Joint Declaration of the EU on the Cover Decision – COP31 – Antalya

Delivered by Minister Darragh O'Brien and Commissioner Wopke Hoekstra

An Outcome That Fails to meet the moment is not an outcome

We, the EU and its Member States, who are united in our commitment to the principles of the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement, came to COP31 to forge a credible response to the climate emergency.

We express our profound disappointment with the final draft COP31 cover decision. At a point where the world urgently needs action to avert disastrous level of global warming, the draft cover decision falls short.

We will not endorse a cover decision that does not respond to the science, that disregards the implementation gap, and risks deepening the chasm between global commitments and the action required to correct the overshoot and bring 1.5°C within reach. We will not endorse a cover decision that does not even mention fossil fuels, the driver of climate change. And we will not accept negotiating backward in time. And we will not accept a COP that greenwashes fossil fuels.

We came to COP31 in good faith, with a shared vision to focus on implementation, to build on previous outcomes, and bring about real progress across mitigation and adaptation.

We also came to COP to talk about how we can make meaningful progress on access to climate finance. About turning financial pledges into the projects and programmes that support vulnerable communities. About moving forward on delivering the commitment to triple adaptation finance. So this COP did not fail over climate finance.

We have engaged constructively and intensively with the COP Presidencies and with other parties. We have shown flexibility and looked for common ground.

However, the need for consensus cannot become a driver for the lowest common denominator. We cannot allow the COP process to be hijacked by the self-interest of the few at the expense of the many. Nor should we sacrifice substance, credibility or effectiveness at the altar of an empty agreement.

Our Shared Concerns

We express great concern with the draft cover decision because:

1. It does not deliver a credible response to the overshoot, including clear, actionable commitments to accelerate emissions reductions consistent with the best available science and the 1.5°C temperature goal.
2. It extols CCUS disproportionally, while it is not in line with science and sends a signal contrary to the need of cutting emissions. It suggests that the world can use CCUS to drag its way out of this crisis under business as usual. This is magical thinking.
3. It fails to provide even acknowledge the need for transition away from fossil fuels, in line with the outcomes of the first Global Stocktake, including the need for accelerated action in this critical decade and to recognise the global momentum that emerged from the work of the COP30 initiatives and the Santa Marta process.
4. It does not properly respond to the adaptation and loss and damage needs of developing countries, whose communities are at the front line of the climate crisis.
5. And it is ambiguous about the best available science and the role of the IPCC.

Our Shared Position

The EU and its Member States reaffirm that continued ambition and implementation must advance together.

We cannot support a cover decision that takes us backwards, that provides an investment prospectus for the fossil fuel lobby, and denies the lived reality of vulnerable populations.

We remain committed to the UNFCCC process and our preparation for COP32 in Addis next year starts now. This is not a rejection of multilateralism: on the contrary it is a reflection of our determination to stand up for multilateral action that reflects the needs and the realities of the many.

We remain committed to working constructively with all Parties and the COP31 Presidency to achieve an outcome that reflects the urgency of the climate crisis, respects the principles of the Convention and its Paris Agreement, and responds meaningfully to the needs of the most vulnerable.

What the world needs

We have been calling therefore for the cover decision to be strengthened through clear political commitments, meaningful action and a balanced outcome across all strands of climate action. Until these fundamental concerns are properly addressed. We are absolutely clear: we cannot support the cover decision presented by the COP Presidencies in its current state.

COP31 will not be judged by whether a decision was or was not adopted, but by whether the international community rose to the challenge we faced. **It did not**. The signatories to this declaration are ready to work towards an outcome at COP that does rise to the challenge.

The revolution of renewable energy has started, the clean transition is happening and it is accelerating. For our health, for our economy, for our sovereignty and survival, we must move forward. We will never return to an age where dirty, erratic and expensive fossil energy will fuel our societies.

Finally, we are going to start preparations for COP32 immediately tomorrow. We will be there with the same objective: finding a response that is proportionate to the size of the climate emergency challenge.

At the same time there must also be a beginning of a serious process of reflection on the how the COP system works. Simply returning to climate conferences to renegotiate previous commitments has no future.