

Across the globe countries have made their climate commitments. Now comes the harder question: can we deliver on them?

For decades, international climate negotiations have shaped global ambitions to reduce emissions, strengthen resilience and support a more just and sustainable future. Yet as climate impacts intensify, the gap between ambition and implementation remains one of the greatest challenges of our time.

For South Africa, the consequences of this gap are being felt more frequently than ever before.

They directly impact the cost and reliability of energy, the resilience of our physical and natural infrastructure, the competitiveness of our industries and the livelihoods of communities already vulnerable to climate-related risks.

But they are also reflected in the opportunities that lie before us.

South Africa's climate transition has the potential to do more than respond to an environmental crisis. It can help reshape our economy, unlock investment, create jobs and strengthen our long-term competitiveness.

The challenge is turning that potential into reality.

As the world prepares to gather in **Antalya, Türkiye, from 9–20 November 2026 for the 31st United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP31)**, the urgency of moving from climate commitments to practical action has never been more apparent.

And for South Africa, there is much at stake.

Why this COP matters



COP31 is being positioned as an *Implementation COP*, placing renewed emphasis on turning climate commitments into tangible, measurable progress.

It also marks the beginning of the second Global Stocktake under the Paris Agreement, creating an important opportunity to examine whether collective climate action is moving at the pace required.

But implementation cannot be separated from questions of fairness, finance and development.

For South Africa and other developing economies, the ability to deliver on climate commitments depends on access to affordable finance, technology transfer, institutional capacity and international cooperation.

These are not peripheral issues. They are fundamental to whether the transition succeeds.

South Africa approaches COP31 with interconnected priorities: mobilising climate finance, accelerating a just transition that supports jobs and industrial competitiveness, strengthening adaptation and climate resilience, and advancing equitable access to implementation support.

The significance of COP31 lies not simply in what the world agrees to do next, but in whether those agreements create the conditions for countries like South Africa to act.

This is where international climate diplomacy meets economic reality.

South Africa's voice on the global stage

For the **National Business Initiative (NBI),** COP31 represents another important chapter in a longstanding commitment to advancing climate action through business leadership and collaboration.

The NBI has worked alongside the South African government to support the South African Pavilion, providing a platform for collaboration, knowledge-sharing and engagement on South Africa's climate priorities.

Over the years, the conversations have evolved from increasing ambition to showcasing implementation, reflecting the growing recognition that climate action must be integrated with economic development, industrial transformation and social inclusion.

At COP31, the NBI, in partnership with the **Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE)**, will once again support the South Africa Pavilion, bringing together business, government, investors, development institutions, civil society, labour and other stakeholders.

The Pavilion will provide a platform to elevate South African and African perspectives, learn from international best practice, showcase practical solutions and strengthen the partnerships needed to accelerate implementation.

As the NBI builds on more than 30 years of mobilising business action for sustainable growth, one principle remains central:

The scale of our challenges demands the strength of our collective response.

Partnerships that make progress possible

Climate commitments cannot build infrastructure, transform industries or strengthen communities on their own.

Progress requires investment, innovation, policy certainty, institutional capacity and sustained collaboration.

That is why partnerships are fundamental to South Africa's engagement at COP31.

The NBI acknowledges and thanks the organisations supporting the South Africa Pavilion: **Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA), African Climate Foundation (ACF), Industrial Development Corporation (IDC), Eskom, Presidential Climate Commission (PCC), Exxaro, Prosus, Energy Council of South Africa, Minerals Council South Africa and CHEP.**

Their support contributes to creating a platform where national priorities can connect with global opportunities and where dialogue can help build the relationships necessary for action.

Because the true measure of collaboration is not the conversations we convene, but the progress we make possible.

Beyond Antalya: What happens next matters most

The importance of COP31 will extend far beyond the two weeks of negotiations.

For South Africa, its legacy must be reflected in the opportunities that follow: stronger investment pipelines, accelerated climate action, more resilient infrastructure, competitive industries and an inclusive transition that creates meaningful benefits for people.

The outcomes of COP31 will not resolve every challenge. But they can help create momentum, strengthen cooperation and shape the decisions that follow.

As South Africa prepares to take its place in global climate discussions, the question is not simply what we hope to achieve in Antalya.

It is what we are prepared to do differently when we return home.

Introducing The Climate Brief

Welcome to **The Climate Brief**, the **NBI's new LinkedIn Newsletter** connecting global climate conversations with South African perspectives and real-world action.

Beginning with COP31, we will bring you insights into the negotiations, perspectives from business and other stakeholders, and the initiatives and partnerships shaping South Africa's climate future.

Beyond the Conference, we will continue exploring what international climate decisions mean for our economy, businesses and communities, and how we can turn global ambition into local impact.

Because climate leadership does not begin and end at COP.

It is demonstrated in the decisions we make, the investments we unlock and the future we build together.

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