Achieving *Climate Cooperation* in a Fragmented World

A FRAMEWORK FOR EVOLUTION OF THE GLOBAL CLIMATE REGIME OVER THE NEXT 3–5 YEARS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE REST OF 2026

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In this era of geopolitical turbulence and change, the credibility and direction of global cooperation on climate is facing the ultimate test. With the framework for implementing the Paris Agreement now completed, the broad climate regime must evolve to support accelerating implementation as it addresses a new geopolitical reality. This will require shifting the focus of the UNFCCC, more broadly embedding climate action in economic and security agendas, advancing targeted cooperation where interests align via coalitions of the willing and bilateral partnerships, and working more closely with real-world actors to ensure the enabling conditions are there to accelerate the transition at the pace needed.

Geopolitics is not only shaping the pace of transition but redefining the terms of cooperation itself. Conflict in the Middle East has returned energy security to the heart of geopolitics, and major power competition is intensifying. At the same time, the transition to a clean economy is gaining momentum through growing markets across regions, investment in industrial strategy, and continuing technological change, creating new opportunities alongside rising tensions.

With climate-related harm and damages already high, and rising, the climate regime must develop quickly to be able to drive delivery in the current context. The 2028 Global Stocktake and 2030 NDC cycle will be key moments that will test the UNFCCC's success in this regard.

We therefore offer priority actions for climate cooperation over the next 3–5 years:

- **Further embed and reenergise climate action in economic, security and foreign policy agendas.** Climate action is more likely to advance where it aligns with the political priorities of growth, competitiveness and resilience.
- **Shape and support a comprehensive climate regime.** International climate cooperation is a year-round effort to support implementation, mobilise investment, and connect international processes more directly with real-economy transformation.
- **Keep Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) at the heart of implementation and delivery.** NDCs are crucial for judging whether countries' climate commitments are translating into investment, infrastructure and real-economy transformation.

Short-term priorities to make sure this year's pre-COP and COP31 can build confidence for this shift are:

- **Stabilise and sustain political support for international climate cooperation and action.** Reinforce the case for engagement, including the scientific basis for climate response. The role of clean energy security and electrification in responding to oil price shocks can also help to build commitment, as can ensuring resilience builds political support given the increased climate impacts from heatwaves and wildfires to El Niño scenarios.
- **Shift to implementation.** Focus on operationalising recent outcomes and associated initiatives through credible implementation pathways, rather than reopening negotiations. Prioritise areas where tangible progress can be demonstrated in the short term.
- **Set the direction for the next Global Stocktake and 2030 NDCs.** This includes ensuring that NDCs will be more tightly linked to economic and industrial strategies, and real-economy transformation.
- **Refocus climate diplomacy on delivery, outcomes and flexibility.** Keep climate at the top of leaders' agendas while broadening ownership beyond environment ministries. Use a wider range of fora and partnerships to pursue cooperation where it can deliver concrete results and accelerate implementation.
- **Maintain momentum across key thematic areas and partnerships where cooperation and implementation matter.** This includes themes such as resilience, finance, electrification and methane, and rebuilding trust between partners to forge durable coalitions. This might mean developing new forms of cooperation to better reflect the world that is and will be.

The climate regime needs to adapt to a changing geopolitical order

The climate regime is at a pivotal moment and needs to evolve. Multilateralism is under threat and climate is at risk of slipping down the list of priorities both internationally and within many advanced economies. While the transition gains momentum in response to economic and security drivers, the question remains: to what extent is it enough to keep the goals of the Paris agreement in sight?

The challenge for the UNFCCC and wider relevant stakeholders is to shape an international system that can accelerate delivery and build the commitment to cooperation and partnerships needed to make this transition durable for the long term. COP30 already marked a shift in this direction, but as climate impacts and costs mount, change needs to be faster and more strategic to maximise the opportunities for action.

Climate action is unfolding in a more unstable and adversarial geopolitical environment

The oil shock from the conflict in the Middle East has put energy security at the top of the global agenda. At the same time, the ongoing war in Ukraine, China's industrial dominance, intensifying great power rivalry, and an uncertain global leadership landscape and global order are reshaping political priorities and absorbing both attention and fiscal resources. In many capitals, governments are operating in permanent crisis mode, with limited bandwidth, and often fewer resources, for long-term, coordinated international climate action.

In the international system, traditional alliances have weakened, trust is lower, and emerging economies are increasingly assertive – though not in a uniform way. Multilateral institutions and global fora – from the G7 and G20 to the UNFCCC – face effectiveness challenges or are struggling to operate in a more contested and transactional environment even if most countries continue to be supportive. The climate regime has additionally seen a second US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, the IPCC, and other institutions.

Governments committed to sustaining momentum are therefore under pressure to develop new geopolitical strategies to maintain a focus on climate and circumvent obstruction.

Across the globe, including within key advanced economies, political divisions are emerging around the costs and pace of the transition, the distributional impacts, and deindustrialisation. Fiscal pressures and competing priorities, particularly defence and social spending, are narrowing the space for ambitious and sustained commitments.

The picture is further complicated by a more contested information space. Climate policy is increasingly exposed to disinformation and polarised narratives that distort public debate and undermine trust in scientific evidence. These dynamics also have an international dimension, as far-right political actors across countries deploy similar tactics and narratives against the transition. In response, communications and narratives must adapt to better connect with citizens and publics, particularly on issues of affordability and prosperity.

The economic case for the transition is strong and political leadership must harness this momentum

Despite the political headwinds, delivery is happening. The current oil shock from the Iran conflict is creating openings to accelerate clean energy as a security imperative. Falling costs, rising investment, and the role of clean technologies in growth and industrial strategy mean that momentum is increasingly driven by markets and economic policy. The latest IEA Global Energy Report notes that electricity demand grew by 3% globally in 2025, twice as fast as total energy demand.[1] Further, renewables are projected to meet over 90% of global electricity demand growth over 2025–2030.[2]

Momentum coming out of Bonn SB64 and London Climate Action Week also showed that a focus on delivery, implementation, and dealmaking is now being taken much more seriously. This was reinforced by recent polling that found that businesses are already committed to the transition with over 90% investing in clean energy or planning to do so.[3]

However, businesses need greater policy certainty and stable, long-term frameworks to unlock investment at scale. Full utilisation of the economic potential of clean technologies requires major policy changes around market reforms, grid infrastructure and financial architecture. And governments need to do a better job connecting the economic momentum and opportunity to their own domestic, regional, and global political commitments. Climate action thereby remains vulnerable to political resistance and narrative contestation. It also risks being swept up in the broader uncertainties of a shifting global order and architecture.

Climate impacts are accelerating, making the case for urgent action and faster delivery stronger than ever. More proactive support for delivery of the transition needs to materialise fast. In 2024, the average global temperature exceeded 1.5 °C above pre-

[1] IEA, April 2026, **Global Energy Review 2026 – Electricity demand**

[2] IEA, October 2025, **Renewables 2025 – Renewable electricity**

[3] E3G, We Mean Business Coalition, Global Renewables Alliance, June 2026, **Powering Up: Business perspectives on electrification across 18 countries**

industrial levels for the first time,[4] and the past decade has been the warmest on record.[5] The devastating effects are already evident in record ocean heat, extreme weather events, changing rain patterns, and mounting damage to lives, economies, and ecosystems. The heatwaves and wildfires spanning Europe, the United States, and Asia are but one extreme example. More frequent and severe climate-related events are amplifying fiscal pressure, food and water insecurity, displacement risks, and political instability, particularly in vulnerable countries. These dynamics are raising the costs of delay and placing additional strain on governments and international cooperation.

These pressures are already structurally high: global disaster losses amounted to $224 billion in 2025, following $368 billion in 2024, with weather-related events accounting for the vast majority.[6] Over the next 3–5 years, even without additional warming, governments should expect persistently high and volatile impacts, meaning that choices made now will determine whether these risks are managed or compound into repeated crisis response.

Strategic shifts in the climate regime are critical

The international climate regime has shown resilience in this more difficult geopolitical context. The Paris Agreement continues to provide a shared framework for engagement, and a critical mass of countries remains committed despite the heightened tensions. However, some countries are also beginning to explore alternative international legal regimes such as the International Court of Justice, UN General Assembly resolutions, or the Fossil-Fuel Non-Proliferation treaty as complements – and potentially alternatives – to the UNFCCC.

COP30 in 2025 marked the transition to a new phase for the UNFCCC, in which the focus will be delivering accelerated implementation in the real economy. However, implementation is complex, politically sensitive, mainly shaped by additional regimes (finance, trade etc.) and faces different political economy challenges across countries and sectors.

COP30 also demonstrated that blocking countries are becoming increasingly emboldened and influential, while progressives were often fragmented and on the back foot. The EU was left in a particularly tricky position with the late submission of its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) and internal divisions, not to mention constraints on finance.

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[4] MetMatters (Royal Meteorological Society), January 2025, **World exceeds 1.5 °C threshold for entire year for the first time**

[5] United Nations, 14 January 2026, **11-year streak of record global warming continues, UN weather agency warns**

[6] Munich RE, 13 January 2026, **Climate change presses on: Devastating wildfires and intense thunderstorms exacerbate losses for insurers**

The UNFCCC remains essential for setting the global framework for climate action, but the negotiating process alone is not sufficient to drive implementation at the pace and scale required. Sustaining collective momentum is also increasingly challenging in the current geopolitical context. The regime must evolve purposefully to strengthen its ability to deliver, demonstrating tangible value, impact, and seriousness at a critical moment for the climate regime and the broader multilateral system.

Priorities for delivery towards 2030

The central test for the climate regime over the coming years is whether it can deliver an effective and politically resilient shift from ambition to accountability and implementation under tighter constraints and a more fragmented geopolitical landscape.

The success of the 2028 Global Stocktake and 2030 NDC cycle in driving meaningful increased ambition from major emitters will be a key test of whether the UNFCCC has retained enduring political support as the core of the international climate regime.

Key priorities are outlined below.

Further embed and reenergise climate action in economic, security and foreign policy agendas

The clean technology transition is already being shaped by energy security concerns, industrial policy, and competition over technologies and supply chains. In this context, climate action over the coming 3–5 years is more likely to advance where it aligns with growth, competitiveness, and resilience objectives, rather than as a standalone political priority. Decision-making is shifting accordingly, with finance ministries, central banks, businesses, and energy institutions playing a more central role.

Recent geopolitical shocks reinforce this trend. The Iran war has exposed the continued vulnerability of global energy systems, with disruptions to key supply routes and renewed price volatility. In the short term, such dynamics can reinforce a narrow definition of energy security centred on fossil fuel supply and gas diversification. Over time, however, they underline the structural risks of fossil fuel dependence, strengthening the case for electrification, accelerated deployment of renewables, and the transition as a pathway to greater energy security and resilience.

This shift also changes the nature of international cooperation needed. Climate objectives will increasingly be pursued through trade, investment, and partnerships, rather than through the UNFCCC process alone. Foreign policy becomes a key instrument to structure cooperation, manage tensions, and build coalitions around concrete delivery goals. In a more fragmented system, progress will depend on aligning interests and identifying areas where cooperation remains possible despite broader geopolitical competition, including through coalitions of the willing and other fora such as the G7 and G20.

The challenge is to integrate climate objectives into a web of coalitions and as core decision-making without losing focus or credibility. This includes aligning investment flows, addressing implementation bottlenecks such as grids and permitting, and ensuring that climate is reflected in macroeconomic and fiscal frameworks. It also requires maintaining policy consistency in a more contested political environment, where climate action is subject to increasing scrutiny and competing narratives.

Though there may be tactical and short-term advantage in deemphasising climate objectives in some fora (e.g. G7/G20) while pursing aligned objectives on resilience and investment, this should form part of an overall strategic approach that also builds progressive coalitions around the need to address the reality of climate change impacts, future risks and transitions in critical international fora (e.g. IMF debt sustainability, financial regulation and transition planning, harmonised carbon standards in trade).

Shape and support a comprehensive climate regime

There is a growing mismatch between the scale and urgency of the climate challenge and the current functioning of the international system. To remain effective in this new reality, the climate regime will need to evolve, becoming a year-round effort to support implementation, mobilise investment, and connect international processes more directly with real-economy transformation, rather than being focussed solely on annual COP moments. It must address the current needs of countries, companies, and consumers while building clean and climate resilient infrastructure to tackle the impacts of climate change over the longer term.

Progress will be increasingly driven by action taken in coalitions around concrete delivery objectives, whether in energy systems, industrial decarbonisation, adaptation, or finance. These arrangements allow countries to move forward where interests converge, rather than being constrained by lowest-common-denominator consensus decisions.

As a result, multilateral processes must evolve. The UNFCCC and COPs will remain essential to provide a universal foundational framework and a reference point for ambition, but should move toward setting direction, maintaining accountability, and anchoring this broader ecosystem of coalitions, initiatives and partnerships that deliver progress outside the formal negotiations while ensuring they move in the same direction.

At the same time, there is a need to build new collective approaches to delivery outside the UNFCCC which will require innovative use of different fora and coalitions. For example, the development of country platforms as a cooperation mechanism to scale investment into country-driven transition strategies has been shaped through broad institutional coalitions such as the Finance in Common Summit (FiCS) and the Climate and Development Ministerial,[7] supported by international institutions including UN Development Programme, European Bank of Reconstruction and Development and NDC Partnership. The country platform approach is being showcased with private and public investors at events such as the IMF/World Bank Spring Meetings, and climate weeks across the world including London Climate Week and Ecoprosperity Week.

It will be essential to manage this dual system effectively. Greater reliance on coalitions and plurilateral initiatives can accelerate delivery, but risks fragmentation if not fully anchored in the common framework that the UNFCCC can provide. Ensuring this coherence while maintaining trust among countries with different capacities and interests will be critical to sustaining momentum.

Keep NDCs at the heart of implementation and delivery

The central test of climate action over the next five years will be whether commitments translate into investment, infrastructure, and real-economy transformation. This is where the gap between ambition and delivery is most visible, and where credibility will increasingly be judged. NDCs are crucial to bridge this gap, and the results of the 2025 cycle have been uneven.

After severe delays, over 135 countries have submitted updated NDCs (3.0) that mark an improvement compared to the previous cycle, with extended coverage of economic sectors, better modelling, clearer implementation mechanisms, and stronger integration of adaptation plans.

At the same time, NDCs 3.0 still fall short on ambition and remain far from being compatible with Paris-aligned pathways. Without a drastic increase in ambition in this cycle, well before 2030, limiting the overshoot of 1.5 °C will be out of reach. Bridging the gap between improved technical quality and persistent gaps in ambition and delivery will depend on whether NDCs can operate as credible delivery frameworks backed by financing strategies, investment pipelines, and governance arrangements capable of sustaining implementation across political cycles and government actors.

The 2028 Global Stocktake and the next round of NDCs (NDCs 4.0) in 2030 will be a critical test of whether the regime addresses the shortcomings demonstrated in this round, and whether full integration of climate goals inside national economic planning and strong governance processes is achieved, with NDCs as an output of national climate governance rather than a driver of them.

Elevating initiatives under the Action Agenda can support this shift by mobilising groups of state and non-state actors and helping to accelerate implementation across key sectors. To

[7] Climate & Development Ministerial, April 2026, [Country Platforms Action Toolkit]

be effective, the Action Agenda will need to demonstrate measurable progress, and provide a strong narrative that delivery is accelerating across sectors and regions. This will be critical to building confidence that implementation is advancing in practice.

Initiatives such as the Belém Mission to 1.5 °C, Global Implementation Accelerator, and Climate Implementation Bridge could play a key role in supporting this process, but to do so they must be designed carefully, in close collaboration between Presidencies, as well as via open consultation with interested stakeholders, to ensure coherence and a clear definition of remit and focus.

Coherence with other elements of the UNFCCC mitigation ambition architecture (such as the Just Transition Work Programme, Mitigation Work Plan, and Action Agenda) is essential. The Climate Implementation Bridge, as a key Turkish priority, could play a role in supporting capacity building on implementation and ensuring visibility of these efforts by bringing together expertise-sharing and long-term partnerships at the political level.

There is a need for progressive countries and stakeholders to align around a clearer vision for the functions and evolution of the UNFCCC in the next 5–10 years. This should include both what it should, and shouldn't, do and be credible given the geopolitical context and resources available. The UNFCCC will retain political support and legitimacy through what it delivers and must avoid unrealistic overreach which has reduced confidence in other international regimes.

2026 as a pivotal year: priorities for action

Within this longer-term trajectory, the rest of 2026 is a critical time to stabilise a fragile multilateral system and set the direction for the next phase of climate action. While the outcomes of Bonn were mixed, with many issues failing to progress across negotiation rooms, there has been further momentum on action and implementation. This was carried through in force at London Climate Action Week and is already shaping plans for the rest of the year, including the UN Secretary General calling for a high-level event on the margins of the UN General Assembly in September, at the pre-COP in October, and then on to Antalya. The focus should be on building confidence that the system can make a durable and politically resilient shift by doing more to elevate the focus on implementation, delivery, and partnerships and shaping the pathway to the second Global Stocktake in 2028.

Key priorities are outlined below.

Stabilise and sustain political support for international climate cooperation and action

- Build political commitment and support for clean energy security and electrification to show how the world can response to the oil price shock and for resilience to respond to the reality of climate impacts.
- Defend and deepen the role of science in guiding the international climate regime and response.
- Maintain engagement of a critical mass of major economies despite geopolitical tensions and active disruption by some actors. Avoid a loss of confidence in the Paris framework following a weak NDC cycle and a more hostile political environment.
- Reinforce the case for continued engagement in multilateral processes, including by clearly articulating the risks of disengagement and the implications for collective action and identifying in concrete and tangible ways how engagement drives positive impact and outcomes.

Set the direction for the next cycle (GST2 and 2030 NDCs)

Begin shaping the next round of climate action around investment credibility, implementation capacity, and political durability. Ensure that future NDCs are more tightly linked to economic and industrial strategies and capable of guiding real-economy transformation.

Shift to implementation

- Focus on operationalising recent outcomes and associated initiatives through credible implementation pathways, rather than reopening negotiations.
- Prioritise areas where tangible progress can be demonstrated in the short term, particularly in energy systems, finance delivery, green industrialisation and resilience.

Reorient climate diplomacy toward delivery and flexibility

- Expand engagement beyond climate ministries to include finance, economy, energy, security, and foreign policy actors. Focus diplomatic efforts on fora and partnerships where concrete outcomes are achievable, and adopt more flexible, context-specific approaches to cooperation.
- Ensure that climate diplomacy is both kept at leaders' level attention and prioritisation and articulates the needs of people and constituencies in a more granular way, to address issues of cost, personal solutions, and economic benefit to combat mis- and disinformation.

Maintain momentum across key thematic areas and partnerships

- Sustain progress across mitigation, finance, and resilience to include for example electrification, methane, and increased adaptation pathways, while further converging nature and climate messaging and narratives, recognising that delivery will increasingly take place across multiple forums and partnerships.
- Strengthen and assess partnerships and coalitions needed to meet today's challenges and seize tomorrow's opportunities. That means building mutually beneficial partnerships between developed and climate-vulnerable countries, including least developed countries and small island developing states, to rebuild trust and support more effective and durable coalitions.

ABOUT E3G

E3G is an independent think tank working to deliver a safe climate for all.

We drive systemic action on climate by identifying barriers and constructing coalitions to advance the solutions needed. We create spaces for honest dialogue, and help guide governments, businesses and the public on how to deliver change at the pace the planet demands.

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