already runs on low-carbon energy. Renewable sources made up 61%

of its final energy consumption in 2021, according to World Bank data. Its updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) says that about two-thirds of Sudan's primary energy supply comes from biomass and hydropower, and that hydro provides over half of annual electricity generation (Republic of the Sudan, Updated First NDC, October 2021). The same sources show what sits behind those figures. Only 66% of Sudan's population had access to electricity in 2024, and only 47% had access to clean fuels and technologies for cooking (World Bank, World Development Indicators, data for 2024, accessed 5 November 2026). The NDC itself states that apart from large hydro and biomass, Sudan's solar, wind and geothermal resources "remain largely untapped".

The roadmap names this pattern directly. "Low fossil fuel exposure in final energy consumption does not necessarily indicate an advanced transition and may also reflect limited access to modern energy services or lower levels of energy consumption," it says (COP30 Presidency Roadmap, November 2026, p. 32). It describes a "Demand Vulnerable" archetype: countries with low fossil fuel use, significant access gaps, reliance on traditional biomass and limited institutional capacity. It also says these countries have a "leapfrog opportunity", because they have less legacy fossil infrastructure to unwind (pp. 31–33).

Second, the roadmap gives Sudan's energy-security argument a transition label. On the supply side, the roadmap describes a "Supply Structurally Vulnerable" archetype. These are countries with limited domestic fossil production and limited capacity to build low-emissions systems, where "exposure may be driven more by reliance on external supply than by domestic fossil fuel production" (p. 61). Sudan's energy minister, Al-Motasem Ibrahim, spent much of an interview with the Sudan News Agency this week explaining that position. He described talks to secure petroleum product supplies from Saudi Arabia and Russia, and higher electricity imports from Egypt for the Northern State, rising from about 100 MW to between 130 and 180 MW this winter. He also listed a working group with ACWA Power on solar, pilot wind projects in Dongola and bioenergy cooperation with Türkiye. And he said that in agriculture, a season's fuel for irrigation pumps can cost as much as a complete solar system (SUNA interview, as carried by Sudan Radio, 3 November 2026).

None of this is new to Sudanese planners. What the roadmap adds is a reading in which an import-dependent, under-supplied country that builds solar, wind and modern cooking is doing transition work, not only development work. It says that for countries in the vulnerable archetypes, international financial institutions, climate funds and development partners "play an especially important role" in finance, technical assistance and capacity building (p. 45). For a country whose NDC already attaches US$3.94 billion of costed energy measures to its 2030 mitigation target, including US$1.87 billion for utility-scale solar and wind and US$846 million for stand-alone and mini-grid systems (Updated First NDC, Table 3-2), that framing is worth having.

Third, the timing suits Sudan. The roadmap proposes a "TAFF Mutirão", a collective agenda in three phases to 2033. In the first phase, to 2028, "the main push goes to institutions and long-term signals". Countries "can conduct the self-assessments and the planning described in this

Roadmap", and the plans completed in this phase "can feed the second Global Stocktake" in 2028. Physical build-out is the focus of 2029–2030, and the main push on fossil fuel supply comes in 2031–2033 (pp. 113–115). Sudan is at the planning stage on two fronts. The minister said the national energy strategy includes targets to raise electricity coverage, expand transmission and distribution, increase generation and introduce renewables "in specified shares" over the next five years (SUNA via Sudan Radio, 3 November 2026). And Sudan's next NDC, known as NDC 3.0, is still listed as pending (Africa NDC Hub, Sudan country snapshot, accessed 5 November 2026). A diagnosis made now can shape both documents. A diagnosis made in 2028 would have to be fitted to targets that are already set.

Why It Matters to the Reader

The fair objection is that the roadmap is a voluntary document from a past COP Presidency. It carries no money, and its critics say it is too slow on fossil fuel production. A country trying to keep the lights on has better things to do than fill in a global questionnaire. That is a reasonable concern, and 3Bi is not claiming that taking the self-test will unlock finance. We are also not claiming to know which archetype Sudan belongs in. That is for Sudan to assess, and the roadmap stresses that its archetypes are "illustrative and not prescriptive". Our point is narrower. The roadmap was built for the starting point of countries like Sudan as much as for oil exporters. Its first steps for the Demand Vulnerable archetype read like Sudan's own priorities: move from basic electricity access to modern energy services, guide growing demand toward electrified and low-emissions uses, replace traditional biomass in homes and productive uses, and integrate access planning with long-term transition goals "to avoid future fossil fuel lock-in" (Table 7, pp. 43–44).

That last point matters for a real choice in Sudan's plans. The 2021 NDC includes improved cookstoves for over 300,000 rural households and for 20% of the rural population, and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) in place of charcoal and firewood for 10% of the urban population (Updated First NDC, Table 3-2). Moving from firewood to LPG is a real gain for health and forests. But LPG is a fossil fuel, and the roadmap asks countries to weigh each access choice against lock-in. A self-assessment is the place to make that trade-off explicitly, for example where solar mini-grids could carry electric cooking, rather than leave it to a future NDC.

If you work in the Ministry of Energy and Oil, the Higher Council for Environment and Natural Resources (HCENR), which hosts Sudan's climate change directorate, or the Ministry of Finance, three steps follow.

First, before the national energy strategy's five-year renewables shares are fixed, run the roadmap's three readiness assessments on data Sudan already has: the NDC energy tables, World Bank access figures and the ministry's own generation and import data. Publish a two-page summary of where Sudan sits on demand, supply and the economy.

Second, write the result into the strategy as a leapfrog plan. Treat irrigation pumps, rural mini-grids and clean cooking as transition measures with their own targets, and say which access choices, such as LPG, are a bridge and for how long.

Third, use the summary at COP31 in conversations with development banks and climate funds, and carry it into the energy chapter of NDC 3.0, so that Sudan's next pledge rests on its own diagnosis.

Close

Brazil's roadmap will be judged on whether it changes what big oil and gas producers do, and its critics may be right that it asks too little of them. But in one passage it also changes how a country like Sudan can describe itself. Sudan does not burn much oil, but that is not because it has finished the transition. Many of its people still lack modern energy. The roadmap calls that a leapfrog opportunity. Sudan should take the test and make that case in its own numbers, in its own strategy and in its next NDC. We will follow up after COP31 on whether the Presidency or any group of countries takes the roadmap forward, and whether any African government publishes its self-assessment first.

Sourcing & Contact

Primary sources: COP30 Presidency, "COP30 Presidency launches international roadmaps to accelerate transition away from fossil fuels and halt deforestation and forest degradation by 2030" (press release), 3 November 2026; COP30 Presidency, "Roadmap for Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuels in Energy Systems" (182 pages), November 2026; Climate Home News, "Brazil's fossil fuel roadmap sketches out first global timetable", 3 November 2026; The Guardian, "Brazil publishes first global 'roadmap' for phasing out fossil fuels", 3 November 2026; Sudan News Agency (SUNA) interview with the Minister of Energy and Oil, as carried by Sudan Radio, "[illegible] 3 ,"[illegible] November 2026; World Bank, World Development Indicators for Sudan (access to electricity, 2024; access to clean cooking, 2024; renewable share of final energy consumption, 2021), accessed 5 November 2026; Republic of the Sudan, Updated First Nationally Determined Contribution, October 2021; Africa NDC Hub, Sudan country snapshot, accessed 5 November 2026; UNFCCC, "UN Climate Change Conference - Antalya, November 2026" (COP31 dates). For methodology questions or to propose a correction, contact 3Bi's Research Team via 3bisudan.org.

3Bi Research Team. This piece was produced through 3Bi's automated daily publications workflow, which monitors regional and international climate and energy reporting.

This publication is produced with support from 3Bi's institutional donors; see the full funder list at 3bisudan.org.

Suggested citation: 3Bi Research Team, "Analytical Article," 5 November 2026, Build Back Better Initiative (3Bi), 3bisudan.org
Publisher: Build Back Better Initiative (3Bi)