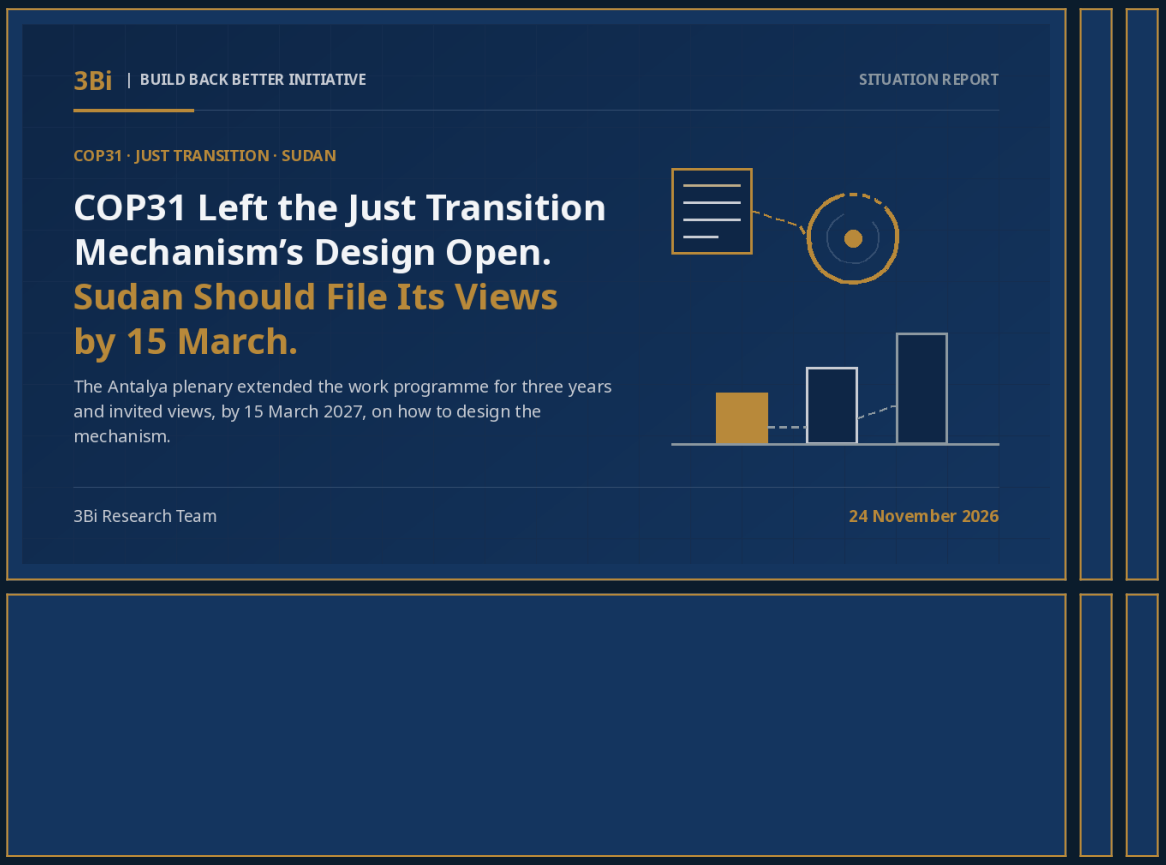
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COP31 Kept the Just Transition Mechanism Alive, but Left Its Design Open. Sudan Has Until 15 March to Say What It Should Do.

3Bi Research Team | Situation Report | 24 November 2026

2026-11-24 · Research Team

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COP31 adopted a decision that keeps the just transition work programme running for three more years and starts a phased process to design the just transition mechanism. The design itself is still open. Sudan has until 15 March 2027 to file its views.

On 22 November 2026, at COP31 in Antalya, the closing plenary adopted the decision on the United Arab Emirates just transition work programme, which extends the programme for three years and invites views, by 15 March 2027, on how to design the just transition mechanism. (Illustration: 3Bi)

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Headline Fact

COP31 did not finish the just transition mechanism, but it did not drop it either. At 7:33 pm on Sunday, 22 November, almost 50 hours after the talks were due to end, the closing plenary in Antalya adopted the decision on the United Arab Emirates just transition work programme, along with outcomes on the global goal on adaptation and the Adaptation Fund. The proposed Antalya Pact was not adopted (IISD Earth Negotiations Bulletin (ENB), 22 November 2026). The just-transition decision keeps the work programme running for a further three years and starts a phased process to design the mechanism that parties agreed, at COP30 in Belém, to develop. It does not say what the mechanism will do. Parties and non-Party stakeholders are invited to submit views on its functions, modalities and operational arrangements by 15 March 2027, through the UN climate secretariat's submission portal. The subsidiary bodies are then asked, at their June 2027 session (SB 66), to develop those arrangements, with a view to recommending a draft decision for consideration and adoption at COP32 in Addis Ababa in November 2027 (UNFCCC, FCCC/PA/CMA/2026/L.24, advance version, 22 November 2026, paragraphs 15 and 19–20). On 8 November, before the summit opened, 3Bi argued that Sudan should say what support an energy-access least developed country would actually use, before the design hardens (3Bi, 8 November 2026). The design did not harden in Antalya. The question now is whether Sudan will put that description on the record before 15 March.

Timeline

- **November 2025 (COP30, Belém):** Under the United Arab Emirates just transition work programme, parties decide to develop a just transition mechanism whose purpose is to enhance international cooperation, technical assistance, capacity-building and knowledge-sharing, and to enable equitable, inclusive just transitions (decision 2/CMA.7, paragraph 25,

as recalled in L.24, paragraph 16).

- **June–October 2026:** In Bonn, countries compile options for the mechanism but do not agree the substance. They discuss the design again at a workshop in Sydney from 30 September to 2 October (IISD, 5 November 2026, as cited in 3Bi, 8 November 2026).
- **8 November 2026:** 3Bi publishes an analytical article recommending that Sudan, in Antalya, describe a just transition centred on energy access, rather than only on the decline of a large fossil-fuel workforce (3Bi, 8 November 2026).
- **9–19 November 2026:** COP31 opens in Antalya. Mid-talks, a two-tier structure — a political body and a technical arm — is reported as attracting general support. A draft published on 19 November leaves the entire body of the text in square brackets and still treats the mechanism's institutional arrangements as options (Carbon Brief, COP31 key outcomes, retrieved 24 November 2026).
- **21–22 November 2026:** Carbon Brief reports that the final decision, setting out the phased approach, was published late on 21 November. The official advance text, FCCC/PA/CMA/2026/L.24, is issued on 22 November as a proposal by the President. That evening the closing plenary adopts it (Carbon Brief, retrieved 24 November 2026; UNFCCC, L.24; ENB, 22 November 2026).

What We Know

We know what was decided, because the advance text is public. The governing body of the Paris Agreement "decides to continue the work programme for a further three years", to review it in November 2029, and then to consider either continuing it or integrating its modalities into the mechanism (L.24, paragraph 15). Among the improvements it lists is more inclusive dialogues, "with strengthened participation of developing country Parties, in particular the least developed countries and small island developing States" (paragraph 15(c)).

We know the mechanism's purpose, which is unchanged from Belém: "to enhance international cooperation, technical assistance, capacity-building and knowledge-sharing, and enable equitable, inclusive just transitions" (paragraph 16). It "shall operate under the authority and guidance of, and be accountable to," the Paris Agreement's governing body (paragraph 17). The decision "reaffirms" that the mechanism is to be implemented in a way that builds on and complements existing work, including the work programme (paragraph 18).

We know the process, and the dates. The decision "decides to operationalize the just transition mechanism… through a phased approach" and requests the subsidiary bodies, at SB 66 in June 2027, to develop its functions, modalities and operational arrangements, with a view to a draft decision at the November 2027 session (paragraph 19). Views are invited by 15 March 2027

(paragraph 20). The chairs of the subsidiary bodies are also invited to consider informal intersessional work before June, "in appropriate formats, including the dialogues under the work programme, and subject to the availability of financial resources" (paragraph 21). Secretariat actions called for in the decision are likewise "subject to the availability of financial resources" (paragraph 23).

We know what the decision does not settle. It does not define the mechanism's functions, its institutional form, or how the mechanism itself will be paid for. Carbon Brief reports that references to transitioning away from fossil fuels, and to trade, did not make it into the final decision (Carbon Brief, retrieved 24 November 2026). The two-tier structure discussed mid-talks is not in L.24. 3Bi is not treating that structure as agreed.

What We Don't Know

We do not know what the mechanism will look like when it is presented to COP32. That is the work of the next year.

We do not know whether informal intersessional work will actually be held. The chairs are only invited to "consider" it, and only if resources are available (paragraph 21).

We have not seen a final, numbered version of the adopted decision. We cite the 22 November advance version of L.24; paragraph numbers may shift.

We have not found a public Sudanese statement devoted to the just-transition item. In its national statement to COP31, Sudan backed 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). 3Bi is not inferring from that a national position on the mechanism's design. ENB records that the African Group, speaking on the proposed cover decisions, objected to, among other things, "an approach to just transition that did not reflect African realities". That remark referred to the Antalya Pact, which was not adopted, not to L.24 (ENB, 22 November 2026).

Implications

In our reading, Antalya bought time; it did not finish the job. That is not nothing. The work programme continues, the mechanism remains under the Paris Agreement's governing body, and a dated invitation now exists for countries to describe the functions they want. It is also not a finished institution. In reviewing the work programme, the decision itself agrees that there is "scope to strengthen its practical relevance and the translation of the shared understanding of just transitions built thereunder into implementation-relevant outputs, as appropriate" (paragraph 14).

There is a fair objection. Sudan's small climate team already has a first Biennial Transparency

Report and a Fourth National Communication to prepare, and a filing by 15 March may look like another short paper that will not decide the outcome. 3Bi is not claiming that a submission will determine the design, or that it will bring new finance. The narrower point is the one we made on 8 November, now with a date attached. If the functions are written around managing the decline of a large fossil-fuel workforce, an energy-access least developed country will find little to use. If they also cover energy access, clean cooking, skills to build power systems, and agriculture, Sudan will have a door to knock on in Addis Ababa. The 15 March window is the cheapest moment to say so.

In our view, three steps follow.

First, file views by 15 March 2027. Sudan's Higher Council for Environment and Natural Resources (HCENR) can submit, through the UNFCCC submission portal, a short paper on the functions, modalities and operational arrangements referred to in paragraph 19. The paper can start from Sudan's own climate plan, as we recommended on 8 November, and state plainly that support for a least developed country's just transition should include energy access and related needs, not only the reskilling of a fossil-fuel workforce. A submission is an invitation, not an obligation. The cost of silence is that other countries will define the functions without that description on the table.

Second, work through the groups Sudan already supports. The African Group and the least developed countries group will come to SB 66 with proposals on the same functions. Sudan can make sure those proposals keep an access-centred transition in the draft that goes to COP32.

Third, use the work programme while the mechanism is being designed. The three-year extension, and the instruction to strengthen the participation of the least developed countries in the dialogues (paragraph 15(c)), give Sudan a forum before November 2027. If informal intersessional work is convened, it should be in the room.

Watch Next

- **15 March 2027:** The date by which parties and non-Party stakeholders are invited to submit views on the mechanism's functions, modalities and operational arrangements (L.24, paragraph 20).
- **June 2027 (SB 66):** The subsidiary bodies are requested to develop those arrangements (paragraph 19). Any informal intersessional work would come before this session (paragraph 21).
- **8–19 November 2027 (COP32 / CMA 9, Addis Ababa):** The session asked to consider and adopt the mechanism's design (paragraph 19; UNFCCC, COP30 decision on dates and venues).

- **November 2029 (CMA 11):** The review of the work programme, and a decision on whether to continue it or integrate it into the mechanism (paragraph 15).

Sourcing & Next Update

Primary sources: UNFCCC, "United Arab Emirates just transition work programme. Draft decision -/CMA.8. Proposal by the President", FCCC/PA/CMA/2026/L.24, advance version, 22 November 2026 (paragraphs 14–21 and 23); IISD Earth Negotiations Bulletin, highlights for 22 November 2026; Carbon Brief, "COP31: Key outcomes agreed at the UN climate talks in Antalya" (retrieved 24 November 2026); IISD, "COP 31 Ends Without Antalya Pact—Time to Rebuild Trust" (22 November 2026); IISD / jetknowledge.org, "Just Transition at COP 31: What to expect from negotiations in Antalya" (5 November 2026); SUNA via Fana News, "Al-Burhan Addresses 31st UN Climate Change Conference in Antalya" (11 November 2026); 3Bi, "COP31 Will Try to Build a Just Transition Mechanism This Week. Sudan Should Say What Fair Looks Like for an Energy-Access LDC" (8 November 2026); UNFCCC, decision on dates and venues of future sessions (COP30 advance unedited version). Quotations are from English-language texts; translations in the Arabic edition are 3Bi's. The decision is cited from its advance version as forwarded for adoption; the final numbered decision may differ in numbering. Next update: 3Bi will report when submissions under the 15 March invitation are posted, and when the SB 66 draft on the mechanism's functions is issued. For methodology questions or to propose a correction, contact 3Bi's Research Team via 3bisudan.org.

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