

# COP30 Debrief: Indigenous Voices at the Heart of Climate Negotiations

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## 1 Context

The 30th Conference of the Parties on Climate Change (COP30) was held from 10 to 21 November 2025 in Belém, Brazil, the gateway to the Amazon [culturalsurvival.org](https://culturalsurvival.org). It was the first time a COP took place in the Amazon, a symbolic region home to nearly 50 million people and 400 Indigenous peoples [cop30.br](https://cop30.br). The choice of Belém was described as a “*political and symbolic decision*” aimed at showing that the Amazon is essential to climate solutions and not merely an object of debate [cop30.br](https://cop30.br). Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva wanted this COP to be the summit of implementation (10th anniversary of the Paris Agreement) and of scientific truth, with an emphasis on accelerating climate action and combating disinformation [cop30.br](https://cop30.br).

This COP was quickly dubbed the “*Indigenous COP*” or the “*Forest COP*”. Indigenous participation reached a historic record: around 3,000 Indigenous representatives from around the world were present, including 500 from Brazil and 500 from other countries [earthday.org](https://earthday.org). That is nearly ten times more than at COP28 (about 350 Indigenous participants) [earthday.org](https://earthday.org). This exceptional mobilization aimed to highlight Indigenous peoples as guardians of biodiversity and to assert their role as decision-makers, rather than mere observers, in climate negotiations [culturalsurvival.org](https://culturalsurvival.org).

Anticipating this influx, the COP30 presidency (held by Ambassador André Corrêa do Lago) created the *Círculo dos Povos* (“Circle of Peoples”) to integrate Indigenous peoples and local communities into the COP process, and launched a training programme (*Kuntari Katu*) to prepare Indigenous leaders for negotiations [earthday.org](https://earthday.org).

Despite these arrangements and the hope raised by holding the summit “*in the heart of the forest*”, Indigenous representatives often expressed frustration and disappointment at their ongoing exclusion from decision-making. Only 14% of the 2,500 Brazilian Indigenous participants expected in Belém obtained an accreditation for the *Blue Zone* (formal negotiation zone), meaning that just 360 Brazilian Indigenous people were allowed into the space where decisions are made [culturalsurvival.org](https://culturalsurvival.org). This figure illustrates the gap between the promised inclusive “showcase” and the reality of limited access to negotiations.

The national Brazilian context also influenced discussions. Lula’s return to power in 2023, with the appointment of Sonia Guajajara (Guajajara Indigenous nation) as the first-ever Minister of Indigenous Peoples, raised expectations for protecting the Amazon and Indigenous rights. However, controversies persisted, particularly around oil exploration projects near the mouth of the Amazon and the slow pace of Indigenous land demarcation—major issues for local communities who came to Belém to challenge political leaders [theguardian.com](https://theguardian.com).

## 2 Timeline

### 2.1 Day 1 – 10 November 2025 (Opening)

COP30 officially opened on 10 November in Belém, in the presence of heads of state and delegations from around the world [cop30.br](https://cop30.br). During the opening ceremony, President Lula delivered a strong speech, recalling the urgency of the climate crisis and the symbolism of holding the conference in the Amazon. He emphasized that “*the Amazon is not an abstraction: it is a home, an economy, a culture, life*” and that “*the most diverse biome on Earth is home to nearly fifty million people, including four hundred Indigenous peoples*” [cop30.br](https://cop30.br). Lula outlined three pillars to guide the negotiations: honour existing climate commitments, strengthen global climate governance, and place people (including Indigenous communities) at the centre of decisions [cop30.br](https://cop30.br).

Similarly, Ambassador Corrêa do Lago, President of COP30, stated that this summit should mark a historic transition as an “*Action COP*”, bringing together climate, economy and development while reducing inequalities [cop30.br](https://cop30.br). He hailed the collective effort (a “*mutirão*” in Brazilian Portuguese) that made it possible to organize the COP in the heart of the Amazon [cop30.br](https://cop30.br). Indigenous leaders from Brazil were also present. Sonia Guajajara, Minister of Indigenous Peoples, stressed that the demarcation of Indigenous lands had to be recognized as a central axis of climate action, in order to protect these territories from extractive industries [theguardian.com](https://theguardian.com). She expressed hope that debates within traditional communities during the COP would influence the final text and inspire future summits [theguardian.com](https://theguardian.com).

This first day thus set the scene for a COP centred on the Amazon and the rights of Indigenous peoples. However, behind official speeches promising inclusion, tensions were already visible regarding the real influence Indigenous peoples would have on the negotiations ahead.

### 2.2 Day 2 – 11 November 2025

As early as the second day, Indigenous frustrations reached the forefront. Hundreds of Indigenous defenders of the Amazon—notably leaders from riverine communities along the Tapajós River (Pará State)—demonstrated at the gates of the Blue Zone, demanding to be heard [culturalsurvival.org](https://culturalsurvival.org). Wearing traditional clothing and body paint, they carried signs reading “*Our land is not for sale*”, “*You can't eat money*”, and “*Lula, shame on you, you are destroying the climate with oil drilling*” [culturalsurvival.org](https://culturalsurvival.org).

Their anger was partly directed at the Lula government, accused of failing to deliver on its promises to protect the Amazon. Protesters chanted that they should be treated not as guests but as “rights holders” in these climate talks [culturalsurvival.org](https://culturalsurvival.org). The situation escalated when some demonstrators tried to enter the official venue: they forced the main entrance to COP30 and clashed with security on 11 November [reuters.com](https://reuters.com). Scuffles broke out, revealing the despair of Indigenous communities in the face of forest destruction. “*It was about drawing the government's and the UN's attention to our plight*,” explained one Arapuá woman afterwards, underlining the urgency of protecting the forest from industrial exploitation [reuters.com](https://reuters.com).

In response, security was tightened around the site, with a notable deployment of federal police and soldiers as early as the evening of the 11th [culturalsurvival.org](https://culturalsurvival.org). This tense atmosphere made a strong

impression: COP30 had barely begun, and the limits of Indigenous inclusion were already evident—kept outside meeting rooms, they had to raise their voices in the streets to be noticed.

### 2.3 Day 3 – 12 November 2025

On the third day, formal negotiations continued inside while civil society stepped up its actions outside. That morning, Indigenous leaders involved in the previous day's incident held a press conference to justify their actions. They said they wanted to show the distress of their communities in the face of deforestation and the urgency of forest protection [reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com). “*It was an attempt to draw the government's and the UN's attention,*” they reiterated, insisting on their will to be fully involved in climate decision-making.

At the same time, the Canadian pavilion at COP30 placed Indigenous participation at centre stage. Canada organized an Indigenous Climate Leadership Day at its pavilion, with dialogues highlighting the importance of the participation of First Nations, Inuit and Métis in international climate action [newswire.ca](https://www.newswire.ca). Canadian ministers Julie Dabrusin and Steven Guilbeault opened the session, stressing the essential role of Indigenous peoples as leaders and environmental stewards [newswire.ca](https://www.newswire.ca). This event illustrated Canada's intent to integrate Indigenous knowledge and to highlight their contributions to climate action.

“*Indigenous peoples are leaders in climate action,*” the Canadian government reiterated, underlining that their inclusion is crucial for equitable solutions [newswire.ca](https://www.newswire.ca). The event also showcased Indigenous delegates from Canada present in Belém, such as youth representatives Samantha Miller (Haudenosaunee) and Joni Shawana (Anishinaabe) who took part in discussions as part of a civil society delegation (KAIROS Canada) [united-church.ca](https://www.united-church.ca).

Another highly symbolic action took place on the waters of Belém on 12 November. Over 100 boats participated in a protest flotilla in Guajará Bay, escorted by the Brazilian Navy [reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com). On board, dozens of Indigenous leaders from across the Amazon basin, joined by environmental activists, brandished banners reading “Save the Amazon” and calling for the recognition of their land rights [reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com). Hundreds of people—Belém residents, Indigenous leaders and even COP delegates—lined the shore to watch this unprecedented water parade [reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com).

“*We are bringing climate negotiators into the heart of the forest so that they understand what it means to live here,*” explained Carolina Pasquali, Executive Director of Greenpeace Brazil, emphasizing the importance of this symbolic immersion [reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com). This flotilla, which had left the Andes and reached Belém the day before COP30 opened, embodied the unity of Indigenous peoples of Latin America in the climate struggle [earthday.org](https://www.earthday.org).

Inside, technical negotiations continued on topics such as climate finance, adaptation and implementation, far from the tumult of the streets. Public figures such as Al Gore also took the floor that day, reminding participants of the long list of recent climate disasters and calling for urgent action [reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com). The contrast between the urgency expressed outside by communities on the front lines and the measured diplomacy of the conference rooms was striking. The need to bridge these “two worlds”—grassroots communities and decision-makers—was more obvious than ever.

## 2.4 Day 4 – 13 November 2025

The fourth day saw negotiations enter a more substantive phase, while civil society continued its activities on-site and in the city. In the Blue Zone, technical discussions intensified on key issues such as climate finance, adaptation, loss and damage, and the energy transition [culturalsurvival.org](https://culturalsurvival.org). Behind the scenes, the atmosphere remained tense, particularly around the possible inclusion of language on phasing out fossil fuels. Several delegations pushed for a strong commitment, but major divisions made clear that this would be one of the most contentious issues of the second week.

On the activism front, the People's Summit was in full swing at the Federal University of Pará. This parallel event, bringing together NGOs, social movements and local communities, offered multiple workshops, conferences and street actions every day. On average, more than four demonstrations per day took place around Belém, targeting destructive agribusiness, infrastructure and mining projects, and expressing solidarity with related struggles (women's rights, climate justice, etc.) [theguardian.com](https://theguardian.com).

On 13 November, protests focused particularly on the impact of illegal mining (garimpo) on Indigenous territories, with leaflets distributed widely. Activists also raised awareness about climate disinformation—an issue addressed by a group of countries (Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, etc.) through a joint initiative launched to combat lobbying and ensure the dissemination of reliable scientific data [reuters.com](https://reuters.com).

This day was thus marked by the simultaneous continuation of diplomatic work and grassroots mobilization. While no major incident interrupted COP30, the message from Indigenous peoples and their allies remained omnipresent: there can be no effective climate solutions without social justice and without taking into account the rights of local communities.

## 2.5 Day 5 – 14 November 2025

Friday 14 November was one of the most striking days in terms of Indigenous action. At dawn, about 50 members of the Munduruku people (from the Amazon) carried out their threat to block the main entrance to the conference centre [theguardian.com](https://theguardian.com). Supported by a handful of international activists, they sat down and linked arms in front of the gates, under the watch of a large contingent of riot police and soldiers equipped with armoured vehicles [theguardian.com](https://theguardian.com). The Munduruku demanded a meeting with President Lula to explain “*the dire situation of [their] communities*” and protested that “*they are never listened to*” [theguardian.com](https://theguardian.com).

This peaceful yet firm blockade temporarily disrupted the work of COP30. Long queues of delegates formed outside, and many had to be redirected to a secondary entrance to access the Blue Zone [theguardian.com](https://theguardian.com). In the face of the protesters' determination, Lula did not come, but COP President André Corrêa do Lago went out to meet them. In a rare gesture of openness, he spent over an hour discussing with Indigenous representatives on site, listening to their concerns [theguardian.com](https://theguardian.com). The protesters eventually lifted the blockade and were invited into an annex building to continue their dialogue with Corrêa do Lago in a more formal setting [theguardian.com](https://theguardian.com).

This action highlighted the dialogue gap between Indigenous peoples and political leaders. On the one hand, communities such as the Munduruku insisted they are on the front lines of deforestation,

illegal mining and oil projects; on the other, decision-makers claimed to understand the urgency yet struggled to translate these concerns into concrete action. UN Secretary-General António Guterres, present in Belém, stressed that civil society and Indigenous participation were essential to counterbalance the influence of industrial lobbies at COPs: in Belém, 1 in 25 participants was a fossil fuel lobbyist, he lamented [theguardian.com](https://theguardian.com). The same day, Minister Guajajara reiterated her warning that Indigenous rights must be upheld against mining companies, even when extraction concerns so-called “critical minerals” for the energy transition[theguardian.com](https://theguardian.com).

The day ended with a mix of relief and gravity. Relief, because the dialogue initiated with the COP President signalled some recognition. Gravity, because the situation showed how deep Indigenous anger runs—“*We are always blocked, never listened to,*” as one Munduruku leader put it—and how far there is to go before forest guardians are truly considered at the highest decision-making level.

## 2.6 Day 6 – 15 November 2025

Saturday 15 November was marked by a large, festive and powerful mobilisation: the People’s Grand March. Thousands of people—members of Indigenous communities from across Brazil, inhabitants of the Amazon region, international climate activists, youth delegations, and many others—marched peacefully through the streets of Belém to demand strong action against climate change[culturalsurvival.org](https://culturalsurvival.org).

This colourful march moved to the sound of traditional music and drums, with dances, chants and creative slogans. At the head of the procession, two gigantic inflatable snakes represented the spirit of resistance at COP30, a nod to Amazonian mythologies and a symbol of vigilance against the destructive forces threatening the forest[theguardian.com](https://theguardian.com).

The march offered a rare moment of joyful unity. Among the participants was the famed cacique Raoni Metuktire, leader of the Kayapó people, now over 90 years old, who insisted on attending. “*This is the first COP in the Amazon, it can help the forest,*” he said, adding that he had never had such an opportunity to speak about the destruction he has witnessed for decades[theguardian.com](https://theguardian.com). Raoni repeated his long-standing warning: “*If we continue to destroy everything on this Earth, there will be many consequences—it will be chaos*” [theguardian.com](https://theguardian.com). His words resonated as another elder denounced the recent approval of offshore oil drilling near the Amazon by the Brazilian government: “*These big projects affect us, and I do not accept it,*” he declared in substance[theguardian.com](https://theguardian.com).

The Grand March also helped bring together converging causes. Banners called for climate justice, the protection of environmental defenders, but also for social justice, gender equality and solidarity with Indigenous peoples in other regions of the world. This joyful demonstration, peacefully supervised by the police, projected a positive image: that of an inclusive and popular climate movement with Indigenous peoples in a place of honour as spokespersons for the planet. After the march, a large concert was held in the city centre, notably featuring Brazilian music legend Gilberto Gil, providing a unifying cultural moment to close the day[theguardian.com](https://theguardian.com).

## 2.7 Day 7 – 16 November 2025

Sunday 16 November was quieter on the media front, marking the transition between the first week (largely dedicated to political announcements and thematic sessions) and the second week of negotiations (focused on drafting the final decisions). Traditionally, Sunday at a COP is a more informal day, with fewer formal negotiations and more side meetings, while many ministers begin to arrive for the final phase starting Monday.

## 2.8 Day 8 – 17 November 2025

Monday 17 November was designated as an “*Indigenous Peoples’ Day*” within COP30. On this occasion, a major concrete step forward was announced by the Brazilian government: the demarcation of 10 new Indigenous territories in Brazil [culturalsurvival.org](https://culturalsurvival.org). The announcement, made in the presence of jubilant Indigenous delegations, concerned territories inhabited by the Mura, Tupinambá, Pataxó, Guarani-Kaiowá, Munduruku, Pankará and Guarani-Mbya peoples, among others [culturalsurvival.org](https://culturalsurvival.org). Demarcation provides official legal recognition and fixed boundaries to these lands, giving communities stronger grounds to oppose extractive projects (agribusiness, mining, oil exploration) on their territories [culturalsurvival.org](https://culturalsurvival.org). With these 10 new areas, 21 Indigenous lands were demarcated in 2025 under Lula, bringing the total area of recognized Indigenous territories in Brazil to 117.4 million hectares, about 13.8% of the country’s land area [culturalsurvival.org](https://culturalsurvival.org). This institutional progress was widely hailed as an important interim victory, responding to a key demand of Indigenous organizations (“*Demarcação Já*” – Demarcation Now).

On the international front, 17 November also saw the operationalization of several financial commitments in favour of forests and their guardians. First, the launch of the Tropical Forests Forever Facility (TFFF) was confirmed, with a promised endowment of USD 125 billion [culturalsurvival.org](https://culturalsurvival.org). This innovative fund aims to reward countries that maintain their tropical forests intact, so that they are not pressured to exploit them. Crucially, it guarantees that at least 20% of the funds will go directly to Indigenous and local communities [culturalsurvival.org](https://culturalsurvival.org). More than 50 countries, including Canada, endorsed the declaration launching this initiative under Brazil’s leadership [newswire.ca](https://newswire.ca). Second, a group of 35 governments and philanthropic foundations announced a USD 1.8 billion, five-year fund dedicated to funding the land and forest rights of Indigenous peoples, local communities and Afro-descendants [culturalsurvival.org](https://culturalsurvival.org). These resources will help secure land titles, support Indigenous-led climate projects and strengthen community-based forest governance [culturalsurvival.org](https://culturalsurvival.org).

Finally, following the Leaders’ Summit held in Belém from 6–7 November, a coalition of states committed to recognizing and protecting 160 million hectares of Indigenous and community lands by 2030 [culturalsurvival.org](https://culturalsurvival.org)—about 395 million acres—responding to calls for land tenure security to be treated as a genuine climate objective [earthday.org/earthday.org](https://earthday.org/earthday.org).

Buoyed by these announcements, the overall mood on 17 November was cautiously optimistic. Inside the negotiation rooms, Indigenous representatives (as accredited observers or advisers in some national delegations) stepped up their efforts to influence the language of the final text. Their main target was to ensure that the decisions explicitly reference Indigenous rights, in particular the principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), in line with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Informal consultations took place throughout the day between the Indigenous Peoples’ Caucus (IIPFCC) and allied negotiators. However, one serious disappointment overshadowed the day: the COP30 presidency failed to attend an official dialogue scheduled with the

Indigenous Peoples' Organizations (IPO) Constituency, one of the nine official constituencies under the UNFCCC [culturalsurvival.org](https://culturalsurvival.org). According to Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim, co-chair of the IIPFCC, the COP President did not show up at the meeting planned with Indigenous representatives on the 17th, which was seen as a serious breach of COP tradition [culturalsurvival.org](https://culturalsurvival.org). Despite this, Indigenous representatives continued their advocacy through side events (panels, press conferences) and bilateral meetings with national delegations. Their core message remained the same: “*We must be heard not as guests, but as rights holders and solution providers*” [culturalsurvival.org](https://culturalsurvival.org).

## 2.9 Day 9 – 18 November 2025

As the end approached, 18 November was intense on the negotiation front. Ministers from many countries had now arrived in Belém to resolve the outstanding political questions. At the heart of the discussions were climate finance (support for vulnerable countries, adaptation finance, etc.) and fossil fuel phase-out. Indigenous representatives and their allies focused their efforts on two main fronts: 1) ensuring that the principle of a just and inclusive transition appears in the final decision, and 2) maintaining pressure to prevent any weakening of references to Indigenous rights.

The night before, a draft of the final text had circulated, featuring an encouraging reference to the need for a just transition that respects human and Indigenous rights. However, some fossil-fuel-producing countries and their allies attempted to water down this language. Through the night of 17–18 November, delegations such as Canada and several European states fought to preserve strong wording on this issue, in consultation with the Indigenous caucus. On the morning of the 18th, uncertainty remained: negotiators were exhausted, and several key points about fossil fuels and the scope of just transition provisions were still bracketed (unresolved) in the draft agreement.

On the ground, 18 November also saw a flurry of statements and speeches by Indigenous leaders on media platforms. The UN stage hosted, for instance, Dinaman Tuxá, one of the coordinators of APIB (the Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil), who reiterated the demand that Indigenous land demarcation be recognized as a climate objective in its own right, and called on other countries to support this politically and financially [earthday.org](https://earthday.org). Meanwhile, Lucía Ixchíu, a young K'iche' activist from Guatemala, told negotiators that “*everything cannot revolve around money; Mother Earth is not a business*” [earthday.org](https://earthday.org)—a reminder that the climate crisis cannot be solved without a profound shift in values.

By evening, despite persistent disagreements, some progress was acknowledged. A report commissioned by the COP confirmed that it is “*entirely feasible*” to meet the target set at COP29 of mobilizing USD 1.3 trillion per year by 2035 for climate action, provided adequate policies and reform of multilateral development banks are implemented [reuters.com](https://reuters.com). This note of optimism on finance encouraged negotiators. In parallel, a coalition of countries (Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, among others) officially launched an initiative against climate disinformation, committing to promote scientific integrity in the face of lobbying campaigns [reuters.com](https://reuters.com). Here too, traditional knowledge was mentioned: combating disinformation also means recognizing the value of Indigenous knowledge, long marginalized.

In short, Day 9 was a day of final trade-offs. While the outcome of COP30 was still uncertain, one thing was clear: the voices of Indigenous peoples, amplified by two weeks of mobilization, had

permeated the debates up to the very end, forcing states to grapple with issues previously sidelined (land rights, FPIC, ancestral knowledge) in the UN climate process.

#### Days 10–12 – 19–21 November 2025 (Closing and Decisions)

The final days (19–21 November) were devoted to the conclusion and adoption of COP30 decisions, in a climate of both fatigue and solemnity. After marathon negotiations that extended late into the nights of 19 and 20 November, a final agreement emerged on 21 November. For Indigenous peoples, the outcome is mixed, combining unprecedented advances in some areas with significant shortcomings in others.

On the positive side, COP30 delivered a notable outcome on adaptation finance: states agreed to triple adaptation finance by 2030, aiming for around USD 120 billion per year in support of the most vulnerable countries [culturalsurvival.org](https://culturalsurvival.org). This increase was a longstanding demand and will indirectly benefit Indigenous communities on the front lines of climate impacts (droughts, floods, permafrost thaw, etc.). Perhaps the most acclaimed achievement for Indigenous representatives, however, was the adoption of a Plan for a Just Transition of the global economy, explicitly recognizing Indigenous rights. The final text establishes an international Just Transition Mechanism tasked with ensuring that the shift to a green economy is inclusive and respects human rights [culturalsurvival.org](https://culturalsurvival.org). It states that all transition strategies must “*respect and promote the collective and individual rights of Indigenous Peoples, including the right to self-determination*”, in line with UNDRIP [culturalsurvival.org](https://culturalsurvival.org). Moreover, it recalls the need to obtain the Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) of Indigenous Peoples for projects affecting them. This provision, hailed as “*exemplary*”, constitutes a historic victory for Indigenous Peoples in the climate regime. Never before had a COP decision gone so far in integrating Indigenous rights into its core.

However, other Indigenous expectations were not met. The phase-out of fossil fuels, crucial for limiting global warming, is absent from the final decision—evidence of the resistance of some major oil and gas producers [culturalsurvival.org](https://culturalsurvival.org). Indigenous Peoples, who had demanded a strong signal to leave fossil fuels in the ground, expressed deep disappointment. Similarly, while major financial pledges were made for forests (TFFF and the land rights fund), their actual implementation will depend on follow-up and political will. Indigenous communities remain vigilant about the materialization of these commitments.

During the 22 November closing session, several Indigenous spokespersons reacted to the outcome. They acknowledged the importance of progress on just transition and finance, but urged governments to “*bridge the gap between words and actions*”. “*We have obtained beautiful lines on paper; now they must be implemented*,” said one representative from the Arctic, noting that the world is still far from the 1.5°C pathway. A young Indigenous delegate from Canada stated that COP30 had given him “*new energy to continue the struggle at home*”, describing his return as an opportunity to advance climate justice in collaboration with First Nations and the federal government.

In closing the conference, President Lula declared that COP30 had made it possible to “*bring together the currents of hope*” at the mouth of the Amazon and claimed that “*the peoples of the forest have finally been recognized as full partners*”. Yet, as many observers pointed out, this COP—celebrated as the “*Indigenous Peoples’ COP*”—turned out to be a double-sided mirror: increased visibility and

participation on one side, and a persistent sense, for many Indigenous participants, of being kept at a distance from the most crucial final decisions [culturalsurvival.org](http://culturalsurvival.org).

### 3 Major issues concerning Indigenous Peoples at COP30

Several key issues relevant to Indigenous Peoples ran through the entire COP30:

- Recognition of land and territorial rights Legal security of Indigenous lands was repeatedly presented as a climate priority. Demarcating and protecting these territories is vital to curb deforestation and preserve biodiversity. The idea of framing Indigenous land demarcation as a climate measure was promoted by Brazil and allies [theguardian.com](http://theguardian.com). The 17 November announcement of 10 new demarcated territories in Brazil illustrated this [culturalsurvival.org](http://culturalsurvival.org). Globally, many speakers reiterated that securing Indigenous land rights is one of the most effective ways to store carbon in forests and fight global warming [earthday.org](http://earthday.org).
- Preservation of forests and biodiversity With COP30 held in the Amazon, forest protection was central. Indigenous Peoples, who manage lands that host around 80% of the world's biodiversity, insisted on strong action against deforestation, illegal mining and land grabbing [earthday.org](http://earthday.org). The TFFF (125 billion USD for forests) and the 1.8 billion USD land rights fund are direct responses to this issue [culturalsurvival.org](http://culturalsurvival.org). The idea is to reward conservation, not only compensate destruction. One slogan that echoed in many workshops was: "*There is no climate solution without living forests, and no living forests without Indigenous Peoples.*"
- Climate finance directly benefiting Indigenous Peoples Historically, Indigenous Peoples have received only a tiny fraction of global climate finance. Changing this reality was an explicit aim at COP30. New commitments stipulate that at least 20% of TFFF funding and a significant share of climate/adaptation funds should be accessible directly to Indigenous and local communities [culturalsurvival.org](http://culturalsurvival.org). This is meant to ensure that aid does not get lost in bureaucracy and actually reaches the grassroots, supporting community-led projects (reforestation, territorial monitoring, agroecology, community-based renewables, etc.). Proven evidence shows that Indigenous communities manage their ecosystems sustainably when they have sufficient means [earthday.org](http://earthday.org).
- Participation in climate governance A fundamental issue was Indigenous Peoples' place in climate governance. The partial exclusion of many Indigenous delegates from the Blue Zone revived the debate over their status. Currently classified as "observers," they are demanding recognition as rights holders with a stronger consultative role. The COP President's failure to attend the scheduled dialogue with the Indigenous Peoples' Organization was seen as a setback [culturalsurvival.org](http://culturalsurvival.org). Nevertheless, the inclusion in the final decision of a Just Transition mechanism that explicitly refers to Indigenous Peoples is a step toward more inclusive governance [culturalsurvival.org](http://culturalsurvival.org). In the background, Indigenous representatives are also calling for a dedicated permanent body within the UNFCCC system to address their

issues, going beyond the current forum (IIPFCCC). This governance challenge is directly connected to climate justice: those who suffer the most from climate change (often Indigenous Peoples) should have real influence on the decisions that affect them.

- Protection of defenders and traditional knowledge  
A number of testimonies highlighted the dangers faced by Indigenous environmental defenders (threats, violence, murders in some countries) and the erosion of their cultures. One central issue was the recognition of the importance of traditional knowledge for climate solutions. In various side events, scientists confirmed that Indigenous practices (controlled burns, agroforestry, water management, etc.) are valuable for adaptation. The objective is for these knowledge systems to be valued as much as modern technologies in the eyes of decision-makers. While this is progressing in discourse, on the ground communities are asking for stronger legal protection and support in the face of violence. This topic was addressed during the 15 November march and in several NGO calls during COP30, but it did not result in specific operational mechanisms in the final text (it aligns instead with broader UN human rights discussions).
- Fossil fuels vs clean energy  
Finally, a transversal issue is the energy transition. Indigenous Peoples overwhelmingly called for an end to new fossil fuel projects that devastate their lands and worsen the climate crisis. In Belém, this demand took the form of slogans (“No oil in the Amazon”) and warnings from leaders such as Raoni about offshore drilling [theguardian.com](https://theguardian.com). In contrast, COP30 failed to adopt language on fossil fuel phase-out, leaving this struggle unresolved. For Indigenous communities, this means ongoing exposure to the risk of new oil, gas, coal and mining projects. While the reference to rights in the just transition mechanism may offer a tool for resistance, without a clear mandate to leave fossil fuels in the ground, their battle continues. Several Indigenous communities also presented clean energy projects during the COP (solar in Inuit territories, small-scale hydro in the Amazon, etc.), demonstrating that they are part of the solution rather than obstacles.

## 4 Impacts and outcomes for Indigenous Peoples

From an Indigenous perspective, the outcomes of COP30 are mixed. They include significant advances but also major frustrations, while the broader impact on the role of Indigenous voices in global climate action is undeniable.

Major advances:

- *Inclusion of Indigenous rights in international decisions* – The adoption of robust language on a just transition that respects Indigenous rights is arguably the most important advance [culturalsurvival.org](https://culturalsurvival.org). For the first time, a UNFCCC decision explicitly recognizes obligations to respect collective Indigenous rights (including self-determination) and FPIC in the context of climate transition. This is a major step that creates a precedent for future COPs and for national implementation of the Paris Agreement. Indigenous delegates see it as the

result of decades of advocacy since the creation of the IIPFCC in 2001 and as a lever to hold governments accountable going forward.

- *Concrete progress on Indigenous lands in Brazil* – The demarcation of 10 Indigenous territories in Brazil is a tangible gain for thousands of families. These communities will be able to live on lands legally protected against illegal mining and agribusiness expansion, thereby strengthening the ecological resilience of these areas (less deforestation, continued carbon storage) [culturalsurvival.org](http://culturalsurvival.org). This directly responds to demands heard throughout the summit (“*Demarcar é clima*” – *Demarcation is climate action*). Lula’s decision may inspire other tropical countries to follow suit.
- *Dedicated climate finance for Indigenous Peoples* – COP30 saw the consolidation of unprecedented levels of funding: the TFFF, with up to USD 25 billion in public funding leveraging USD 100 billion in private investment [theguardian.com](http://theguardian.com), at least 20% of which is earmarked for Indigenous peoples [culturalsurvival.org](http://culturalsurvival.org), and the USD 1.8 billion land rights fund [culturalsurvival.org](http://culturalsurvival.org). If delivered, these commitments mean that in the short to medium term, substantial financial flows will reach local communities to support their projects (food security, territorial monitoring, community-based renewables, etc.). This could represent a scale shift for Indigenous-led solutions, which have long been underfunded (currently, less than 1% of global climate finance goes directly to Indigenous Peoples according to NGOs). These financial commitments, combined with references to Indigenous Peoples in the decision text, legitimize their role as frontline climate actors in the eyes of international institutions.
- *Increased visibility and legitimacy* – The unprecedented political and media attention given to Indigenous Peoples at COP30 strengthened their legitimacy in public climate discourse. The narrative of “*forest guardians*” was repeated in countless speeches, official statements and articles [earthday.org](http://earthday.org). This contributes to a paradigm shift: where Indigenous Peoples were once seen as secondary victims or folkloric figures, they now increasingly appear as moral and strategic leaders in the climate crisis. For example, the Canadian Indigenous delegation found greater resonance upon returning home. Canadian media highlighted the participation of Indigenous youth like Samantha Miller, and the federal government reiterated commitment to working “*in partnership with Indigenous Peoples*” on climate policy [newswire.ca](http://newswire.ca). This symbolic gain can influence domestic policies (integration of Indigenous knowledge into climate plans, co-management of protected areas, etc.).
- *International solidarity and network strengthening* – COP30 also served as a moment of consolidation for the global Indigenous climate movement. The gathering of such a large number of Indigenous representatives in the Amazon enabled intense intercultural exchanges and sharing of experiences between peoples from different regions (Amazon, Arctic, Pacific Islands, African savannas, boreal forests, etc.). Alliances were formed or strengthened. For instance, Indigenous representatives from Canada and Brazil agreed to collaborate so that their respective governments fully implement UNDRIP in climate policy. Similarly, convergence with youth, feminist and anti-racist movements at the People’s Summit broadened support for Indigenous causes. This strengthened network dynamic is a lasting

impact: participants return home with new contacts, ideas and an increased sense of belonging to a global common struggle.

## 5 Frustrations and dark spots

- *Persistent exclusion from core negotiations* – Despite their visibility, many Indigenous participants felt acutely their exclusion from the decision-making arena. The fact that only 14% of Brazilian Indigenous participants were allowed into the Blue Zone was experienced as humiliating by some [culturalsurvival.org](https://culturalsurvival.org). Several leaders spoke of their exhaustion and anger at having to shout outside locked doors [culturalsurvival.org](https://culturalsurvival.org). The image of forest guardians being pushed back by security as they tried to enter peacefully will remain a stain on COP30. This frustration may deepen cynicism toward the UN process among young Indigenous activists, who might increasingly gravitate toward more radical action or spaces outside future COPs. There is already talk of organizing an independent “Indigenous Counter-Summit” at COP31 if participation modalities are not improved.
- *Implementation gap* – The victories won on paper (just transition, finance, demarcation) must be translated into practice. Past experience shows a recurrent implementation gap. Recognizing rights in an international text does not necessarily prevent a local government from approving a mining project without consent. Brazilian Indigenous Peoples, who celebrated Lula’s 17 November announcements, have not forgotten that 107 Indigenous territories still await demarcation [earthday.org](https://earthday.org). Likewise, the USD 5.5 billion pledged for the TFFF [earthday.org](https://earthday.org) remain promises subject to budgetary and political fluctuations. There is a real risk of disillusionment if these commitments go unfulfilled. Indigenous Peoples are aware of this and have already planned to mobilize at upcoming events (COP31, UN Indigenous Peoples’ summits, etc.) to demand accountability.
- *No reference to fossil fuels* – The absence of any explicit mention of reducing or phasing out fossil fuels in the final agreement is a major disappointment for Indigenous Peoples and civil society [culturalsurvival.org](https://culturalsurvival.org). It signals that the root causes of climate change remain insufficiently addressed. For Indigenous communities, this leaves intact the risk of new extractive projects (oil, gas, coal, lithium, etc.) on their lands. While references to rights and FPIC in the just transition mechanism may help them resist, the lack of a clear fossil fuel phase-out commitment is seen as a failure of political courage. Some activists—including Indigenous people from the Arctic and the Pacific—described feeling “*betrayed*” on this front and warned that they will intensify direct action (as seen in the blockades) to challenge fossil fuel expansion.
- *Linguistic and cultural barriers* – Another obstacle raised by Indigenous delegates was the language and cultural gap. Many local Indigenous participants in Belém spoke only Portuguese or their Indigenous language, while negotiations were conducted in English, often without adequate translation [culturalsurvival.org](https://culturalsurvival.org). Some felt ignorant or excluded because they could not follow the technical sessions. Moreover, UNFCCC diplomatic protocols and jargon are far removed from Indigenous modes of communication, which are more narrative and experiential. COP30 highlighted the need for better accessibility of processes for Indigenous Peoples: more interpreters, negotiation training (like the Kuntari Katu programme

launched by Brazil [earthday.org](https://earthday.org)), and greater awareness among diplomats about listening to Indigenous stories. Without such changes, inclusion risks remaining superficial.

Overall, the impact of COP30 can be assessed at several levels. In the short term, it produced concrete gains (protected lands, funding commitments) and strengthened the place of Indigenous Peoples in the global climate narrative. In the medium term, it provides new leverage tools (internationally agreed language, global networks, heightened media attention). In the long term, COP30 may be seen as a symbolic turning point: the moment when the international community began genuinely treating Indigenous Peoples as indispensable actors in climate solutions, rather than as mere victims or observers.

At the same time, COP30 revealed how far there is to go to achieve true Indigenous climate justice. Indigenous Peoples will continue to have to fight for implementation of commitments and to defend their territories against harmful projects. But they now do so with greater unity, visibility and legitimacy than before Belém.

## 6 Conclusion

In conclusion, COP30 in Belém will be remembered as the “*Amazon and Indigenous Peoples’ COP*”—a turning point where Indigenous voices resonated more strongly than ever at the heart of climate negotiations. Over two intense weeks, these guardians of the Earth reminded the world that the climate crisis is not an abstraction but a lived reality in their forests, islands and mountains. They demonstrated that their solutions—protecting forests, defending biodiversity, living in balance with nature—are indispensable for the planet’s future. And they ensured that, for the first time, their fundamental rights were partially inscribed in the core of an international climate agreement [culturalsurvival.org](https://culturalsurvival.org).

Yet COP30 also laid bare ongoing challenges. Behind the uplifting images of Indigenous participants in traditional dress welcoming delegates, the reality was also one of barricades, tears and tensions—evidence of justified impatience in the face of urgency. “*It was a nightmare despite record participation,*” summarized one Indigenous observer, stressing that the road ahead remains fraught [culturalsurvival.org](https://culturalsurvival.org). The gap between political promises and concrete action to keep warming below 1.5°C remains alarming, and Indigenous Peoples have repeated that we can no longer move “*at the wrong speed,*” to borrow Lula’s own warning [cop30.br](https://cop30.br).

Nevertheless, a threshold has been crossed. COP30 showed that stronger Indigenous engagement can raise the level of ambition of a climate summit. Thanks to their pressure, the concept of a just transition acquired real meaning, grounded in human rights. Thanks to their vigilance, tropical forest protection advanced in tangible ways. And thanks to their presence, global civil society was reminded that climate action is, above all, a struggle for justice and dignity.

Ultimately, while COP30 did not “solve the climate crisis” on its own, it succeeded in placing Indigenous voices at the heart of negotiations—where they belong. The path toward climate justice is still long, but Belém has provided new momentum and hope. The Brazilian concept of *mutirão*—“*working together*”—repeated by the COP President [cop30.br](https://cop30.br), captures this spirit. The survival of the

climate and of humanity depends on a collective effort in which Indigenous Peoples are no longer sidelined, but recognized as essential partners, carrying knowledge and resilience the world now urgently needs.