

Keswick Reminder 05.12.25: NfWW No.101 COP30: Success, failure or fudge?

By the time you read this, COP30 in Brazil will have been over by at least two weeks. But since I promised to report on it, I will.

Was it a success, a failure, a fudge, or a bit of all three? It was a success in that it did not collapse entirely when, on the last official day, it came close to it, because there was no agreement on the final text. It was rescued from total failure by running over one day.

So, what happened in overtime? The sticking point was that very many of the 193 participating countries plus the EU (USA was officially absent; North Korea attended) wanted reference in the final text to a 'roadmap' to phase out fossil fuels, the burning of which contributes 68% of greenhouse gas emissions. But this was something Saudi Arabia, Russia and other petrostates would not countenance.

The wrangling went on into the night and much of the next day. Finally, consensus was reached with UK's Ed Miliband playing a significant part in persuading the Saudis to accept an oblique reference to a statement made at the end of COP28 in which there had been agreement, for the first time, to 'transition away from fossil fuels'. This was agreed so long as there was no explicit mention of fossil fuels. Thus, a fudge to prevent failure.

While this was a very big, if perverse, 'victory' for Saudi Arabia and co, it was terrible news for the planet – and us. Most experts say there no chance of meeting 1.5°C of global warming above pre-industrial levels, which was the more ambitious target of the 2015 Paris COP21, and little chance of meeting the less ambitious 2°C.

While this was a huge disappointment for many, there were some significant consolations. These include:

A tripling of funding for climate adaptation for climate vulnerable countries by 2035 to roughly \$120b/year.

Billions of dollars of investments in securing indigenous land rights; in climate-resilient farming in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, and in strengthening health systems worldwide.

A 'just transition mechanism' to protect workers and communities in the shift away from fossil fuels.

There were also two significant agreements outside the formal COP process. First, in the absence in the final agreement of a roadmap for fossil fuel phase-out, 24 countries signed 'The Belém Declaration' supported by 80 in total (including UK) to pursue independently a voluntary roadmap. For this Colombia and the Netherlands will co-host an 'International Conference on the Just Transition Away from Fossil Fuels' in April 2026.

Second, \$6.6b was pledged for the 'Tropical Forest Forever Facility', a Brazilian initiative which incentivises the conservation and expansion of tropical forests worldwide. It does so by making annual payments to tropical forest countries who maintain their forest cover.

Despite these, however, most observers say that, overall, it was too little, too late.

Please share widely, and for more, contact sustainablekeswick@gmail.com.

Joe Human
Sustainable Keswick