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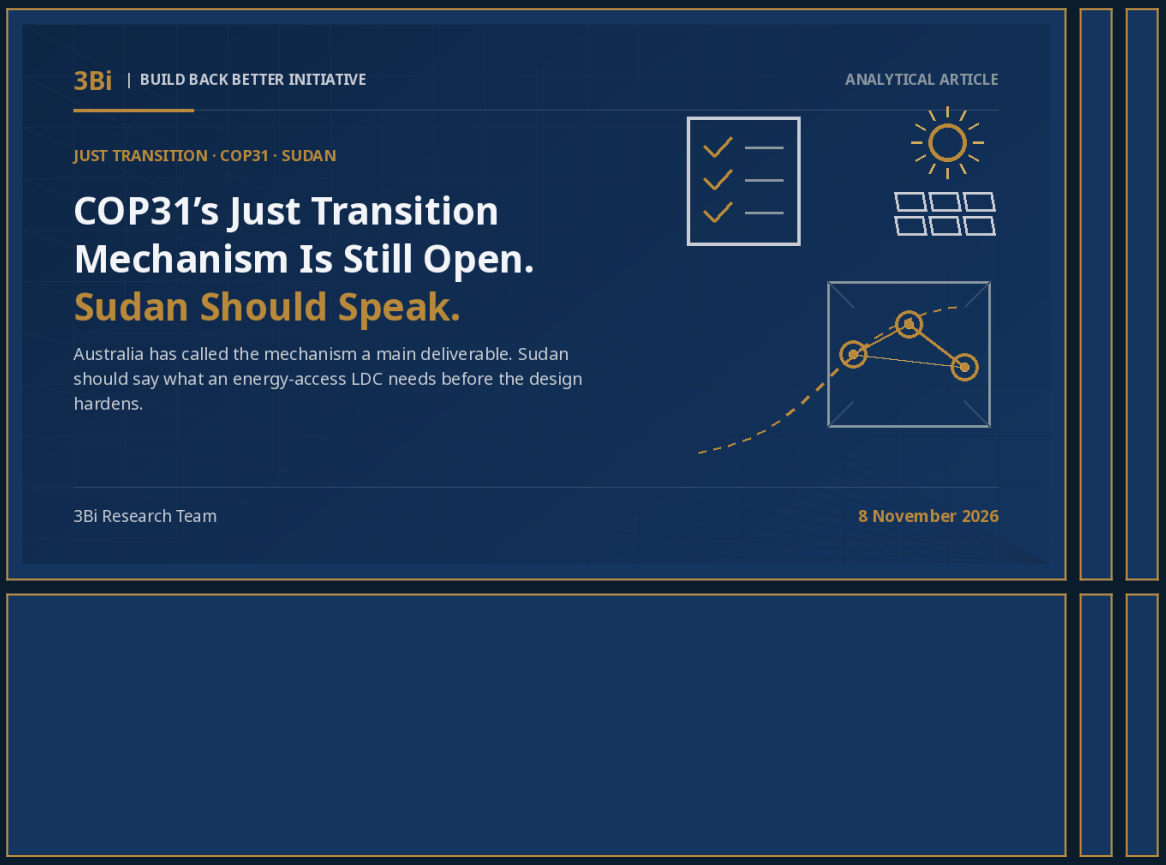

COP31 Will Try to Build a Just Transition Mechanism This Week. Sudan Should Say What Fair Looks Like for an Energy-Access LDC.

3Bi Research Team | Analytical Article | 8 November 2026

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Australia has said the Just Transition Mechanism is a main deliverable at COP31, which opens tomorrow in Antalya. The design is still open. Sudan should say what support an energy-access least developed country would actually use, before the blueprint hardens.

COP31 opens in Antalya on 9 November 2026. Australia, which will preside over the negotiations, has said a Just Transition Mechanism is set to be one of the main deliverables; its design is still open. (Illustration: 3Bi)

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The Hook

COP31 opens in Antalya tomorrow, 9 November, and runs until 20 November (United Nations, COP31 page). One of the few new institutions the summit is expected to create is a Just Transition Mechanism. Australia, which will preside over the negotiations while Türkiye hosts, has said the mechanism is set to be one of the main deliverables (Climate Home News, 5 November 2026, updated 6 November 2026). Campaigners have nicknamed it the Belém-Antalya Mechanism, or BAM.

The origin is last year's summit in Brazil. At COP30 in Belém, parties agreed under the United Arab Emirates Just Transition Work Programme to develop a Just Transition Mechanism to strengthen technical assistance, capacity-building, knowledge sharing and international cooperation (IISD, 5 November 2026). A UNFCCC Katowice Committee background note for a meeting on 4–5 June 2026 lists that decision as 2/CMA.7 and records, among its elements, that parties decided "to develop just transition mechanism" (UNFCCC, KCI 14 background note, 4–5 June 2026). They did not settle how those functions would be delivered, or through which institutions. In Bonn in June, countries compiled options in an informal note prepared by the co-chairs, but they did not negotiate or agree the substance (IISD, 5 November 2026). They discussed the design again at a workshop in Sydney from 30 September to 2 October (IISD, 5 November 2026). The unfinished business now sits in Antalya.

Most of the public argument will be about whether the mechanism should push countries to transition away from fossil fuels, and whether it should come with new money. Those fights matter. Our reading is that another question will decide whether the mechanism is useful to Sudan: is it being built for economies that are managing the decline of a large fossil-fuel workforce, or can it also serve a least developed country whose transition is about getting modern energy to people who do not yet have it? Sudan should answer that question in the room this week, in its own words, before the design hardens.

The Argument

First, this is one of the rare items at COP31 that is supposed to produce an institution, and the blueprint is still blank in the places that matter. IISD's preview, published on 5 November, is clear about what was settled and what was not. The COP30 decision set the mechanism's broad purpose. It left open the delivery model and the institutional home. The questions still on the table are which functions need dedicated capacity, how responsibilities should be shared, and what role the mechanism should play in helping countries reach finance and technical support (IISD, 5 November 2026).

The options now in circulation are not minor variations. Some parties envisage a tiered structure, with a political body under the Paris Agreement and a technical arm focused on implementation. Others want a leaner, demand-driven network that connects countries to expertise, partnerships and finance that already exist, without new standards or reporting. More concrete ideas include matchmaking platforms, technical assistance hubs that answer country requests, and resource-mobilisation groups that identify financing gaps and work with financial institutions on access (IISD, 5 November 2026). Some parties and stakeholders want COP31 to establish the mechanism, including its core functions and structure, so that it can start work. Others prefer an initial framework in Antalya, with the design finished in 2027 (IISD, 5 November 2026; Climate Home News, 5 November 2026). There will also be a review of the existing Just Transition Work Programme, based on terms of reference agreed in Bonn. IISD warns that this review diverted time in June and could do so again (IISD, 5 November 2026).

3Bi is not predicting which model will win. The point is the window. An institution whose functions, finance role and start date are decided this fortnight will be harder to reopen later. Countries that arrive with a plain description of the support they would use will have something to point to. Countries that treat the item as a side room will inherit a design written around someone else's transition.

Second, the fight over scope will decide whether countries like Sudan are clients of the mechanism or bystanders. Climate Home News reports that the Like-Minded Developing Countries, a bloc of more than 20 low- and middle-income nations including China and India, and the Arab Group oppose the mechanism being used to push them to transition away from fossil fuels. Some Latin American countries and small island states want the opposite: they want the mechanism used to further commitments already made in 2023 to transition away from fossil fuels and to triple renewable energy by 2030. Developed countries, for their part, insist that the mechanism should not put responsibility on them to provide new financial support (Climate Home News, 5 November 2026).

That is not the only split. Some experts want the mechanism to cover more of the economy than energy-sector workers, including agriculture and heavy industry. Others say it should make sure vulnerable people receive a fair share of the benefits of a greener economy and of efforts to build resilience. Climate Action Network International has proposed a "resource mobilisation

group" under the mechanism that would look at the quantity, quality and governance of just-transition finance, which is currently "not well defined or tracked", without creating yet another United Nations fund that would then have to be filled (Climate Home News, 5 November 2026).

For Sudan, the practical questions are simpler than the factional map. Will "just transition support" include energy access, clean cooking, skills to build power systems rather than only to wind them down, and agriculture? Will there be a way to be matched with existing finance and technical assistance? Or will the functions be written around mine closures and the reskilling of oil-sector workforces? 3Bi is not telling Sudan which side to take on the fossil-fuel language. We wrote separately, on 5 November, about Brazil's voluntary fossil-fuel roadmap and what a self-test would mean for an energy-poor country. That argument stands and is not repeated here. The point this week is narrower. Whatever language is agreed on fossils, Sudan has an interest in making sure the mechanism's functions are broad enough to serve an access-centred transition.

Third, Sudan already has the raw material for that description in its own climate plan. It does not need to invent a new doctrine in the first week of a summit. Sudan's updated first Nationally Determined Contribution accounts for its status as a least developed country under Article 4.6 of the Paris Agreement (Republic of the Sudan, Updated First NDC, October 2021). The same document describes the starting point. About two-thirds of Sudan's primary energy supply consists of renewable resources — biomass and hydro — and the electric system is "largely hydro-dependent, making up over 50% of annual electricity generation". Sudan has "substantial" solar, hydro, wind, geothermal and biomass resources, but "except for large hydro and biomass, renewable resources remain largely untapped". The NDC says that climate finance and other support will be needed, as specified in Articles 9, 10 and 11 of the Paris Agreement, if those resources are to be used in a low-carbon transition (Updated First NDC, October 2021).

The plan already names the kinds of measure an access-centred just transition would have to cover. On biomass and cooking, it includes improved cookstoves for over 300,000 rural households, improved cookstoves to replace traditional wood stoves for 20% of the rural population, and liquefied petroleum gas as a substitute for biomass and charcoal for 10% of the urban population (Updated First NDC, Table 3-2, October 2021). Elsewhere it costed stand-alone and mini-grid systems and other energy measures. The NDC also says later that Sudan faces climate impacts "as an LDC with very limited internal resources" (Updated First NDC, October 2021). None of this is a just-transition strategy, and 3Bi is not dressing it up as one. It is a list, already submitted to the UNFCCC, of the sectors and households a mechanism would need to be able to help if "just transition" is to mean something in Sudan. A two-page note that points to those lines, and says what technical assistance, skills and matchmaking Sudan would use, is enough to put that interest on the table.

Why It Matters to the Reader

The fair objection is that Sudan's delegation will walk into a packed fortnight. Adaptation finance, the agenda and a dozen other rooms will compete for the same people. A mechanism that may start without new money can look like another talk shop, and a country trying to keep the lights on has reason to ask whether drafting yet another note is time well spent. That is a reasonable concern. 3Bi is not claiming that the mechanism will disburse funds to Sudan, or that a short paper will settle the design. We are also not claiming to know Sudan's position. We have not seen a Sudanese statement on the mechanism, on its scope, or on whether it should be established this year or next.

Our point is narrower, and the cost is low. The default design will reflect the loudest constituencies in the room: countries defending themselves against fossil-fuel language, countries trying to hard-wire that language in, and developed countries drawing a line against new finance obligations. An energy-access least developed country that does not describe the support it would use will not be designed for. Silence is also a position. It is just not a useful one.

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

First, before the opening plenary or in the first days of the conference, write a one- to two-page note that states what just transition support Sudan would actually use: expanding electricity access, clean cooking, productive uses including agriculture, and the skills and technical assistance needed to build renewable and grid systems. The NDC already supplies the examples. Do not wait for a perfect national just-transition strategy.

Second, share that note with the African Group's just-transition coordinators and use it in the work-programme and mechanism negotiations in week one, so that Sudan's starting point appears in the bloc's evidence rather than only in a document filed in 2021.

Third, watch three design questions and report the answers back to the ministries that will have to live with them. Does the scope include energy access and agriculture, or only fossil-fuel workforces? Does the mechanism have a matchmaking or resource-mobilisation function, or none? Is it established now, with core functions and a structure, or deferred to 2027? Those three answers will tell you whether Antalya built an institution Sudan can use.

Close

The Just Transition Mechanism will be judged on whether it helps real transitions, not on the elegance of its organigram. If it is built only for countries leaving coal and oil, it will miss the countries that have not yet arrived at modern energy. COP31 opens tomorrow. Sudan should say

what fair looks like for an energy-access least developed country, while the text is still being written. We will follow the negotiating text and say whether the design that emerges can serve a country in Sudan's position.

Sourcing & Contact

Primary sources: Climate Home News, "COP31 Briefing: What to expect from the Antalya climate summit?", 5 November 2026 (updated 6 November 2026); IISD, "Just Transition at COP 31: What to expect from negotiations in Antalya", by Jonas Kuehl, 5 November 2026; UNFCCC, "Outcomes of COP 30 in Belém and activities of the KCI", background note for the 14th meeting of the Katowice Committee of Experts, 4–5 June 2026 (summarising decision 2/CMA.7 on the United Arab Emirates just transition work programme); United Nations, "COP31 to take place 9-20 November 2026 in Antalya, Türkiye"; Republic of the Sudan, Updated First Nationally Determined Contribution, October 2021. For methodology questions or to propose a correction, contact 3Bi's Research Team via 3bisudan.org.

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