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Statement by H.E. Dr. Khalilur Rahman, President of the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly, at the opening of COP31

Antalya, Türkiye · November 2026

Mr. President,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The clock is ticking.

Last year, total carbon emissions hit a record forty-two billion tonnes.

The twelve warmest years ever recorded are the last twelve.

Paris promised 1.5 degrees.

We are on track for 2.8.

That is not a gap. It is a chasm.

And people are falling into it, every day.

The only way to close it is to deliver on our commitments.

It is therefore very timely that the focus of this Conference is on implementation.

I thank President Erdoğan, and the people and Government of Türkiye, for welcoming us to Antalya.

I thank the President of COP31 for leading this Conference, and Minister Bowen for steering the negotiations.

As we move from climate ambition to implementation and action, we are not starting from scratch.

Paris gave us a compass.

The UAE Consensus gave us a direction.

The Taku Pakasoa Declaration gave us the islands' and Pacific's voice. Antalya must give us delivery.

Let me offer three tests for the days ahead.

First, our ambition must translate into concrete results.

New nationally determined contributions are on the table.

Fund them. Measure them. Deliver them.

Science demands emission cuts of 45 per cent by 2035.

Tripling renewables means we should add some 1,200 gigawatts every year. Not someday. Now.

Decarbonization must remain our ultimate priority, as it affords us the only viable path to reduce emissions and rein in temperature rise.

We should advance a just transition away from fossil fuels. And invest in adaptation as fiercely as in mitigation.

The COP31 Presidency's 2035 targets, on electrification, sustainable buildings, green industry and zero waste, can turn our commitment into measurable progress.

And the Climate Implementation Bridge can carry national plans across the valley to investable projects.

Let the second global stocktake begin here with a sense of purpose and ambition.

Second, our ambition must be adequately resourced.

A commitment without finance is a promise deferred. A promise deferred is lives left unprotected.

The world agreed to 300 billion dollars of climate finance a year by 2035, on road to 1.3 trillion.

Developing countries need up to 305 billion a year for adaptation. Currently, they receive only 26 billion.

This gap is not a rounding error. It is a verdict on our solidarity.

We should make finance adequate, accessible and affordable. Financing should be, as much as possible, non-debt-creating.

We should fill the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage, ensure coordination and coherence among different sources of climate finance, and simplify the procedures.

Let vulnerability, not income alone, open the door to finance.

Third, no one must be left outside the circle of protection.

Small islands. Least developed countries. Low-lying coasts. They emit the least. But they face most of the adversity.

Early warnings should reach the last mile and anticipate new threats, such as glacial floods.

New technologies including artificial intelligence should be properly employed to enhance early warning systems.

The cost of climate action should be borne equitably.

Before coming here, I visited the Republic of the Congo at the invitation of President Denis Sassou Nguesso.

I saw first-hand how forest communities are protecting and preserving one of the lungs of our planet.

The whole world breathes better because of the stewardship of forest communities from the Amazonia to the Congo Basin to the Mangrove forests of Bangladesh.

We benefit from their work but regrettably fail to share the costs of their efforts.

This must change. The financial needs of the forest communities around the world must be factored in our response to climate change.

Women and girls, young people, indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities should participate in shaping and implementing our climate response, not merely be recipients of it.

Excellencies,

I came to the United Nations forty years ago as a young diplomat. I have since heard many appealing speeches.

But speeches do not cool our planet. Decisions and delivery do.

Restoring trust. Managing transformation. Delivering for all. This is the compact of the eighty-first session of the General Assembly. Let it also be the compact of this Conference.

When good faith meets good will, multilateralism works. We have seen the most recent evidence of it when the UN General Assembly adopted the UN Declaration on Sea-Level Rise last month.

The small gavel of Paris did big things.

Let the gavel of Antalya do bigger ones.

Let this be the COP of implementation.

Let our work here be remembered by a child in the Congo forest, a farmer in Antalya and a fisherman in the Bay of Bengal as promise delivered.

Let us answer them with action. Together, strongly.

As President of the General Assembly, I will ensure that the Assembly carries forward what we decide here into its 2027 Sustainable Development Goal Summit.

I thank you.