

Summary of the High-Level Segment of the First Conference on Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuels: 28–29 April 2026

It is a truism that burning fossil fuels causes human-induced climate change. But this truth is rarely spoken at UN climate change meetings. The focus has been on emissions, not their sources. The First Conference on Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuels (TAFF 1) sought to shift the discussion and build momentum for concrete solutions to end fossil fuels' grip on economies, legal frameworks, and energy systems.

The invitation-only meeting aimed at solidifying and expanding the coalition of the willing. Those countries assembled represented one-third of global fossil fuel consumption and one-fifth of global production. Together, they could take considerable steps to reduce demand for fossil fuels and promote a just transition. Many gathered were also highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

The two-day high-level segment brought together diplomats, Indigenous Peoples, academics, and civil society representatives for direct discussions rather than pre-written speeches. The themes were overcoming the economics of fossil fuel dependence, transforming supply and demand, and advancing international cooperation within and beyond global climate governance

A final breakout session sought to advance cooperation on concrete solutions. Each outcome of the conference involves a shared set of efforts for states, scientists, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and others to take forward, including:

- a new science-policy panel, called the Global Energy Transition Panel, led by scientists;
- three workstreams on roadmaps for the transition, supported by the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) Partnership and Global Energy Transition Panel; on macroeconomic dependencies and financial architecture, supported by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) and the Centre for Economic Policy and Research (CEPR); and on fossil fuel free trade systems, supported by Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD); and
- a second TAFF conference co-hosted by Tuvalu and Ireland, to take place in Tuvalu in 2027.

The TAFF 1 co-hosts, Colombia and the Netherlands, will produce a co-hosts' takeaway summary and a full conference report that reflects the broader range of inputs.

The TAFF 1 Conference convened in Santa Marta, Colombia, from 24 to 29 April 2026. The two-day high-level segment was attended by delegates from 57 countries, including 27 countries who

were represented by ministers, deputy ministers, or ambassadors, as well as 1,500 representatives of civil society.

A Brief History of the TAFF

The silence surrounding fossil fuels' role in the climate crisis has increasingly been challenged in recent years. At the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), a growing coalition of states has pushed for decisions to phase down or phase out fossil fuels. They called for this language in the 2023 Global Stocktake outcome, but had to settle for a package of measures and a mere reference to fossil fuels. This section of the Stocktake outcome remains contested in discussions on how to realize the ambitions of that decision. These calls remained and came to a head at the Belém Climate Change Conference in 2025. Countries left that meeting with the [Belém Declaration](#) that includes a roadmap for transitioning away from fossil fuels. Again, falling short of their demands, the Declaration is not a formal UNFCCC outcome. It is a promise by the Brazilian Presidency to advance these efforts.

At the same time, at a press conference, a group of countries announced the first TAFF Conference. It is a plurilateral meeting of willing (and invited) states, Indigenous Peoples, and civil society representatives that seeks to complement, not replace, the UNFCCC. Some of these civil society and Indigenous leaders, as well as some states believe this process could start talks for a fossil fuel treaty, as one of many solutions on the table to address the economic, legal, and technological challenges identified by TAFF organizers.

In the run-up to TAFF 1, the organizers solicited input through several means. Delegations from invited countries gathered in an in-

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person retreat. There were over 20 preparatory online dialogues and more than 600 written submissions. Additional inputs were provided after “self-managed” days, including from Indigenous Peoples, academics, the private sector, and subnational, regional, and state governments.

TAFF High-Level Segment Report

Co-Chair Irene Vélez Torres, Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development, Colombia, opened the high-level segment on Tuesday, 28 April 2026, stressing that fossil fuels not only fuel the climate crisis but are also responsible for inequalities in the global economy and have consolidated neocolonial economies. For more than three decades, she said, some tried to discuss fossil fuel dependency in a multilateral context. Highlighting that “we are living in a fracture of the global order as we know it,” she said hope lies in collective action, and this crisis can create a possibility to create a new architecture of international relationships.

Co-Chair Stientje van Veldhoven-van der Meer, Minister of Climate and Green Growth, the Netherlands, underscored that price volatility and import dependence are structurally affecting economies, urging a transition away from fossil fuels to strengthen energy independence and security. Calling for the implementation of a global roadmap towards a fossil-free future, she said the challenge is not just about energy but also about building a new economy. Highlighting that countries face a shared opportunity, she said they must cooperate to move towards alternatives to fossil fuels.

Selwin Hart, Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General on Climate Action and Just Transition, identified fossil fuels as the common denominators of the energy and climate crises, because three-quarters of the global population rely on energy imports, sharing the same vulnerabilities despite their differing economies and circumstances. He observed the transition so far is accelerating, but remains unequally distributed. Calling out the delay and obstructionist tactics of some, he urged the protection of scientists, activists, and human rights defenders.

Yuvelis Morales, Goldman Prize winner, called on participants to imagine a world that children deserve, where they can live, people can breathe, and nature thrives. She called for concrete actions to protect life and realize this future.

In opening statements, NIGERIA said that a phase-down, not a phase-out, of fossil fuels can give exporting countries time, stressing that the focus must be not on whether, but on how to manage it equitably.

TUVALU referred to the story of Noah’s ark, saying that wealthy countries have the ability to purchase tickets to board the ark, while countries with limited capacity are left to swim outside. They called for the willing to join efforts to lead the way and accelerate momentum in delivering practical solutions.

SPAIN said the transition away from fossil fuels is a social, prosperity and security agenda. He stressed the importance of having Indigenous Peoples, parliamentarians, civil society and academics present, and called for alliances to build the roadmap for transitioning away from fossil fuels.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES said they cannot accept “a new form of colonialism cloaked as just transition,” lamenting their tokenization and calling for greater collaboration and more serious partnerships.

PARLIAMENTARIANS said the transition away from fossil fuels must now move from ambition to implementation, calling for

agreements and treaties to develop predictable, accessible, and non-debt-inducing finance.

BELGIUM called for reinforcing sustainable and active multilateralism, saying countries need to leverage this crisis and ensure a just transition.

MALDIVES stressed that renewable energy targets are insufficient and the transition must be system-wide, address transportation systems, and be realistic, guided by equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capacities (CBDR-RC) in light of national circumstances.

PEOPLES OF AFRICAN DESCENT traced the connections among slavery, extractivism, colonialism, militarism, and the climate crisis. They called for a transition that recognizes the legal rights and spaces of Afro-descended communities and facilitates self-governed energy systems and fair environmental licensing.

ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS reported from the academic days that preceded this segment, which brought together 400 experts with diverse expertise grounded in lived realities. She highlighted their recommendations, including reforming central banks, addressing Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) mechanisms, and developing national transition roadmaps.

The ENERGY TRANSITIONS COMMISSION advanced an encouraging picture, calling the current energy system wasteful, inefficient, and insecure. Among the seven trends he highlighted were technological advancements such as heat pumps and electric cars, as well as economic trends showing that these technologies and renewable energy are cost-competitive. Focusing on demand, he noted that electrification can displace 75% of fossil fuel demand.

Calling the energy transition a “tangible way to follow the science,” the EU recalled the UNFCCC commitments made in 2023 to transition away from fossil fuels. He stressed climate, commercial, and security-related reasons for reducing reliance on fossil fuels, saying the EU is currently losing half a billion USD per day due to higher energy prices.

VANUATU said this conference responds to a “clear gap” in international climate governance: the absence of a binding international framework governing the production of fossil fuels. He highlighted the International Court of Justice (ICJ) Advisory Opinion, which considers international cooperation as indispensable.

PALAU underscored the need to address the root cause of the climate crisis, the supply of fossil fuels, and to “free ourselves from fossil fuel dependency.” He stressed the need for clean energy systems that match global capacities, in tandem with mechanisms to phase out fossil fuel supply.

The WOMEN AND DIVERSITIES CHAPTER called to “transform the rules of the game,” highlighting energy democracy as a right. She stressed the historical responsibility of the Global North and the need to acknowledge communities affected by fossil fuels, petrochemicals, and mining.

MULTILATERAL DEVELOPMENT BANKS (MDBs) called for targeting subsidies to those who really need it, in order to deal with the short-term impact of fossil fuel price shocks in a way that does not exacerbate existing market distortions. He underscored that MDBs remain committed partners with governments to navigate the short-term impacts of the current crisis as well as the longer-term transition away from fossil fuels.

GERMANY said this conference is a “turning point,” and an opportunity to exchange experiences and to “get rid of fake news.” Reflecting on Germany’s coal phase-out experience, he said if it

had been done earlier, it would have been cheaper politically and economically.

NORWAY underlined it remains committed to realizing the era of renewable energy and to unlocking the transition across all sectors and continents and for all peoples. She called for close cooperation between producers and consumers, given the volatility and interconnections of energy markets.

The POTSDAM INSTITUTE FOR CLIMATE IMPACT RESEARCH made clear that the world will surpass 1.5°C and that coming back from overshoot is possible but will require systems transitions at scale. He announced the tentatively-named Science-Policy Panel for the Global Energy Transition, with four objectives:

- update scientific roadmaps annually until 2035 across all sectors at the global, regional, and national levels;
- review the most effective and socially acceptable policy packages;
- map the barriers to scaling up the transition; and
- explore strategies for government decision making and international cooperation.

He said the new panel will complement the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and will be advised by a multi-stakeholder panel.

The PRIVATE SECTOR underlined the need to be honest that the transition is not just swapping energy sources, but it is a systems transition in a different way to power economies, move goods, and support communities. They called for credible, investable roadmaps that survive short-term political cycles. They also called for honesty about the full scale of support the fossil fuel industry receives and for revising subsidy systems.

NGOs stressed that how the fossil fuel era ends is a choice that must align with science, be equitable, and end predatory finance. They called for grant-based finance, debt cancellation, social protections for impacted communities, permanent fossil fuel exclusion zones, and reparations for affected peoples. They urged a legally binding treaty for a rights-based and funded transition, and exit from ISDS.

The UK stressed that this second energy crisis proves that reliance on fossil fuels must end. They suggested strengthened cooperation with emerging markets and developing countries, particularly those that rely on fossil fuel exports, and also identified challenges related to debt, energy planning, electrification, and insecurity. Lauding the strong role of Indigenous Peoples at this conference, she called for their continued engagement.

MARSHALL ISLANDS relayed the consequences of the current energy crisis: their government shuts down every day at 3:00 pm to save energy, seawall construction might have to pause, and a few companies make “outrageous profits” at the expense of people. She called for all to support the International Maritime Organization (IMO) decarbonization plan and announced the Marshall Islands will co-chair the Coalition on Phasing Out Fossil Fuel Incentives Including Subsidies (COFFIS).

TRADE UNIONS noted that there is no energy transition without workers, stressing the need for a just transition that ensures decent work and social protection.

COLOMBIA highlighted the need to create fiscal space for Global South countries and emphasized that countries highly dependent on fossil fuels need alternatives. He underscored that subsidies perpetuating fossil fuel dependence need to be transformed.

FRANCE described their domestic roadmap for the transition away from fossil fuels, which contains clear end dates, calling on other countries to develop national roadmaps.

GUATEMALA noted gaps in infrastructure, finance, and energy access, calling for a transition that is fair, equitable, and people centered. He urged creating decent jobs in green sectors and ensuring the effective participation of communities, including Indigenous Peoples, in decision making.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH noted the ICJ advisory opinion states that fossil fuel production, licensing, and subsidies can breach international law. She said children and youth are implementers of the just transition.

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS reiterated their concerns about false solutions, calling for a binding international agreement that includes a plan to phase out fossil fuel production subsidies and a financial structure that does not increase debt for countries in the Global South.

The UNFCCC COP30 PRESIDENCY said the seed planted by President Lula at COP30 has already “borne wonderful fruit,” saying this conference is about implementing what has already been agreed at COP28. She stressed that the TAFF is not only vital to combat climate change, but also for energy security, sovereignty, economic fairness, justice, and peace.

SLOVENIA found value in a space for practical action, but stated the Paris Agreement must remain the central pillar of climate governance and stressed the need to build trust among partners and countries for the transition to succeed.

PANAMA called for a new legal instrument to end fossil fuels, a prohibition on offshore drilling and new fossil fuel infrastructure, and fossil fuel exclusion zones. He highlighted Panama’s call for a declaration on the rights of nature as a key step toward building a just, sustainable future.

LOCAL AND SUBNATIONAL GOVERNMENTS reported one clear message from their discussions over the previous days: the transition requires working with, not around, local governments. He characterized cities and regions as where policy meets reality, because they are close to people and territories, and work with communities, Indigenous Peoples, and other partners.

TANZANIA called for a just, development-oriented transition guided by existing multilateral frameworks. He highlighted the need to prioritize clean cooking as a solution for those without access to electricity.

MALAWI looked forward to working with a coalition of the willing to negotiate a new treaty to finance and scale up the transition in a way that complements the views expressed here and other frameworks. He said it is time to set immediate goals and advance concrete solutions.

THE INTERNATIONAL RENEWABLE ENERGY AGENCY (IRENA) said the current energy crisis is the result of an economic system based on fossil fuels, while renewable energy is reliable, stable, and cost-competitive. He said IRENA’s upcoming analysis of the pathways for the transition could be a first result of this conference and will feed into the Brazilian COP Presidency’s roadmap.

BRAZIL relayed its efforts to advance the transition, focusing on planning to make its NDC actionable by developing clear regulatory frameworks and financing mechanisms. He said this work is advancing across the ministries of energy, finance, and environment and climate change.

ITALY called for a new diplomatic platform that is inclusive to all, including major emitters and those who “resist the logic of the transition,” stressing that there is nothing to negotiate.

CANADA underlined that the energy crisis, affordability, energy security, and climate change need to be considered together. They recalled countries’ shared commitments under the Paris Agreement and its Global Stocktake and the COP Presidency’s roadmap to phase down fossil fuels.

AUSTRALIA highlighted its rapid transformation of the energy system, stressing that clean energy enhances energy security. He called to accelerate the rollout of renewable energy, energy storage, and electrification.

TÜRKIYE said there is no one size fits all for the global energy transition, noting different national circumstances, development priorities, access to finance, and technology needs. He said the three guiding principles of the COP31 Presidency are dialogue, consensus, and action.

Presidential Address

Introducing the President, Vélez Torres stressed the conflict in the Middle East has shown that the world not only faces an environment and climate crisis, but also a crisis with national security and economic dimensions. She pointed to the Science Panel for a Just Energy Transition as an important outcome of the conference.

President Gustavo Petro welcomed participants to this historic meeting, noting that Colombia is the world’s fifth-largest coal exporter. He outlined the contradictions of the climate crisis and the inequalities that causes. He pointed the cause of climate change directly at fossil fuels, recalling that 75% of it is due to the extraction and consumption of hydrocarbons. Denouncing the “deepening of barbarity” in the world, he called for a swift and immediate response involving the unity of peoples.

Breakout Sessions

Breakout sessions were facilitated by Ministers, and each had a list of assigned participants to ensure all groups could engage. They took place in parallel on both days of the conference.

Energy Access: Moderated by Chipiliro Mpinganjira, Deputy Minister of Natural Resources, Malawi, many lauded the successful expansion of renewables, but stressed the 685 million left behind without access to electricity. Several underlined a focus on rural communities, diasporas, decentralized systems, biofuels, and biomass.

Some refuted the narrative of an energy shortage, lamenting that an “energy abundance” narrative is used to justify further fossil fuel use. Rather, they underlined that the challenge is distribution and access.

Several pointed to practical solutions that could be scaled up. Some Global South countries reported that the falling price of solar panels has led to rooftop installation without subsidies or other public resources. Similarly, participants shared positive national experiences related to clean cooking and mini-grids.

Some noted challenges with accessing remote areas, promoting energy efficiency in households, and rebuilding renewable energy infrastructure after extreme weather events. Concerns were raised on substituting crops for biofuels and ensuring the prior informed consent of communities and rights holders for activities on their lands.

On areas of future cooperation, many raised technology transfer and capacity-building. Ideas to address these challenges included

experience-exchange programmes for workers and youth, and sharing experiences on regulatory frameworks, particularly through South-South or regional cooperation. For many, there were positive synergies between managing a just transition and improving energy access.

Grant-based public finance was seen as key to help cover the upfront costs of investment. A few urged shifting the conversation to begin negotiating a fossil fuel treaty that would put access and justice at the center.

Economic and Labor Transitions: Moderated by Jean-Luc Crucke, Minister of Climate, Energy, Mobility, and Institutional Reform, Belgium, participants discussed the criteria for successful transitions and areas where global cooperation could help ensure just transitions. Many stressed that a just transition is not only about creating green jobs. It is also about communities and workers who rely on the fossil fuel sector directly or indirectly.

On the criteria, some recalled the lessons from unplanned energy transitions that led to long-term social and economic inequalities. The need for planning and active management was cited as a means of avoiding detrimental effects on communities. Some pointed to long-term planning through engagement with universities, professional training bodies, and unions to ensure future generations have the skills needed for the green economy. Many stressed the need for cross-government discussions, from education and labor to environment and finance, to develop a cohesive package of support. Others noted the need to map transferable skills to help identify new sectors for workers, including decommissioning fossil fuel infrastructure or undertaking reclamation activities.

Social dialogue was highlighted as a fundamental success factor, particularly the use of inclusive mechanisms that facilitate consistent interaction. Many stressed the need to engage with communities and workers, given the disruption a plant closure could cause to a local municipality. One noted the need to maintain dialogues to counter climate skepticism that can be used to mobilize workers against the transition.

Many Global North representatives mentioned funding, particularly the need to tie it to clear deliverables and earmark the funds to enable long-term predictability.

On areas for cooperation, there were several suggestions. One called for addressing long-term contracts and power purchase agreements, which are expensive for governments to exit and take away resources that could be used to support communities. Another participant pointed to ISDS agreements that prioritize legacy profits over what is needed for the transition, while others noted the ongoing just transition work under the UNFCCC.

Fiscal Dependence: Moderated by Irene Vélez Torres, Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development, Colombia, the group explored the varied incentives and experiences of importing and exporting countries, and those that both import and export fossil fuels. Many also noted links to discussions on just transition pathways and subsidies.

National experiences focused on how domestic budgets can be reliant on incomes for fossil fuel production and exports. In the context of an energy crisis, exporters noted an incentive to expand their market share and capture windfall profits, while importers said they scrambled for alternative fossil fuel supplies.

One producer country shared its experiences in phasing down production, guided by a cross-government committee led by the finance ministry, which also created a unit to assess the implications

for the national budget. One country shared its experience of an unplanned decline in fossil fuel revenues after an oilfield reduced production, and the problems it created for the national budget.

Countries noted that taxes on petrol, for example, continue to increase government reliance on fossil fuel purchases, complicating efforts to decarbonize transport.

Trade links importers and exporters. As one participant explained, fossil fuels' share of exports is the World Bank's proxy indicator for fiscal and economic vulnerability to external shocks. Several spoke of the idea of linking importers and exporters to improve coordination in trade relationships that facilitate the transition. Some mentioned innovative solutions, such as debt-for-climate swaps or sustainable bonds.

On cooperative next steps, participants noted the need for engagement, particularly with finance ministers. Some noted the work of the Coalition of Finance Ministers for Climate Action in particular. Other organizations to engage with included the three major private credit rating agencies, which have downgraded countries when they announce fossil fuel phase-downs; state-owned enterprises; the Beyond Oil and Gas Alliance (BOGA); and the NDC Partnership.

A suggestion to connect importers and exporters to address revenue exchange problems, such as linking phase out and decarbonization objectives in importing countries with sustainable industrial strategies in exporting countries, garnered interest.

Subsidies and Financial Incentives: Moderated by Stientje van Veldhoven, Minister of Climate Policy and Green Growth, the Netherlands, the session featured participants who shared their national experiences and suggested ways forward. A participant set the scene, reporting that fossil fuel subsidies total an estimated USD 1.2 trillion a year globally. She reported that subsidies could increase, given the energy crisis, as countries respond to household needs.

Much of the discussion revolved around ensuring equity. In many national experiences, blanket subsidies, for example, to buy electric vehicles or reduce the cost of household energy, seemed less expensive, but they disproportionately benefited higher-income households. The goal, many agreed, should be policy packages that target support to vulnerable communities and households. Some noted that this requires a more granular approach, such as considering second-hand vehicle markets or interventions for specific fuels, which in turn requires data to design appropriate policies. Many emphasized how equity is key to getting social buy-in for the transition. The opportunity to leverage windfall profits in the fossil fuel sector was raised as a short-term mechanism to redistribute funding to vulnerable communities.

There were varied national experiences in using revenues from carbon pricing mechanisms to subsidize energy efficiency measures or renewable energy. Some noted that communication and transparency are key to gaining support, particularly if the prices raise costs for consumers. Populations demand transparency to understand where that revenue is spent.

On cooperation opportunities, there was a common call for national subsidies inventories. Many noted the varied national experiences and definitions of subsidies. Countries shared their experiences working in COFFIS, including that the methodology proved flexible for small island developing states to use. Some noted that a fossil fuel treaty could help to reorient the financial incentives that continue to support the fossil fuel sector.

Planned Phase-Down and Closure of Fossil Fuel Extraction:

Moderated by Abubakar Momoh, Minister of Regional Development, Nigeria, countries shared experiences of phasing out fossil fuel extraction. Reflecting on phasing out oil and gas production, one country noted: the crucial role of ministries of finance in being involved in decision making from a macroeconomic perspective; the need to plan early to give clarity to investors; the importance of worker retraining and social protection schemes; and the usefulness of the BOGA as a coalition to share experiences and enhance technical capacity.

On coal phase-outs, another country underscored the role of active policies to phase out, in addition to renewables phase-in policies, such as feed-in tariffs. They reflected on phasing out coal subsidies, saying that it is best to start early. Another government stressed a just transition and economic diversification in the coal mining phase-out.

One government noted the challenge of unplanned refinery closures, which affect the supply of transportation fuels as well as local tax bases. They highlighted a multi-stakeholder task force, which they said is planning a supply decrease in line with demand reduction.

One country reflected on its regulations to phase out coal-fired electricity generation, calling for bringing societies along on the demand side just as much as on the supply side. Another said exchange of information between exporters and importers could be helpful, expressing openness to a buyers-sellers club.

One country proposed that countries attending TAFF 1 commit to creating national roadmaps. Other topics discussed included: human health benefits of phasing out fossil fuel extraction; electrification of an economy where the power sector is already 97% fossil-free; and how to reform NDCs and require all countries to submit energy strategies as part of their NDCs.

Fuel Switching, Energy Security and Sovereignty:

Facilitated by Sara Aagesen, Minister for Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge, Spain, countries considered the following questions. Which combinations of policies, investments and safeguards have proven most effective in making fuel switching work in practice while maintaining affordability, reliability, and public support? What measures should this group coordinate and advance together to accelerate fuel switching across sectors? Where would collective action make the greatest difference compared to acting individually?

Countries reflected on the role of grids and interconnections, highlighting the European single power market as a model, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) power grid as requiring further support. One country noted the need for submarine cables to facilitate energy security in small island developing states (SIDS).

Countries shared experiences regarding transitioning away from coal in the power sector, noting long-term power purchase agreements as a major barrier that locks in coal in power systems. One country mentioned the first pilot of coal retirement credits in the Philippines, which will take place in 2026.

On moving away from gas in the power sector, marginal pricing systems were cited as a barrier because they determine a single wholesale price based on the cost of the last and most expensive generator that is needed to meet demand. One country said the only way to move beyond the high price problem is to get rid of gas power plants altogether.

One country identified biofuels as a major part of its energy matrix in 2050 carbon-neutrality pathways. Another noted small modular reactors and green hydrogen as good energy solutions for small countries. Access to finance for SIDS to fund renewables and grids was stressed as important.

Other topics discussed included: the role of the IMO as a driver for change; technology transfer and capacity-building, especially South-South programmes; sequencing investment in grids and renewable power generation; green bonds and blended finance instruments; using government procurement powers to promote low-carbon projects; and the need for electrification and green hydrogen in the heavy industrial sector.

Collective Action to Close Governance Gaps: Moderated by Maina Vakafua Talia, Minister for Home Affairs, Climate Change and Environment, Tuvalu, the group addressed the following questions. How far can existing international frameworks realistically take us in accelerating implementation of the transition? What is needed and feasible in terms of complementary frameworks or instruments to close the existing gaps? Following Santa Marta, what concrete steps can this group take together to advance coordinated action?

Several countries stated that the Paris Agreement is working, although not at the necessary speed. Others highlighted the need to bring the results of this conference into the UNFCCC process, while strengthening, preserving, and maintaining the UNFCCC system, noting the Just Transition Mechanism, the Mitigation Work Programme, and the Action Agenda as places where solutions can land. Several discussed the second Global Stocktake, saying that countries need to be prepared with a concrete roadmap, actions, and elements to feed into the process. One expressed a concern that this conference could give license to countries that are not supportive of energy transition to say, “We can’t talk about energy transition in the UNFCCC because there is another process in which to discuss it.” Another highlighted that TAFF should be a key part of every NDC.

On how to strengthen the existing system, a few countries raised the proliferation of reporting requirements across the three Rio Conventions, stressing that this is burdensome for small countries. Countries discussed ways to streamline processes and cut bureaucracy across the three conventions.

On whether to develop new processes or platforms, several expressed concern about the time required to develop and negotiate a new internationally legally binding instrument, with another noting that a new setup may be needed if what exists cannot be fixed. One country called for an independent review and formal monitoring, review, and verification of where each country stands in the climate transition, using the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Article 4 review of each country’s financial health as a model.

Several countries pointed to existing coalitions, such as BOGA and the Powering Past Coal Alliance (PPCA), with one noting that this process is bringing many coalitions under a single umbrella.

Other topics discussed included: the need to protect science, including the IPCC; the importance of working with local communities; how to defend against attacks on the existing system; the need to connect more with the real economy, including the private sector; whether MDBs can work differently and better on climate; and the need to change the relationship with the natural world.

Closing Gaps in Financial and Investment Systems: Facilitated by Vélez Torres, participants considered the following questions. What type of international investment architecture and regulatory frameworks are needed to enable the transition, and what actions can this group take to advance alignment? Which actions can we mobilize to shape innovative financial mechanisms that increase the adequate financial flows needed to implement the transition? Who are the key actors that need to be involved, and how do we bring them to the table and influence them?

Participants discussed ISDS and its negative consequences for the energy transition. In response to a question about whether this issue had been brought up at the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law, an expert said it had but the scope of the initiative was narrow, only looking at procedural rules rather than aligning ISDS with climate action. One country noted that many Pacific SIDS lack investor-state treaties.

A few speakers discussed fossil fuel subsidies, calling for their reform and for support measures in response to the current crisis, to not create a new form of dependence. One country supported a proposal made by two countries in a previous session that all countries should come to the next TAFF conference with subsidy inventories.

Two developing countries called for more finance for just transition in the energy sector, highlighting energy access as an issue.

Other topics discussed included: the Pacific Resilience Facility, with an invitation for pledges at the pre-COP; the need to fund capacity-building initiatives; implementation and updating of the Baku to Belém Roadmap to 1.3T; the importance of MDBs maintaining a climate focus; the Tropical Forest Forever Facility; how to use IMF special drawing rights for middle-income countries; and the benefits of accelerating electrification and strengthening power systems.

Frontrunner Cooperation: This session took place as a Committee of the Whole, with participation by countries and representatives of civil society and Indigenous Peoples, and was facilitated by Vélez Torres and van Veldhoven. Vélez Torres invited comments on three workstreams to organize efforts in the coming year: collaboration to build TAFF roadmaps, including for fossil fuel-producing countries; trade decarbonization by fossil fuel-exporting countries; and the financial system, addressing the fiscal trap, debt trap, and subsidy trap. They said transparency is a cross-cutting component, noting that it is important to declare incentives and subsidies for fossil fuels to know how to address them.

Countries expressed broad support for the three workstreams, with some noting how they could contribute. Two called for making the workstreams open to all stakeholders. Another urged the involvement of ministries of finance and energy.

On roadmaps, an observer group said that these should be binding. Others urged a focus on supply-side commitments and exports and working together to use the roadmaps to drive ambition in these areas.

On trade, one called to not duplicate existing international entities that are under threat. Others highlighted the need to understand certain concepts, such as buyer-seller clubs.

On finance, one urged bringing the IMF into this process, as well as the Circle of Finance Ministers and the Council of Finance Ministers. One country proposed a workstream focused on the macroeconomic conditions necessary for successful transitions. An

observer group urged fairness and equity to be at the heart of these efforts, while a few countries drew attention to the role of the private sector. Some highlighted ISDS as the major obstacle to the energy transition.

Several countries pointed to the importance of the UNFCCC process and the need to consider entry points, such as the second Global Stocktake, and some suggested a high-level event at COP 31. Others called for aligning the roadmaps with NDCs and just transition pathways. One called for a global partnership based on CBDR-RC and the right to development. Another noted the importance of support from developed to developing countries in the UNFCCC system.

Some countries and observer groups expressed strong support for a fossil fuel treaty, urging its inclusion in ongoing work, stressing that voluntarism under COPs has not moved the world far enough. Another explicitly opposed a fossil fuel treaty, noting that it would “lose” many producing countries. Another stressed the need to strengthen legal mandates to fast-track the phase-out, while expressing openness to the exact legal form, and urged the creation of a registry of fossil-free zones.

Several noted the importance of science, especially the IPCC, and some called for the science-policy panel launched in Santa Marta to draw on diverse knowledge systems, including an Indigenous Peoples advisory committee to the panel. Others noted the need to include other disciplines beyond climate science given the focus on policy frameworks and that discussions pointed to context-specific issues like social acceptance of taxes and subsidy reform.

Many noted the need to work with existing initiatives and coalitions citing, among others, COFFIS, BOGA, PPCA, and the IMF.

There was a strong call to promote the outcomes and positive spirit of this meeting, as one put it “create FOMO” (a fear of missing out). Suggestions included events at COP 31, the pre-COP, and the UN General Assembly. Van Veldhoven agreed, stressing that promoting this process and its outcomes is a collective task.

Closing Plenary

Vélez Torres and van Veldhoven lauded participants’ work and constructiveness, with Vélez Torres saying TAFF 1 represented a transformation of global democracy: to sit as friends, to talk about taboos, and to build cooperation. They announced a series of outcomes from the meeting.

The first outcome is that TAFF 2 will take place in Tuvalu in 2027, co-hosted by Ireland and Tuvalu.

Philip Nugent, Director General, Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment, Ireland, stressed that, at a time when the need to transition is the immediate, defining challenge, participants are building momentum, openness, and willingness to work together. Success, he suggested, would be earned before TAFF 2 through the collective actions of all.

Maina Vakafua Talia, Minister of Home Affairs, Climate Change and Environment, Tuvalu, noted the special partnership between two island peoples that may be separated by the width of the world but joined by something deeper. He urged participants to maintain momentum and deepen solutions that confront “the barriers that we have named together.”

The second outcome is the science-policy panel, named the Global Energy Transition Panel, which Vélez Torres said 5,200 scholars had signed on to.

The third outcome was the identification of three workstreams, which identify actions to take forward, as outlined by Vélez Torres:

- Roadmaps to transition away from fossil fuels, including supply-side aspects, because NDCs are relevant, but there is a lack of clear commitments to control emissions exported from producing countries. The roadmaps could be national or regional. The NDC Partnership and Global Energy Transition Panel will support this workstream.
- Macroeconomic dependencies and financial architecture, focusing on the fiscal, debt, and subsidy traps. IISD and the CEPR will support.
- Trade and investment balance for decarbonization to create fossil fuel-free trade systems to understand where trade is producing emissions and replace it with green trade. The OECD will support.

The fourth outcome was a commitment to maintain the “Santa Marta psychology” by working with the incoming Co-Chairs to sustain inclusive, positive dialogue and keep the TAFF a “safe space” for confronting challenges.

The fifth outcome was a commitment to communicate these outcomes at the upcoming UNFCCC COP by working with the two incoming COP Presidencies and the current Brazilian Presidency.

The sixth outcome was a commitment to transparency. Van Veldhoven explained that all countries will receive information about the COFFIS methodology and template to help identify, track, and understand their fossil fuel subsidies.

Participants who were unable to speak in the Frontrunner Cooperation Breakout Group were then invited to do so.

TRADE UNIONS noted the importance of ensuring that trade unions can operate effectively and safely in their countries and called for countries’ withdrawal from the ISDS system.

GHANA, noting that fossil fuels remain deeply tied to government revenues that fund essential services, called for a fossil fuel treaty to create the architecture for a just transition.

SINGAPORE stressed the different national circumstances of countries, recalled the importance of carbon pricing, and called for regional grids that allow clean energy to flow across borders.

CHILDREN and YOUTH powerfully explained how children are affected by continued fossil fuel extraction and climate change, saying “We are the future.”

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC urged accessible finance, technology transfer, and capacity-building, highlighting that adaptation is at the core of clean energy transitions.

SPAIN noted that practical examples exist, stressing financing, subsidies, and debt as key factors in unlocking an equitable transition for all.

SWITZERLAND urged the conference co-hosts to keep the door open and invite other countries to join the next conference, noting the need to bring the momentum generated in Santa Marta back to COP 31 and the second Global Stocktake.

NIGERIA said TAFF should not be a parallel process to the UNFCCC, calling for addressing methane while planning for the long-term transition proceeds.

MALAWI said they came as observers and deeply appreciated being included, noting that the transition will require such inclusivity.

Van Veldhoven applauded participants for building the next foundational layer of the transition to disentangle fossil fuels from economic and political systems through openness and honesty. She

observed that learning is not just dialogue; it involves innovating, demonstrating, and daring to share mistakes.

Vélez Torres called this meeting inspiring and reminded that countries have the executive power to act, and that those actions will matter in the year ahead until TAFF 2.

The meeting closed at 6:14 pm.

A Brief Analysis of the Meeting

“It’s better to knock without an invitation—than to wait forever for permission” — Gabriel García Márquez

There will never be a perfect time to end the fossil fuel era, but perhaps this moment comes close. The First International Conference on Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuels (TAFF 1) convened during an energy crisis caused by fossil fuel dependence, much like the climate crisis. The US-Israel war in Iran and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz shed a stark light on the true costs of dependence on fossil fuels: energy insecurity and price volatility. There was added urgency to a meeting originally born of frustration with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change’s (UNFCCC) relative silence on phasing down fossil fuels.

TAFF 1 asked a timely question, given growing geopolitical gridlock: can changing the setting change the politics? The conference was by invitation only. Those countries assembled represented one-third of global fossil fuel consumption and one-fifth of global production. The connections among producers and consumers are many and are reflected in the co-hosts and the conference’s location. The Netherlands is one of the leading destinations for Colombian coal exports, and Santa Marta is the country’s largest coal port.

Announcing the outcomes of the conference, Co-Chair Irene Vélez Torres, Colombia, said, “This is a transformation of global democracy,” allowing countries to “talk about taboos.” Countries overwhelmingly welcomed the outcomes, even if they are largely procedural. Participants established a series of workstreams to develop transition roadmaps, chart a fossil fuel-free trade system, and address debt, subsidy, and fiscal traps. Yet, this work will chart a way forward for continued cooperation on fossil fuel transitions.

This brief analysis considers if TAFF 1 launched a process capable of shifting the global politics of fossil fuel production and consumption. As many repeated, it is a success that the meeting even took place – that a group of countries dared to knock without invitation and “talk about taboos,” notably the political and economic changes needed to “begin the end of fossil fuels.”

Naming the Problems (and Solutions) Together

One of the most remarkable aspects of TAFF 1 was the tone of the discussions. There was no blocking, no interminable procedural discussions, no lamentations of the inaction of others. Conversations proved both constructive and action-oriented. Governments shared experiences, challenges, lessons learned, and opportunities. Fifty-seven countries attended, nearly half represented by Ministers, Deputy Ministers, and Ambassadors. Perhaps the number of high-level representatives seems low; other countries, notably some producer countries such as Canada, sent directors or UNFCCC negotiators. Yet, some noted that gathering this many ministers for what is essentially an experiment in global governance was significant. Ministers often do not speak freely about detailed policies. The briefing process would have been lengthy for some.

These briefing needs were higher at TAFF because participation practices differed from UNFCCC meetings. It was not a conference for pre-prepared speeches. Subnational state and regional governments, and Indigenous Peoples had seats beside Ministers in the breakout rooms. In the plenaries, the interventions of non-governmental stakeholders and rightsholders were interspersed with those of states, rather than all coming at the end. Some questioned whether this was good enough. Seats in breakout groups for non-governmental stakeholders were limited. Some noted little debate or “constructively building” on one another’s points. Government ministers seemed unaccustomed to speaking to local coal workers and Indigenous representatives.

Differences in positions did emerge. Some producer countries in the Global North avoided discussing the phasing out of fossil fuel extraction. Some countries in the Global South named fossil gas as a “transition fuel.” By contrast, other delegates openly discussed a decline in fossil fuel production and said fossil gas has a limited role in the transition. These divergences were to be expected.

One of the biggest divergences was seen in governments’ reactions to the idea of a treaty or other legal instrument specifically dedicated to the phase-out of fossil fuel production. Civil society overwhelmingly supported such a treaty, but governments’ reactions were muted. Some countries did call for a fossil fuel treaty, including some that had not previously endorsed one, including Panama, Malawi, and Ghana. However, other countries dismissed the idea, saying a fossil fuel treaty could take too long to negotiate, could undermine the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement, and could turn producing governments away from the TAFF process.

What united all governments present, however, was a desire to discuss the transition in good faith. Reflecting on how far the global politics of fossil fuels had come, one COP veteran said, “This conference has been incredibly inspiring. Seeing countries debate issues that have long been unspeakable within the UNFCCC is a strong signal to the rest of the world that the transition is inevitable.” Many left heartened at the honesty of discussions on: the degree of fiscal reliance on fossil fuels; the lack of transparency about subsidies; and the chilling effect of Investor-State Dispute Settlement mechanisms in trade agreements. In fact, during the conference, an oil company used this mechanism to sue Colombia over its climate policies.

Building the Coalition of Doers

The fossil fuel frustration – that the UNFCCC has for years failed to meaningfully tackle the source of 75% of global emissions – fueled much of the desire to move ahead. For a relatively small, if plucky, group to do so required considering how the TAFF process fits within an ecosystem of initiatives and agreements.

Other outcomes hold potential to be unique. A “fossil fuel-free trade system” could be a club of buyers and sellers that designs green trade systems among a group of countries to replace trade in fossil fuels. The idea is new, and some asked to build conceptual clarity on what this club could look like. Socializing and gaining acceptance to explore the concept could lead to a new set of trade relationships that support producer countries’ efforts to phase down fossil fuels without losing much-needed revenues. It’s an outcome that many viewed as only possible in the TAFF setting.

Several government coalitions already exist, including the Beyond Oil and Gas Alliance, the Powering Past Coal Alliance (PPCA), the Clean Energy Transition Partnership, and the Coalition on Phasing Out Fossil Fuel Incentives Including Subsidies

(COFFIS). Each has their own mandates and membership. While 62 national governments joined the PPCA, other initiatives are smaller collections of a handful of states. These initiatives only partially overlap with TAFF invitees. Like the fossil fuel treaty initiative, some of these initiatives left Santa Marta expecting to gain new members.

TAFF created what some called “a coalition of coalitions” in the form of a steering committee. It will consist of countries that lead existing coalitions as well as the incoming and outgoing Conference Co-Chairs to create consistency conference-to-conference. It could also be an information exchange hub. Already, the COFFIS methodology for inventorying fossil fuel subsidies will be shared with all participants. Yet other initiatives were missing; a few noted the absence of Sustainable Energy for All.

One existing agreement loomed: the UNFCCC and its Paris Agreement. By the end, there was no call to merge the TAFF process into the UNFCCC. Instead, some suggested ways to provide “inputs” to the UNFCCC through the next Global Stocktake, for example. A few areas of overlap were highlighted. Some countries’ nationally determined contributions (NDCs) include phase-down or phase-out targets, but many do not. The transition roadmaps can address this gap and include supply-side measures and exported emissions, which are also often missing.

Just as the roadmaps seek to fill a gap, the new science-policy panel launched in Santa Marta will try to overcome perceived shortcomings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The IPCC produces assessments every six to seven years, and calls to be more nimble and responsive are often blocked by a handful of fossil fuel producer countries. The new panel will deliver annual transition roadmaps. Widely welcomed, there were questions of how this work would unfold to create the promised national and regional roadmaps and policy package recommendations. So far, much of the panel’s focus seems to be on the natural sciences, but as TAFF discussions repeatedly showed, policy options are deeply context-specific and will require a broader range of expertise.

The UNFCCC and other forums are also sites for disinformation and obstructionist narratives that several used TAFF 1 to refute. Leaders called out “false narratives” of energy shortages, stressing that the rapid rise of renewable energy is already here, even with challenges of access and distribution. Narratives of “energy abundance,” in their view, only propped up fossil fuel use, just like calling fossil gas “natural.” Scientists thanked delegates for their support and Selwin Hart, Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General on Climate Action and Just Transition, urged all to continue to protect scientists and human rights defenders. The overwhelming narrative from Santa Marta is that the transition is underway and inevitable. It’s up to countries to act first, join the coalition of doers, or be left behind.

To Tuvalu and Beyond

TAFF 1 was only the beginning. Announcing that TAFF 2 would take place in Tuvalu in 2027, Minister Maina Vakafua Talia said delegates can “reach new horizons together.” Those horizons will literally be new to many delegates, since no global climate conference has ever been held in person in the Pacific Islands. The location, at the frontline of climate impacts, will undoubtedly put survival at the top of delegates’ minds.

Participants left with homework. For TAFF to be credible, countries need to act, whether on developing national transition roadmaps or inventories of their subsidies. The world is awash with talk shops about climate change, and TAFF aspires to be different:

a coalition of doers. It’s now up to governments and all types of stakeholders and scientists to live up to their ambitions as expressed in Santa Marta.

Upcoming Meetings

Bonn Climate Change Conference: The 64th sessions of the UNFCCC subsidiary bodies will meet to advance technical work under the Convention and the Paris Agreement. **dates:** 8–18 June 2026 **location:** Bonn, Germany **www:** unfccc.int/sb64

Regional Climate Week: Climate weeks provide a structured yet flexible space for dialogue, capacity-building, and showcasing innovative solutions to support the intergovernmental process and urgent, inclusive, and coordinated climate action. **dates:** 7–11 September 2026 **location:** Baku, Azerbaijan **www:** unfccc.int/topics/climate-weeks

Pre-COP to the 2026 UNFCCC COP: The Pre-COP is an opportunity for ministers and heads of delegation to discuss key issues in advance of the COP. **dates:** 5–8 October 2026 **location:** Fiji **www:** unfccc.int/cop31/the-road-to-antalya

IPCC-65: The 65th meeting of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change will consider issues including its budget and the timeline for the contribution of the three Working Groups to seventh assessment report. **dates:** 12–15 October 2026 (TBC) **location:** Addis Ababa, Ethiopia **www:** ipcc.ch

World Bank and IMF Annual Meetings: The Annual Meetings bring together central bankers, ministers of finance and development, private sector executives, civil society, media, and academics to discuss issues of global concern, including the world economic outlook, global financial stability, poverty eradication, inclusive economic growth and job creation, climate change, and others. **dates:** 12–18 October 2026 **location:** Bangkok, Thailand **www:** worldbank.org/en/meetings/splash/about

Türkiye/Australia Climate Change Conference: Türkiye will host COP 31 in Antalya, with Australia designated the “President of negotiations.” **dates:** 9–20 November 2026 **location:** Antalya, Türkiye **www:** unfccc.int/cop31

For additional meetings, see sdg.iisd.org

Glossary

BOGA	Beyond Oil and Gas Alliance
CBDR-RC	Common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capacities
CEPR	Centre for Economic Policy and Research
COFFIS	Coalition on Phasing Out Fossil Fuel Incentives Including Subsidies
COP	Conference of the Parties
ICJ	International Court of Justice
IISD	International Institute for Sustainable Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMO	International Maritime Organization
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
ISDS	Investor-State Dispute Settlement
MDBs	Multilateral development banks
NDC	Nationally determined contribution
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PPCA	Powering Past Coal Alliance
TAFF	Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuels
UNFCCC	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change