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COP31 Points Countries to Their Regional Seas on Ocean Action. Sudan's Is the Red Sea. It Should Report Its Coastal Plan and Work Through PERSGA.

3Bi Research Team | Situation Report | 18 November 2026

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COP31's new Antalya Ocean and Seas Compact points countries to their regional seas bodies, and the draft cover decision invites ocean reporting. Sudan has about 800 km of Red Sea coast and a US$150 million coastal plan. It should report it and work through PERSGA.

On 16 November 2026, at COP31 in Antalya, the COP31 Presidency presented the Antalya Ocean and Seas Compact, which invites Parties to work through Regional Seas Conventions and other regional arrangements; the same day, its first draft cover decision invited Parties to report ocean-related activities in their biennial transparency reports. (Illustration: 3Bi)

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Headline Fact

The ocean has moved from the side events into the texts at COP31. On Monday, 16 November, the COP31 Presidency presented the Antalya Ocean and Seas Compact, a 13-paragraph text that "invite[s] Parties, as appropriate, to work through Regional Seas Conventions, Programs, Action Plans and other existing regional arrangements" to strengthen ocean-related climate action, science, access to technology and finance, and capacity-building (COP31 Presidency, Antalya Ocean and Seas Compact, 16 November 2026). The same day, the Presidency's first draft cover decision encouraged Parties to put "sustainable ocean-based action" into their national climate plans, including NDCs and national adaptation plans, and invited them to report ocean-related mitigation and adaptation activities in their biennial transparency reports. It would also set up a "high-level ministerial dialogue on ocean–climate action" (UNFCCC, COP31 Presidency draft cover decision, unedited version 16 November 2026, paragraphs 53–54 and 133). Tuesday, 17 November, was the conference's Ocean, Seas, Nature and Land Use day (The Türkiye Times, 17 November 2026). Sudan has about 800 km of Red Sea coast and a US$150 million coastal adaptation line in its national climate plan (Republic of the Sudan, Updated First NDC, October 2021). Both texts give it a reason to put that coast on the record now.

Timeline

- **October 2021:** Sudan's updated NDC describes a Red Sea coastline of about 800 km, warns that warmer water can harm corals and that sea-level rise can "force inland migration of mangroves", and costs a coastal adaptation programme at US$150 million, led by the Higher Council for Environment and Natural Resources (HCENR) and the Red Sea State government. Its indicator, "increased carbon sequestration by blue carbon systems", has no baseline (Updated First NDC, October 2021).

- **29 October 2026:** 3Bi recommends that Sudan build a blue-carbon baseline for the Red Sea coast, and commits to track how COP31 treats the ocean (3Bi, 29 October 2026). This report is part of that follow-up.
- **11 November 2026:** In Sudan's national statement to COP31, the country says it is preparing its Fourth National Communication and its first Biennial Transparency Report, and backs the common positions of the African Group, the Arab Group, the G77 and China, and the least developed countries (SUNA via Fana News, 11 November 2026).
- **16 November 2026:** The Presidency publishes the first draft cover decision, 144 paragraphs long, and presents the Antalya Ocean and Seas Compact (UNFCCC, draft cover decision, 16 November 2026; COP31 Presidency, 16 November 2026). The Arab Group and the Russian Federation reject the draft over language on energy sources, sectoral targets and electrification (IISD Earth Negotiations Bulletin (ENB), daily report, 16 November 2026).
- **17 November 2026:** On Ocean Day, the programme includes a Blue Ministerial Event organised by the Presidency and Australia on preparing ocean projects for finance and investment, and a Mediterranean Ministerial Roundtable with the Union for the Mediterranean (The Türkiye Times, 17 November 2026). In the cover-decision consultations, the Republic of Korea, Micronesia, the Marshall Islands and Tuvalu welcome "recognition of the impacts of Ocean degradation and the inclusion of the Ocean-climate nexus" (IISD ENB, daily report, 17 November 2026).

What We Know

We know what the compact does and does not do. It is a Presidency text. It says it aims to connect existing initiatives "without establishing new obligations or mechanisms". It encourages action to protect and restore "mangroves, seagrasses, coastal wetlands, coral reefs", and says "only a limited share of climate finance reaches ocean-related priorities". It asks institutions to improve access to finance through "simpler procedures, technical assistance and project preparation", and names the Climate Implementation Bridge, built by the Presidency with UNDP, as one route to stronger project pipelines (COP31 Presidency, Antalya Ocean and Seas Compact, paragraphs 1, 8, 11–12). It also names one sea. COP31 is the first UN climate conference held on the Mediterranean, and the compact calls that sea "a climate change hotspot" (paragraph 3). The Red Sea is not mentioned.

We know what the draft cover decision proposes on the ocean. Beyond paragraphs 53 and 54, it asks the co-facilitators of the UNFCCC's Ocean and Climate Change Dialogue to draw up a multi-year plan, to write a synthesis report on how Parties have used ocean-based action in their national climate policies, and to prepare a road map for the dialogue in 2027–2028 "taking into account views submitted by Parties and non-Party stakeholders" (draft cover decision, paragraphs 129–132). Paragraph 133 adds the invitation to report ocean activities in transparency

reports, "taking into account national circumstances". Separately, paragraph 7 invites all Parties to submit their biennial transparency reports due on 31 December 2026, and underlines the need for support to developing countries to prepare them (draft cover decision, paragraph 7).

We know Sudan has a regional channel. Sudan is one of the seven Parties to the Jeddah Convention, alongside Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia and Yemen. Its regional body, the Regional Organization for the Conservation of the Environment of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden (PERSGA), is one of the UN Environment Programme's Regional Seas programmes, exactly the kind of body the compact points to. PERSGA prepared the management plan for Sudan's Dungonab Bay–Mukkawar Island National Park, lists regional initiatives on blue carbon with UNEP, and says it is finalising the preparation phase of a GEF-supported, UNEP-implemented project on the blue economy in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden (UNEP, Jeddah Convention and PERSGA page, accessed 18 November 2026).

What We Don't Know

We do not know whether the ocean paragraphs will survive. The draft is unedited and early, and Carbon Brief's Simon Evans called it a "grab-bag of parties' divergent priorities", some of which "stand no chance of being agreed" (Carbon Brief, Daily Briefing, 17 November 2026). The paragraph numbers may change in the next version. ENB reports that on 17 November the Arab Group "rejected references to roadmaps" (IISD ENB, 17 November 2026); ENB does not say whether that objection covers the ocean dialogue's road map in paragraph 132, and 3Bi is not suggesting that it does.

We do not know whether any Red Sea country, or PERSGA, has engaged with the compact. 3Bi's searches found no PERSGA event at COP31, and no Sudanese intervention on the ocean in ENB's reports. Nor could we verify a current official figure for the area of Sudan's mangroves or seagrass beds, so we use none.

Implications

In our reading, neither text creates money or obligations for Sudan. The compact is voluntary by design, and the cover decision is still a draft. Their value is that they set the format for how the ocean will be tracked in the UN climate process over the next two years: through national plans, transparency reports and a dialogue that will feed the second global stocktake (draft cover decision, paragraphs 54 and 129–133). Countries that put their coasts into those channels early will be visible when the synthesis report is written. Countries that do not will be missing from it.

There is a fair objection. Sudan's small delegation has bigger priorities in Antalya, from adaptation finance to its first transparency report, and the Red Sea is not where most Sudanese face climate risk. 3Bi is not arguing that the ocean should outrank water, farming or early

warning. The narrower point is that the steps below cost little and reuse work Sudan has already done.

In our view, three steps follow.

First, put the Red Sea coast into Sudan's first Biennial Transparency Report. Sudan says the report is being prepared (SUNA via Fana News, 11 November 2026). HCENR can add a short section on the NDC's coastal measures, such as mangrove restoration, protection of coral reefs and seagrass beds, and mapping of coastal hazard lines, stating what has started and what has not. If paragraph 133 is adopted, this answers the invitation directly. If it is not, the section still documents an NDC commitment.

Second, work through PERSGA, as the compact suggests. Through its PERSGA national focal point, Sudan can propose a joint Red Sea and Gulf of Aden input to the ocean dialogue's 2027–2028 road map, if paragraph 132 survives, and suggest linking PERSGA's blue-carbon and blue-economy work to members' national climate plans. In our view, one regional input is easier to hear than seven separate ones, and it builds on bodies that already exist, as the compact asks.

Third, prepare one coastal project before COP32. The compact says ocean finance is scarce and points to project preparation and the Climate Implementation Bridge (paragraph 12). The NDC's US$150 million coastal line can supply a first concept, starting with mangrove restoration, ready for discussion before COP32 in Addis Ababa in November 2027. 3Bi is not claiming that a concept will be funded; without one, there is nothing to fund.

Watch Next

- **18–20 November 2026:** A revised draft cover decision; whether paragraphs 53–54 and 129–133 survive, and with what numbers. COP31 is scheduled to close on 20 November (The Türkiye Times, 17 November 2026).
- **After the close:** Whether the Presidency publishes initiatives or partners linked to the Antalya Ocean and Seas Compact (COP31 Presidency, 16 November 2026, paragraph 13).
- **31 December 2026:** Due date for biennial transparency reports cited in the draft cover decision (paragraph 7).
- **2027–2028:** The ocean dialogue's road map, if adopted, and the views it takes into account (draft cover decision, paragraph 132).
- **November 2027:** COP32 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (Ethiopian News Agency, 15 November 2026).

Sourcing & Next Update

Primary sources: COP31 Presidency, “Antalya Ocean and Seas Compact” (web page and PDF, 16 November 2026); UNFCCC, “Draft text prepared under COP 31 Presidency consultations on Presidency-led Party-driven cover decision”, unedited version 16 November 2026 (paragraphs 7, 53–54, 129–133); IISD Earth Negotiations Bulletin, daily reports for 16 and 17 November 2026; Carbon Brief, “Daily Briefing: COP31 ‘cover text’ | US data centres | China’s climate call” (17 November 2026); The Türkiye Times, “COP31 day nine in Antalya focuses on oceans, nature, D-8 and 2030 goals” (17 November 2026); UNEP, Jeddah Convention and PERSGA page (accessed 18 November 2026); Republic of the Sudan, Updated First Nationally Determined Contribution (October 2021); SUNA via Fana News, “Al-Burhan Addresses 31st UN Climate Change Conference in Antalya” (11 November 2026); Ethiopian News Agency, “Ethiopia Turns COP31 Diplomacy into Strategic Opportunity to Advance COP32 and Africa’s Climate Agenda” (15 November 2026); 3Bi, Policy Brief on the Red Sea blue-carbon baseline (29 October 2026). Quotations are from English-language texts. The cover decision is a draft and may change before the close. Next update: 3Bi will report on COP31’s final ocean outcome after the close, and on the Red Sea follow-up by the end of January 2027, as committed on 29 October. For methodology questions or to propose a correction, contact 3Bi’s Research Team via 3bisudan.org.

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