

Australian Conservation Foundation

Submission to: Roadmaps on the Transition Away from Fossil Fuels in a Just, Orderly and Equitable Manner; and on Halting and Reversing Deforestation and Forest Degradation by 2030

Addressed to: COP30 Presidency

Submission from: Australian Conservation Foundation

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About the Australian Conservation Foundation

The Australian Conservation Foundation is Australia's national environment organisation. Since 1965, we've protected the nature we all love – our unique wildlife and our beautiful beaches and bush.

Driven by the power of people, we won World Heritage listing for the Great Barrier Reef and Kakadu National Park, and returned precious water to the rivers of the Murray-Darling.

We influence governments and businesses to protect the animals, rivers and reefs close to our hearts and hold decision-makers to account without fear or favour. Everything we do is evidence-based and helps nature and people thrive for generations to come.

We won't give up until Australia's nature is protected and regenerated.

The Australian Conservation Foundation acknowledges that First Nations Peoples of Australia hold unique knowledge and rights inherited from their ancestors and Country and have cared for this country since time immemorial. We pay our respect to First Nations Peoples of Australia, past, present and future. We respect their leadership in caring for Country and support their rights to continue to do so. We recognise that sovereignty was never ceded, and that colonisation was unjust, often violent and continues to adversely impact on First Nations Peoples today. As Australia's national environment organisation, we understand we have a responsibility to help right this historical wrong. We support their authority to speak for Country, right to self-determination and recognise that rightful recognition of and genuine reconciliation with First Nations Peoples is fundamental to protecting nature in Australia. We support First Nations-led campaigns that protect Country and seek win-win outcomes for our environment and for the rights, wellbeing and advancement of First Nations Peoples.

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Introduction

ACF welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the following roadmaps being progressed by the COP30 President, the *COP30 Presidency Roadmap on the Transition Away from Fossil Fuels in a Just, Orderly and Equitable Manner*; and the *COP30 Presidency Roadmap on Halting and Reversing Deforestation and Forest Degradation by 2030*. The outcomes of the first Global Stocktake (GST) adopted at COP28 affirmed that global climate action remains insufficient to limit global warming to 1.5°C with no or limited overshoot, and further that the international community:¹

- has already agreed that “transitioning away from fossil fuels in a just, orderly and equitable manner” needs to be accelerated in order to make “deep, rapid and sustained reductions in greenhouse gas emissions in line with 1.C” (at [28] and [28(d)]; and
- has further recognised that “conserving, protecting and restoring nature and ecosystems” is essential for the achievement of the Paris Agreement and called for “enhanced support and investment” to halt and reverse deforestation and forest degradation by 2030 (at [33]).

At the outset, ACF affirms the COP30 President’s commitment to an inclusive, transparent and co-created participatory process, that remains driven by States and guided by the science.² This is absolutely essential for the success of both roadmaps and must remain the foundation of their development. The maintenance of principles will undoubtedly be complex to navigate, but ACF urges the COP30 President to continue to push for an inclusive and transparent process that nonetheless centres the primary responsibility for action at the State-level, in accordance with international climate and biodiversity law.

As Australia’s national nature advocacy organisation, ACF’s submission to this process has focused on analysis and recommendations that are relevant to Australia’s transition away from fossil fuel exports and Australia’s international role as COP31 President of Negotiations. Similarly, our submission on deforestation focusses on the leadership role we believe Australia should play in contributing to an international roadmap by addressing Australia’s significant deforestation problem.

ACF strongly supports and affirms the importance of ensuring a just global transition to sustainable economies and the responsibility of high-income countries to financially support the transition for low- and middle-income countries that face additional structural obstacles to overcoming fossil fuel production dependencies and to halt and reverse deforestation.

¹ Conference of the Parties, *First Global Stocktake*, 4/CMA.5, FCCC/PA/CMA/2023/L.17 (13 December 2023), [28]-[33].

² See further International Climate and Politics Hub, *TAFF and Forest Roadmaps* (Briefing, 13 February 2026).



ACF further endorses and urges the COP30 Presidency to ensure both roadmaps, on transitioning away from fossil fuels and halting deforestation by 2030, are developed in a manner and contain substantive obligation that are in accordance with international human rights law, specifically the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP),³ and aligned with the principles of fairness, equity and solidarity. Critically, both roadmaps in substance, and via the processes for their development, must be enabling of Indigenous Peoples' self-determination and justice, including the facilitation of Indigenous Peoples consultation, leadership, and consent.

While the submission is structured to provide separate feedback to each roadmap, ACF recognises that the protection of forests and phaseout of fossil fuels will intersect in practice as countries navigate the transition, and therefore, requires explicit safeguards. Weak safeguards may result in the decarbonisation burden shifting from fossil fuel production and use to the land sector, primarily via carbon crediting systems – leading to the perverse outcome of forest protection serving to justify continued fossil fuel extraction.⁴ However, integration through alignment on climate (especially carbon sequestration), environmental and human rights standards and safeguards across both roadmaps will enable mutually reinforcing outcomes and increased climate integrity.

In the following sections, this submission provides specific feedback to both roadmaps.

³ *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, GA Res 61/295, UN Doc A/RES/61/295 (2 October 2007, adopted 13 September 2007).

⁴ *Ibid*, 3.





Recommendations

Recommendation 1: the COP30 Presidency roadmap on the transition away from fossil fuels must articulate guiding principles for justice and equity

ACF recommends the adoption of the following guiding principles:

- Affirming the scientific imperative to act and abiding by the temperature goal articulated in the Paris Agreement of limiting global warming to as close to 1.5°C as possible;
- Regenerative and aligned with the roadmap on halting and reversing deforestation;
- In accordance with international human rights law, especially with respect to the rights and self-determination of Indigenous Peoples. This includes according Indigenous Peoples formal status in any roadmap negotiation processes; and
- Embracing of international cooperation.

Recommendation 2: the COP30 Presidency must ensure the roadmap on the transition away from fossil fuels is not undermined by qualified language that serves to lock-in fossil fuel production

ACF strongly urges the COP30 Presidency to leverage the two-tier-multilateralism process envisaged by the roadmap to strive for maximum ambition and alignment on genuine action to accelerate the transition away from fossil fuels. This means prioritising negotiation to avoid the use of qualified language in relation to phaseout commitments, such as 'unabated' or 'inefficient', or reliance on false climate solutions, like carbon capture and storage, that ultimately locks-in greater fossil fuel production.



Recommendation 3: the roadmap on the transition away from fossil fuels should provide a pathway for codification of the ICJ advisory opinion on climate obligations in treaty form

ACF recommends that the COP30 Presidency seek a mandate from willing parties to leverage the roadmap process for the negotiation and ratification of a binding international agreement that codifies the ICJ's advisory opinion on climate obligations and statement of existing international customary law. This should be a critical pillar of progressing action in accordance with the *Belém Declaration*, and ACF calls on Australia to be an active participant in this process as a signatory and high-income, fossil fuel exporting State.

In ACF's view, the global momentum for a Fossil Fuel Treaty is aligned with such a codification process and would be a suitable mechanism for clarifying State obligations and creating the conditions for States to agree to, and coordinate, ending new fossil fuel extraction, managing the phase-out of existing production and supporting a globally just transition.

Recommendation 4: ensuring the roadmap and associated instruments are reintegrated back into UNFCCC processes in due course

ACF strongly supports the COP30 Presidency developing a forward agenda for the reintegration of the roadmap on the transition away from fossil fuels process back into the formal *Paris Agreement* architecture, including to inform part the process for the second Global Stocktake.

Recommendation 5: States must progress national transition roadmaps in parallel with international cooperation, to accelerate the transition away from fossil fuels and implement the *Belém Declaration*

ACF strongly recommends that the COP30 Presidency, in cooperation with the First International Conference on Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuels, progress actions to implement the *Belém Declaration* including for States to develop national roadmaps for the transition away from fossil fuels in the near term. ACF urges Australia to champion and lead such a process.

Recommendation 6: developed countries must lead on the roadmap on halting deforestation covering domestic and trade related measures

ACF recommends that the global forest roadmap should urge developed countries like Australia to develop national plans or domestic roadmaps as a matter of urgency. These plans should include science-based commitments to halt and reverse deforestation and degradation measured in gross terms. They should also include ambitious LULUCF targets and funding support for implementation.

The forest roadmap should recommend both domestic and trade related measures, including import-focused due diligence regimes, necessary to halt and reverse global deforestation to ensure commodity importing countries are not exporting environmental harm including emissions.



Recommendation 7: the roadmap on halting deforestation must recognize food production as a key driver of deforestation

The roadmap should recognise food production and especially beef production as a key driver of deforestation and encourage countries to act on Target 10 of the KMGBF by eliminating deforestation and land degradation and transitioning to agricultural models that improve nature outcomes and reduce emissions.

Recommendation 8: the roadmap on halting deforestation must emphasise the need for improved national and subnational regulation on halting deforestation

The roadmap should emphasise the need for improved national and subnational regulation to halt and reverse deforestation, and recommend the need for domestic roadmaps to include review and improvement of regulations to halt and reverse deforestation and forest degradation.

Recommendation 9: the roadmap on halting deforestation must recognise the need for increased public investment and financial regulation to halt and reverse deforestation

The roadmap should recognise the need for increased public investment to support halting and reversing deforestation, and should prioritise action to identify and remove harmful subsidies.

Furthermore, ACF urges the COP30 Presidency to ensure the roadmap recommends integration of deforestation and forest degradation-related risks into financial regulation, central bank oversight and both private and public investment decision-making.

Recommendation 10: the roadmap should aim for synergies and policy coherence between Rio Convention and a dedicated institutional framework should be implemented to drive implementation

The roadmap should:

- Include measures to improve synergies and policy coherence between the Rio Conventions, advancing cooperation with other international organizations and creating a dedicated space for maximising climate and biodiversity synergies in the UNFCCC, and for minimising negative trade-offs and maladaptation risks; and
- Establish a dedicated institutional “home” (with clear mandate, budget and authority) to hold and drive the implementation of the Roadmap and its milestones beyond a single COP presidency. This space could be used to incentivize, provide guidance, and support countries to produce their own national plans for halting and reversing deforestation and forest degradation by 2030.





Developing the Roadmap for Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuels in a Just, Orderly and Equitable Manner

Critical barriers preventing the transition away from fossil fuels in major fossil fuel exporting economies like Australia

Australia is the world's third largest fossil fuel exporter by volume. If Australia accounted for its fossil fuel trade, Australia's total carbon footprint would equal 4.5% of annual global emissions,⁵ making Australia responsible for more carbon pollution than over 190 countries. Domestically, Australian governments continue to evade responsibility for this pollution and have failed to engage with supply-side interventions to phaseout fossil fuels exports, enabled by the lack of binding supply-side instruments in international climate governance. ACF notes the *Paris Agreement* contains a global temperature limit of as close to 1.5°C as possible, which implies a phaseout in fossil fuel supply, yet does not explicitly regulate this,⁶ and welcomes the *Belém Mechanism for Just Global Transition* to address this gap.

Australian government inertia also arises from historical dependency on fossil fuels and slow economic reconversion to clean energy exports. Australia is a net exporter of energy commodities (primarily LNG, coal and uranium products), and the value of these exports is a key driver of Australia's current account balance. These economic factors underpin continued government support and approval of new fossil fuel extraction projects in Australia. For example, the International Energy Agency (IEA) forecasts that 58% of new global coal capacity is expected to come from Australian projects, representing the majority of new global capacity and far exceeding the next highest country's expansion plans (Russia at 13% new coal capacity).⁷

Permissive Australian laws and budgets also distort energy markets and lock-in fossil fuel production, via direct subsidisation and tax regimes that incentivise fossil fuel extraction. Additionally, in Australia, fossil fuel exploration and production licences are property, afforded compensation rights,⁸ reinforcing the economic value of fossil fuel extraction. In 2025, the IMF found that Australia funnels US\$40 billion into subsidies to fossil fuels annually.⁹ In the context of the International Court of Justice's (ICJ) *Advisory Opinion on the Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change* (2025), Australia's domestic laws – which enable the continued licensing and approval of new fossil fuel extraction – and subsidisation of fossil fuel production may be in breach of binding obligations under international customary law to prevent significant

⁵ H Grant and B Hare, *Australia's global fossil fuel carbon footprint* (Climate Analytics Report, August 2024) 3.

⁶ A Janzwood and K Harrison, "The political economy of fossil fuel production in the Post-Paris Era: Critically evaluating Nationally Determined Contributions" (2023) 102 *Energy Research & Social Science* 103095, 103095.

⁷ International Energy Agency, *Coal 2025*, 98.

⁸ See further *Newcrest Mining (WA) Ltd v Commonwealth* (1997) 190 CLR 513.

⁹ S Black et al, *Underpriced and overused: Fossil Fuel Subsidies Data 2025 Update* (December 2025, IMF Report), 34.



climate harm.¹⁰

The trade ecosystem between fossil fuel exporters, like Australia, and importers serves to reinforce fossil fuels in the global energy economy.¹¹ Overall free trade and international investment laws, underpinned by trade liberalisation policies and Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) provisions,¹² have not supported a transparently planned phaseout. In ACF's view, global trade laws have failed to account for the climate, environmental and human rights externalities of the fossil fuel trade,¹³ contrary to the WTO's mandate to govern trade relations in accordance with sustainable development principles (*Marrakesh Agreement*).¹⁴

Many of Australia's trade relationships also involve the continued promotion of fossil fuels including with Japan, South Korea and China.¹⁵ Australia is a founding member of the Asia Zero Emissions Community (AZEC) but has leveraged AZEC to progress fossil fuel multilateral initiatives. Close to 60% of MOUs that Australia has signed pursuant to AZEC involve the promotion of fossil fuel technologies.¹⁶

Equally, ACF is concerned by growing foreign government investment in upstream fossil fuel projects, contributing to fossil fuel expansionism in Australia.¹⁷ Since 2008 Japan and South Korea have funnelled over \$20bn USD of public funds into Australian gas projects.¹⁸ However, as North-East Asian countries decarbonise, this investment is increasingly driven by corporate profiteering rather than energy security.¹⁹ Export credit agencies and major North-East Asian energy companies are investing in mid-stream and downstream fossil fuel infrastructure in South-East Asia (e.g. import terminals, power plants) to enable on-selling of fossil fuel stocks into the region, displacing renewables.²⁰ Such investment patterns carry risks for both the climate and returns on public investment,²¹ because of the reliance on bullish assumptions that South-East Asia will rapidly expand its fossil fuel use, contrary to the *Paris Agreement*.²²

The result is a self-reinforcing fossil fuel trade between Australia and our regional partners, with a gamble on continued corporate profits trumping our mutual commitment to climate action and

¹⁰ See especially, *Obligations of States in Respect of Climate Change (Advisory Opinion)* (International Court of Justice, General List No 187, 23 July 2025).

¹¹ See further E Cima and D Etsy, "Making international trade work for sustainable development: toward a new WTO framework for subsidies" (2024) 27 (1) *Journal of International Economic Law* 1.

¹² L Di Salvatore, *Investor-State Disputes in the Fossil Fuel Industry* (December 2021, IISD Report).

¹³ H Asmelash, "The role of international trade law in the energy transition" (2023) 24 *Journal of World Investment & Trade* 847.

¹⁴ *Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organisation* (signed 15 April 1994, entered into force 1 January 1995) 1867 UNTS 154, Preamble.

¹⁵ G Moon, *Escalation: the destructive force of Australia's fossil fuel exports on our climate* (UNSW Australian Climate Accountability Project, August 2024).

¹⁶ Zero Carbon Analytics, "Zero Emissions or Fossil Fuels? Tracking Japan's AZEC Projects" (*Insights*, October 2024), <<https://zerocarbon-analytics.org/insights/briefings/zero-emissions-or-fossil-fuels-tracking-japans-azec-projects/>>.

¹⁷ See, e.g., Public Finance for Energy Database, "Data Dashboard" (*Oil Change International*, Database, 2024), <<https://energyfinance.org/#/data>>.

¹⁸ S Ali and J Sherley, *How to Build a Gas Empire: Part 1* (Jubilee Australia Research Centre, Australian Conservation Foundation and Fossil Free Japan Report, July 2025) 3 and 12.

¹⁹ P Dira, *2025 Southeast Asia Fossil Fuel Divestment Scorecard* (CEED, CELIOS, KRuHA, Rimbawatch and WALHI Report, May 2025) 7.

²⁰ See JOGMEC, "Results of FY2024 Survey on LNG Handling Volume by Japanese Companies" (*JOGMEC*, Webpage, November 2024), <https://oilgas-info.jogmec.go.jp/nglng_en/handling_volume/1010256.html>.

²¹ G Semieniuk et al, "Stranded fossil-fuel assets translate to major losses for investors in advanced economies" (2022) 12 *Nature Climate Change* 532.

²² P Dira, *2025 Southeast Asia Fossil Fuel Divestment Scorecard* (CEED, CELIOS, KRuHA, Rimbawatch and WALHI Report, May 2025).



the urgent need for fossil fuel use to peak. If the international community is to cooperatively transition away from fossil fuels, it must recognise and address the international, regional and bilateral trade relationships that are critical barriers to action.

Although not the focus of ACF's submission or advocacy, we further recognise the following as critical barriers preventing the transition away from fossil fuels globally:

- Fossil fuel lock-in causing infrastructure, business models and policies to favour and prolong fossil fuel-based systems and energy use, especially as a result of foreign aid;
- Debt crisis and unjust global financial architecture that continues to hamper the rollout of renewable energy and energy independence amongst Global South/low-income nations, causing fossil fuel dependence including on fossil fuel-derived revenue increasing the instability risks of transition; and
- Complex interactions between rising militarization, geopolitical fragmentation, emerging colonisation/extractive economic models with respect to transition minerals and renewable supply chains and competing crises, such as perceived incompatibilities between accelerating decarbonisation and economic development, impeding countries from the transition away from fossil fuels in a manner that upholds human rights and nature positive outcomes.

Ensuring a just, orderly and equitable transition that best reflects the diverse realities of countries, and the importance of high-income countries demonstrating leadership during the transition

The transition away from fossil fuels must reflect the urgency of this moment, including recognition that a market-driven transition away from fossil fuels is wholly insufficient for aligning global decarbonisation trajectories with the temperature goal of as close to 1.5°C as possible, as expressed in the *Paris Agreement*. The global public, and communities in Australia, expect governments to intervene and manage the phaseout of fossil fuel extraction in a manner that is compatible with a safe climate. Furthermore, this significant economic transition must be leveraged to address global wealth inequalities, human rights abuses and continued unsustainable economic development.

ACF recognises that as a high-income, fossil fuel exporting nation Australia has a particular responsible to lead on the transition away from fossil fuels.

An important first step for ensuring these principles are adopted in practice is for the COP30 Presidency to prioritise the articulation and party agreement to guiding principles for the development of the roadmap on the transition away from fossil fuels and complementary international mechanisms that may develop from roadmap negotiations, including:

- Affirming the scientific imperative to act and the outcomes of the GST, namely, the concern that "significantly greater emission reductions are required to align with global greenhouse gas emissions trajectories in line with the temperature goal of the Paris Agreement";²³
- Regenerative and aligned with the roadmap on halting and reversing deforestation (see

²³ Conference of the Parties, *First Global Stocktake*, 4/CMA.5, FCCC/PA/CMA/2023/L.17 (13 December 2023), [21].



further below):

- In accordance with international human rights law, specifically the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP),²⁴ and aligned with the principles of fairness, equity and solidarity;
- Enabling of Indigenous Peoples self-determination and justice, including the facilitation of Indigenous Peoples consultation, leadership, and consent by according Indigenous Peoples formal status in the roadmap process; and
- Embracing of international cooperation, in recognition that the transition away from fossil fuels is a shared global endeavour that will require cooperation to both shift and strengthen multilateral trade flows.

Recommendation 1: the COP30 Presidency roadmap on the transition away from fossil fuels must articulate guiding principles for justice and equity

ACF recommends the adoption of the following guiding principles:

- Affirming the scientific imperative to act and abiding by the temperature goal articulated in the Paris Agreement of limiting global warming to as close to 1.5°C as possible;
- Regenerative and aligned with the roadmap on halting and reversing deforestation;
- In accordance with international human rights law, especially with respect to the rights and self-determination of Indigenous Peoples. This includes according Indigenous Peoples formal status in any roadmap negotiation processes; and
- Embracing of international cooperation.

The COP30 Presidency must ensure that the roadmap remains solely focused on navigating the genuine barriers and enablers of the transition away from fossil fuels. While COP outcomes have historically allowed for qualified language, such as calling for the “phase-down of *unabated* coal power” (emphasis added),²⁵ in recognition that the roadmap process sits alongside the UNFCCC and must represent genuine ambition and momentum, ACF urges the Presidency to make clear to parties that qualified language and false climate solutions will not fall within the scope of the roadmap.

ACF expresses grave concerns that carbon capture and storage (CCS) technologies have been elevated within international climate negotiations to greenwash and delay the transition away from fossil fuels. To date, operational CCS projects have chronically underperformed, with no project ever reporting higher than an 80% capture rate and most reporting capture rates of between 10%-60% annually.²⁶ The hype around CCS by fossil fuel proponents is because CCS investment greenwashes continued expansion of fossil fuel production and use. The USA House Oversight Committee’s 2024 investigation into fossil fuel funded disinformation found that major gas corporations like BP, Exxon and Shell invest in CCS projects to “help sustain gas demand

²⁴ *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, GA Res 61/295, UN Doc A/RES/61/295 (2 October 2007, adopted 13 September 2007).

²⁵ See, e.g., Conference of the Parties, *First Global Stocktake*, 4/CMA.5, FCCC/PA/CMA/2023/L.17 (13 December 2023), [28](b).

²⁶ Oil Change International, *Funding Failure: Carbon Capture and Fossil Hydrogen Subsidies Exposed* (August 2024), 8.



growth for longer” and for “counteracting statements made by climate-focused NGOs;”²⁷ internal financial records of these corporations show that actual investment in CCS deployment is low.²⁸

In 2023, an Oxford Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment report found that high-use CCS pathways would cost at least US\$30 trillion more than low-use pathways (approx. US\$1 trillion more per year to 2050).²⁹ The study was conservative, and the authors acknowledge that costs could easily rise in a high-use CCS pathway because of the statistically greater likelihood of capture underperformance or storage reservoir failure. The IPCC has also found that reliance on CCS is unproven at scale, unavailable in the near term to cut emissions and is among the highest cost mitigation option available at US\$50-\$100 per tonne of CO₂-e reduced.³⁰

Recommendation 2: the COP30 Presidency must ensure the roadmap on the transition away from fossil fuels is not undermined by qualified language that serves to lock-in fossil fuel production

ACF strongly urges the COP30 Presidency to leverage the two-tier-multilateralism process envisaged by the roadmap to strive for maximum ambition and alignment on genuine action to accelerate the transition away from fossil fuels. This means prioritising negotiation to avoid the use of qualified language in relation to phaseout commitments, such as ‘unabated’ or ‘inefficient’, or reliance on false climate solutions, like carbon capture and storage, that ultimately locks-in greater fossil fuel production.

Potential levers for accelerating the implementation of the transition away from fossil fuels commitment

ACF urges the COP30 Presidency to champion both international and coordinated national interventions for accelerating the transition away from fossil fuels, as committed to by nations pursuant to the *Belém Declaration on the Transition Away from Fossil Fuels*.³¹ We recognise that the COP30 Presidency has supported “two-tier-multilateralism”, enabling complementary multilateral climate negotiations and outcomes alongside the existing institutions and processes embedded in the UNFCCC. We support this approach and affirm the importance of two-tier-multilateralism to build ambition and mobilise action in a manner that remains anchored to transparency, cooperation and legal clarity.

In ACF’s view, a critical component of the two-tier-multilateralism process envisaged by the COP30 Presidency must be the development and implementation of international cooperation mechanisms that accelerate the transition away from fossil fuels, and that forms the cooperative foundation for States to scale-up domestic action. This includes coordinated international action to codify and clarify the binding obligations recognised by the ICJ in its *Advisory Opinion on the Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change* (2025), including through a Fossil Fuel Treaty.³²

²⁷ House Committee on Oversight and Accountability and United States Senate Committee on the Budget, *Denial, Disinformation, and Doublespeak: Big Oil’s Evolving Efforts to Avoid Accountability for Climate Change* (Joint Staff Report, April 2024), 32 and 34.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ A Bacilieri, R Black and R Way, *Assessing the relative costs of high-CCS and low-CCS pathways to 1.5 degrees*, (Oxford Smith School Working Paper 23-08, 2023), 6.

³⁰ IPCC, *Sixth Assessment Report* (Working Group III: Mitigation of Climate Change, 2022), 38.

³¹ CarbonBrief, “COP30: Key outcomes agreed at the UN climate talks in Belem” (23 November 2025, Blogpost), <<https://www.carbonbrief.org/cop30-key-outcomes-agreed-at-the-un-climate-talks-in-belem/>>.

³² “Fossil Fuel Treaty” (2026, Webpage), <<https://www.fossilfueltreaty.org/>>.



The ICJ's opinion on climate change confirms that the failure to phaseout fossil fuel extraction may constitute an internationally wrongful act (at [427]).³³ It is critical that States now proceed to codify the ICJ's expression of international customary law in a binding multilateral agreement, to clarify and progress international action to phaseout fossil fuel production. Codification would be consistent with the *Belém Declaration* welcoming the ICJAO statement of law (*Declaration*, [3]-[4]). ACF urges signatories of the *Belém Declaration*, including Australia, to reaffirm commitment to the *Belém Declaration* by participating in the negotiation and signatory process of codifying the ICJAO statement of law. Any fossil fuel phaseout treaty should seek to develop implementation obligations, review and ratchet mechanisms for the following commitments in the Belem Declaration (at [6] and [8]):

- the acknowledgement that accelerating the transition away from fossil fuels requires "complementary efforts"; and
- the opportunity to develop an implementation agenda for addressing components of the transition away from fossil fuels, including the "economic diversification" agenda for supply chains and workforces, development of "enabling conditions, including financial" to advance the transition and the phaseout of "fossil fuel subsidies as soon as possible".

A Fossil Fuel Treaty is a viable mechanism to achieve this aim, by creating the conditions for States to agree to, and coordinate, ending new fossil fuel extraction, managing the phase-out of existing production and supporting a globally just transition. This would complement the *Paris Agreement* by clarifying existing obligations and adopting a high-ambition model that supports the ratchet mechanism, pursuant to Art 4(3), for nationally determined contributions.³⁴ The Fossil Fuel Treaty must affirm the importance of human rights,³⁵ including UNDRIP, and gender justice both in text and by ensuring First Nations and civil society observers are afforded a formal role in the agreement architecture. The Treaty must remain grounded in the scientific and human rights imperative to limit warming to 1.5°C.

Finally, the Fossil Fuel Treaty should contemplate a forward agenda for aligning international trade and investment law with the phaseout of fossil fuel supply chains, and provide a forum for signatories to coordinate action on the following priority actions:

- Exclusion of ISDS provisions from future bilateral and multilateral trade agreements, and a process for the termination of treaties or provisions that contain ISDS provisions;
- Reforms to international tax cooperation, including ongoing negotiations for the UN Framework for the Convention on International Tax Cooperation,³⁶ to accelerate efforts to reduce tax avoidance and illicit financial flows; and
- Reforms to the mandates of relevant Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) to end all direct and indirect financing of fossil fuel exploration, supply chains and power generation, including via financial intermediaries. This should extend to prohibiting CCS financing; on this issue, ACF notes and commends Australia's *Statement on International Public Support for the Clean Energy Transition* (December 2024) which clarifies that

³³ *Obligations of States in Respect of Climate Change (Advisory Opinion)* (International Court of Justice, General List No 187, 23 July 2025).

³⁴ *Paris Agreement* (opened for signature 22 April 2016, entered into force 4 November 2016), [2016] ATS 24, art 4(3).

³⁵ See further UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Climate Change, *A human rights-based approach to the energy transition*, UN GAOR, 80th sess, Agenda Item 72(b), UN DOC A/80/188 (17 July 2025).

³⁶ See further IISD, *A Roadmap for Negotiating the Protocols to the United Nations Framework Convention on Tax* (Report, July 2025).



Australia will only support abated projects that can demonstrate significant emissions reductions over the lifetime of the asset, support transition pathways to net zero, and do not create lock-in effects that delay or diminish the transition to renewable energy" (emphasis added).³⁷

Recommendation 3: the roadmap on the transition away from fossil fuels should provide a pathway for codification of the ICJ advisory opinion on climate obligations in treaty form

ACF recommends that the COP30 Presidency seek a mandate from willing parties to leverage the roadmap process for the negotiation and ratification of a binding international agreement that codifies the ICJ's advisory opinion on climate obligations and statement of existing international customary law. This should be a critical pillar of progressing action in accordance with the *Belém Declaration*, and ACF calls on Australia to be an active participant in this process as a signatory and high-income, fossil fuel exporting State.

In ACF's view, the global momentum for a Fossil Fuel Treaty is aligned with such a codification process and would be a suitable mechanism for clarifying State obligations and creating the conditions for States to agree to, and coordinate, ending new fossil fuel extraction, managing the phase-out of existing production and supporting a globally just transition.

However, ACF also urges the COP30 Presidency to ensure that the two-tier-multilateralism process – essential in the near-term to build ambition – is nonetheless navigated in a manner that enables the eventual reintegration of the roadmap for the transition away from fossil fuels back into the UNFCCC architecture and *Paris Agreement* process for nationally determined contributions and coordinated global climate action. Indeed, most nationally determined contributions do not include supply-side commitments to phaseout fossil fuels³⁸ nor commitments to support a just transition, contrary to the developing *Belém Action Mechanism* (BAM).³⁹

Ahead of the second GST, ACF calls on States to develop an integration agenda in 2026 and 2027, to ensure the BAM, *Belém Declaration* and outcomes of the Conferences on Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuels inform the GST agenda and outcomes. As part of this integration agenda, the *Belém Declaration* commitment to progress a fossil fuel phaseout roadmap must be explicitly included leading up to the GST process,⁴⁰ with the expectation that fossil fuel phaseout principles - including covering exports - will inform the development of updated nationally determined contributions. As a signatory to the *Belém Declaration* and COP31 President of Negotiations, Australia has a critical role to play in elevating a fossil fuel phaseout action within the UNFCCC architecture.

ACF expects that the primary mechanism to progress this issue will be the development of a robust Belém to Antalya Roadmap that elevates fossil fuel phaseout. States should also continue to support the evolution of the Action Agenda, as agreed at COP30, and ensure that the phaseout

³⁷ Australia, *Statement on International Public Support for the Clean Energy Transition* (Implementation Guidelines, December 2024), 7.

³⁸ P Andrea Yanguas Parra et al, "What NDCs 3.0 Are (and Aren't) Saying about Fossil Fuel Production: COP30 Update" (17 November 2025, IISD Insights) <<https://www.iisd.org/articles/insight/what-ndcs-are-arent-saying-fossil-fuel-production-cop-30-update>>.

³⁹ See Climate Action Network, *The Belém Action Mechanism for a Global Just Transition (BAM): Why and How* (October 2025).

⁴⁰ K Brown et al, *The Road to Antalya: Early Insights on What is Needed for COP31 to Deliver in a Changing Global Order* (March 2026, E3G Briefing), 6.



of fossil fuel production is an explicit focus of thematic pillar one.

Recommendation 4: ensuring the roadmap and associated instruments are reintegrated back into UNFCCC processes in due course

ACF strongly supports the COP30 Presidency developing a forward agenda for the reintegration of the roadmap on the transition away from fossil fuels process back into the formal *Paris Agreement* architecture, including to inform part the process for the second Global Stocktake.

In the near term, including at the First International Conference on Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuels in April 2026, all signatories to the *Belém Declaration* must commit to actioning the *Declaration*, commencing with an immediate commitment to not approve new coal and gas projects together with the rapid development of national roadmaps for the transition away from fossil fuels (*Declaration*, [7]), that abide by agreed upon principles. In ACF's view national level action must be accelerated, to contribute to continued global momentum for the roadmap for the transition away from fossil fuels.

ACF calls on the conference to agree to grounding principles for national roadmaps including: abiding by the *Paris Agreement* temperature goal, compliance with international human rights law, compliance with *UNDRIP* and centering Indigenous Peoples' self-determination, and embracement of international cooperation. Roadmaps should include quantifiable phaseout targets, timelines and trajectories and be compliant with the ICJAO on climate. In ACF's view, it is essential that national roadmaps are on the agenda for the First International Conference on Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuels, and that an outcome of the conference is agreement to an implementation agenda for the *Belém Declaration*. Guiding principles and timelines should be finalised no later than the Second International Conference on Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuels, and a secretariat and signatory champions should be nominated.

As a signatory and COP31 President of Negotiations, ACF calls on Australia to act as a champion of the *Declaration* and to lead by committing to approving no new coal and gas projects, and the development of its own national roadmap.

National transition roadmaps must be time-bound, equitable national plans that align the transition away from fossil fuel production and consumption in a manner that is compatible with the *Paris Agreement* temperature goal, in accordance with international human rights and international environmental law. In particular, national plans should be required to demonstrate compliance with the ICJAO including: moratoria on new fossil fuel exploration and licensing, legally binding timelines for fossil fuel production decline, strategies for economic diversification in fossil fuel-dependent regions and providing support for workers and communities in the transition, fossil fuel consumer subsidy phaseout frameworks, the expansion of renewable energy and energy efficiency, and demonstration of compliance with international human rights law especially with respect to Indigenous Peoples.



ACF affirms Climate Action Network International's call for such national transition roadmaps to include implementation mechanisms, which should be established as national government-led transition planning bodies that are inclusive of rightsholders' voices.⁴¹

Recommendation 5: States must progress national transition roadmaps in parallel with international cooperation, to accelerate the transition away from fossil fuels and implement the *Belém Declaration*

ACF strongly recommends that the COP30 Presidency, in cooperation with the First International Conference on Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuels, progress actions to implement the *Belém Declaration* including for States to develop national roadmaps for the transition away from fossil fuels in the near term. ACF urges Australia to champion and lead such a process.

⁴¹ See further Climate Action Network International, *Submission to the COP30 Presidency Roadmap for Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuels* (Submission, March 2026), 5.





Developing the Roadmap for Halting and Reversing Deforestation and Forest Degradation by 2030

What are the most critical barriers — whether physical, economic, financial, institutional, technological or social — preventing the halting and reversing of deforestation and forest degradation?

Australia is a global deforestation and forest degradation hotspot with a number of options open to it to address this poor record. As such, identification of critical barriers to halting and reversing deforestation and forest degradation in Australia, and the potential levers available to the Australian government, should assist in developing a global roadmap. This roadmap should include a clear understanding that developed economies such as Australia are expected to assume a leadership role by taking domestic action to halt and reverse deforestation and forest degradation.

Australia has one of the highest rates of deforestation in the world and has the highest rate of deforestation of any developed country.⁴² As is the case globally, agriculture is the biggest driver of deforestation in Australia. Land clearing for beef pasture expansion is the main reason Australia is a global deforestation hotspot. In recent years, on our calculation, more forest has been bulldozed for beef production in the State of Queensland than was destroyed for palm oil production in Indonesia.⁴³

In addition, native forest logging and forest management in Australia results in forest ecosystem decline, vulnerability to fire and reduction in carbon stocks.

Australia claims to have achieved a net increase in forest cover in recent years, but that statistic masks the enormous impact of ongoing deforestation.

Research has found that:⁴⁴

- Most Australian Forest destruction has occurred in carbon-dense and species-rich forests, while most regrowth is in drier regions with sparse vegetation that cannot absorb the same amount of carbon.
- Almost 85% of the reported increase in forest cover since the early 2000s occurred in areas of existing native vegetation – and mostly in semi-arid, arid and northern rangelands – rather than on previously cleared land.

⁴² World Wildlife Fund (2021) *Australia remains the only developed nation on the list of global deforestation fronts*, available at: <https://wwf.org.au/news/2021/australia-remains-the-only-developed-nation-on-the-list-of-global-deforestation-fronts/>

⁴³ Australian Conservation Foundation (2025) *Financed Deforestation: The banks behind nature destruction*. <https://www.acf.org.au/news/financed-deforestation>

⁴⁴ Keith H., Macintosh A., Butler D., Mackey B. (2025). *How claims of a net increase in forest cover mask the truth about the environmental impact of land clearing in Australia*. Griffith Climate Action Beacon Science Informing Briefing Note 1/25. Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia



- On average, the clearing of remnant forest in Australia's intensive regions, where most losses occur, releases up to 120 times more greenhouse gas emissions (CO₂-e) per hectare than could be plausibly removed from the atmosphere through the thickening of existing vegetation in rangelands, where most forest gains have occurred.
- Since 2000, emissions from the clearing of forests alone (not including sub-forest ecosystems) have averaged 55 million tonnes of CO₂-e per annum.
- There is considerable uncertainty about the accuracy of the Australian Government's estimates of the reported changes in forest area in existing native or remnant vegetation, with the prospect that the reported increase in forest extent has been significantly overestimated.

The global forest roadmap should recommend developed countries like Australia develop national plans or domestic roadmaps as a matter of urgency. These plans should include science-based commitments to halt and reverse deforestation and degradation measured in gross terms. They should also include ambitious LULUCF targets and funding support for implementation.

Targets should be based on reformed forest accounting including:

- Report forest area change, disaggregated by forest type and condition:
 - Classification by forest type to provide ecosystem extent
 - Classification by forest age and condition (ecosystem integrity)
 - Progressively include additional indicators of ecosystem composition, structure, and function. Change in forest area reported as gross gains and losses of each category of forest.
- Change how land carbon stocks are reported so that it includes:
 - Carbon stocks by area of forest type and condition class
 - Gross gains and losses in carbon stocks
 - Changes in carbon stocks due to area of forest change or activities in the same area.

Australia is the second largest beef exporter in the world, behind only Brazil, supplying over 80 countries and exporting approximately 75% of its production volume.⁴⁵ A lack of due diligence in global agricultural supply chains in comparison to, for example, the timber trade is one of the main reasons that deforestation persists in agricultural supply chains, including Australia's.⁴⁶ Only 3% of global companies with the greatest exposure to the forest risk commodities associated with 60% of all global deforestation have strong deforestation targets that show evidence of effective implementation, according to Global Canopy.⁴⁷

Where due diligence is not required by law, it is applied inconsistently leading to 'leakage' to other businesses or markets. To avoid this leakage, governments must work together to develop consistent domestic forest roadmaps as well as requirements for supply chain due diligence to prevent commodity trade driving deforestation. The forest roadmap should map out both domestic and trade related measures necessary to halt and reverse global deforestation to ensure commodity importing countries are not exporting environmental harm and emissions.

⁴⁵ Meat and Livestock Australia, Record Breaking Beef Exports (Web Page, 8 August 2024)

<https://www.mla.com.au/news-and-events/industry-news/record-breaking-beef-exports>

⁴⁶ OECD/FAO (2023), OECD-FAO Business Handbook on Deforestation and Due Diligence in Agricultural Supply Chains, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/c0d4bca7-en>.

⁴⁷ Global Canopy (2025) *Companies profit, forests fall: everyone pays the price. Forest 500 Report 2025* available at <https://forest500.org/publications/companies-profit-forests-fall-everyone-pays-the-price/>



Developed countries like Australia should lead in developing domestic roadmaps.

What potential levers, whether economic, financial, institutional, social or technological, exist for accelerating the implementation of the commitment to halt and reverse deforestation

Recommendation 6: developed countries must lead on the roadmap on halting deforestation covering domestic and trade related measures

ACF recommends that the global forest roadmap should urge developed countries like Australia to develop national plans or domestic roadmaps as a matter of urgency. These plans should include science-based commitments to halt and reverse deforestation and degradation measured in gross terms. They should also include ambitious LULUCF targets and funding support for implementation.

The forest roadmap should recommend both domestic and trade related measures, including import-focused due diligence regimes, necessary to halt and reverse global deforestation to ensure commodity importing countries are not exporting environmental harm including emissions.

and forest degradation?

As outlined above, agriculture, especially for food production, is the leading cause of deforestation in Australia and worldwide. At the same time, agriculture and food are among the most nature-dependent industries both globally⁴⁸ and in Australia.⁴⁹ Deforestation and forest degradation contribute to erosion, worsening soil fertility, salinisation and increasing chance of drought. The degradation of land is estimated to cost Australia \$224 billion annually in lost ecosystem services and production capacity.⁵⁰ The Australian government has committed to a National Food Security Strategy, which provides an opportunity to set a new strategic direction for food production that emphasises not just agricultural outputs but need to halt deforestation and protect ecosystems for the long-term security of the food system. The Roadmap should acknowledge the reliance of agriculture and food security on nature globally and encourage a transition to agricultural practices that improve nature outcomes, reduce emissions and promote food security.

Recommendation 7: the roadmap on halting deforestation must recognize food production as a key driver of deforestation

The roadmap should recognise food production and especially beef production as a key driver of deforestation and encourage countries to act on Target 10 of the KMGBF by eliminating deforestation and land degradation and transitioning to agricultural models that improve nature outcomes and reduce emissions.

⁴⁸ World Economic Forum (2020) *Nature Risk Rising: Why the Crisis Engulfing Nature Matters for Business and the Economy*. Available at <https://www.weforum.org/press/2020/01/half-of-world-s-gdp-moderately-or-highly-dependent-on-nature-says-new-report/>

⁴⁹ Australian Conservation Foundation (Media Release, 6 September 2022) <https://www.acf.org.au/news/how-australias-prosperity-depends-on-nature>

⁵⁰ Williams KJ, Hunter B, Schmidt RK, Woodward E, Cresswell ID (2021). Land: Management approaches. In: Australia State of the environment 2021, Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, Canberra, <https://soe.dcceew.gov.au/land/management/management-approaches>, DOI: 10.26194/6EAM-6G50



National and subnational regulations are an important lever for reducing deforestation. In Australia, recent changes to Australia's national environmental law, the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, create a foundation for improved forest protection if these changes are thoroughly implemented. Changes to exemption applicable to agricultural deforestation are an opportunity for a fresh approach to the application of these national laws to the agricultural sector, remedying the longstanding lack of compliance and enforcement of these national environmental protection laws. A new national environmental regulator, the National Environmental Protection Agency, should lead to better decision making and improvements to compliance and enforcement. These changes also create an opportunity for the federal government to work more effectively with State and Territory governments to ensure coordinated approaches to improving regulation of deforestation.

Recommendation 8: the roadmap on halting deforestation must emphasise the need for improved national and subnational regulation on halting deforestation

The roadmap should emphasise the need for improved national and subnational regulation to halt and reverse deforestation, and recommend the need for domestic roadmaps to include review and improvement of regulations to halt and reverse deforestation and forest degradation.

Increased public funding to support protection and recovery of forests and other ecosystems, is critical to halt and reverse deforestation and forest degradation. At the federal level, government spending on-ground biodiversity programs amounts to just 0.06% of the most recent federal budget. In ACF's view, approaches intended to facilitate private investment are necessary but insufficient.

Australia's Net Zero Plan incorporates and Agriculture and Land Sector Plan which includes recognition of the role of protection and restoration in enhancing the contribution of land management to a net zero economy. But improved accounting and more support for protection and restoration are necessary including through policy support for the transition to nature friendly agricultural practices such as agroecology, sustainable intensification, climate-smart farming through stewardship payments, enhanced research funding, extension or technical support, and the integration of nature related risks to economic decision-making including agricultural policy.⁵¹

Australia is yet to act on its commitment under the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) to identify and reduce subsidies that are harmful to nature (Target 18). Research has found that the Australian Government provides \$25 billion per year in subsidies that harm biodiversity, including those for activities that directly or indirectly contribute to deforestation.⁵² Identifying and reducing or eliminating these subsidies – already a commitment under the KMGBF – should be emphasised as a critical step in global and national roadmaps.

⁵¹ Selinske, M.J., Garrard, G.E., Humphrey, J.E. *et al.* Pathways to a nature positive agricultural sector. *npj Sustain. Agric.* **4**, 18 (2026). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s44264-025-00104-x>

⁵² Elton, P., Clement, S., Maron, M., & Ashby, L. (2026). Biodiversity-harmful subsidies in Australia. *Australasian Journal of Environmental Management*, *33*(1), 11–29. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14486563.2026.2623910>. See also Biodiversity Council of Australia, The Australian Government's \$26 billion per year nature-harming problem revealed by study

(Web Page, 17 February 2026) <https://biodiversitycouncil.org.au/news/research-reveals-australian-government-26-billion-per-year-nature-harming-problem>,



Banks and other financial institutions contribute to Australia's deforestation problem through their lending practices. Despite rising global pressure on financial institutions to address climate and nature-related risks, most Australian banks still fail to track, report or manage financed deforestation.⁵³ The roadmap should outline steps for the integration of deforestation and forest degradation-related risks into financial regulation, central bank oversight and both private and public investment decision-making. This would shift capital away from high-deforestation and forest-degradation activities and practices and align with the 'mainstreaming' targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

Recommendation 9: the roadmap on halting deforestation must recognise the need for increased public investment and financial regulation to halt and reverse deforestation

The roadmap should recognise the need for increased public investment to support halting and reversing deforestation, and should prioritise action to identify and remove harmful subsidies.

Furthermore, ACF urges the COP30 Presidency to ensure the roadmap recommends integration of deforestation and forest degradation-related risks into financial regulation, central bank oversight and both private and public investment decision-making.

Other matters related to the development of the Roadmap

ACF recommends measures to improve synergies and policy coherence between the Rio Conventions, advancing cooperation with other international organizations and creating a dedicated space for maximising climate and biodiversity synergies in the UNFCCC, and for minimising negative trade-offs and maladaptation risks; and

We also believe that it is important to establish a dedicated institutional "home" (with clear mandate, budget and authority) to hold and drive the implementation of the Roadmap and its milestones beyond a single COP presidency. This space could be used to incentivize, provide guidance, and support countries to produce their own national plans for halting and reversing deforestation and forest degradation by 2030.

Recommendation 10: the roadmap should aim for synergies and policy coherence between Rio Convention and a dedicated institutional framework should be implemented to drive implementation

The roadmap should:

- Include measures to improve synergies and policy coherence between the Rio Conventions, advancing cooperation with other international organizations and creating a dedicated space for maximising climate and biodiversity synergies in the UNFCCC, and for minimising negative trade-offs and maladaptation risks; and
- Establish a dedicated institutional "home" (with clear mandate, budget and authority) to hold and drive the implementation of the Roadmap and its milestones beyond a single COP presidency. This space could be used to incentivize, provide guidance, and support countries to produce their own national plans for halting and reversing deforestation and forest degradation by 2030.

⁵³ Australian Conservation Foundation (2025) *Financed Deforestation: The banks behind nature destruction*. Report and supporting data available at <https://www.acf.org.au/news/financed-deforestation>.

