20261124 COP31 Outcome Public Failure, Quiet Victory; New guiding Metric

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Public failure to agree a Cover Decision

COP31 in Antalya, Türkiye ended on Sunday, November 22, 2026 as the first COP to fail to agree a **'Cover Decision'**.

Disagreement on fossil fuels led to this failure.

- Previous Conferences explicitly recognised the need to 'phase-out' (or 'phase-down') their use. But this year Russia, Saudi Arabia and some other countries refused to allow this to be mentioned. In response 130 other countries refused to agree the proposed 'Cover Decision'.
- The Conference also failed to agree a proposal to increase funding for adaptation in Developing Countries to $300 billion between 2026 and 2035.

The World's countries seem like alcoholics with health problems who refuse to stop drinking. Their 'drink' is fossil fuels. Like alcohol they inhibit clear thought.

So, what did COP31 do?

- It recognised the failure to keep temperatures from going above 1.5C.
- It recognised Carbon Dioxide Removal (CDR) from the atmosphere is now necessary to avoid dangerous climate change.
  Comments on this: *CDR is necessary given the failure to decarbonise, but:*
  - *It is more expensive that reducing emissions.*
  - *It can't be done fast enough to stop Global Warming making parts of Earth uninhabitable. So, we also need large scale Solar Radiation Management such as action to Refreeze the Arctic.*

Quiet Victory of CBAM which goes from strength to strength

The best news from COP31 is nothing happened to derail the EU and UK's Carbon Border Adjustment mechanisms 'CBAM'.

CBAM allows countries to set a carbon price which is high enough to drive decarbonisation without cheaper imports out-competing domestic production.

CBAM does this by requiring importers to declare the quantity of the Greenhouse Gases[1] emitted when the imports were made. It then levies a tariff on this quantity times the excess of the 'carbon price' in importing country over the carbon price in the exporting country.

The EU and UK are introducing this CBAM for imports of cement, iron and steel, aluminium, fertilisers, electricity, and hydrogen.

Many countries, including China, India, Japan, Turkiye, Vietnam and the group of Serbia, Montenegro & Albania have, or are**,** introducing carbon pricing schemes. The carbon price signal from these schemes should drive substantial their decarbonisation.

See **Attachment 1** for more detail on this from Google AI. This includes news of:

- UK & EU aligning their schemes
- Norway and Iceland joining the EU. scheme.
- Australia and Canada discussing establishing their own.

Great progress towards global carbon pricing which drives global decarbonisation.

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[1] The EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) covers carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide and perfluorocarbons (PFCs) for specific sectors, but it excludes methane. It aligns with the EU ETS by focusing on gases that can be measured, reported, and verified with high accuracy, leaving methane outside for now.

Earth's Energy Imbalance as a new Star to Steer decarbonisation

In its March 2026 State of the Climate Report 2025 the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) adopted **Earth's Energy Imbalance (EEI)** as a key metric (**Attachment 2)**

In November 2025 for COP31 WMO published its preliminary State of the Climate Report 2026. **(Attachment 3).** This diagram from that report shows EEI is now at a record high:

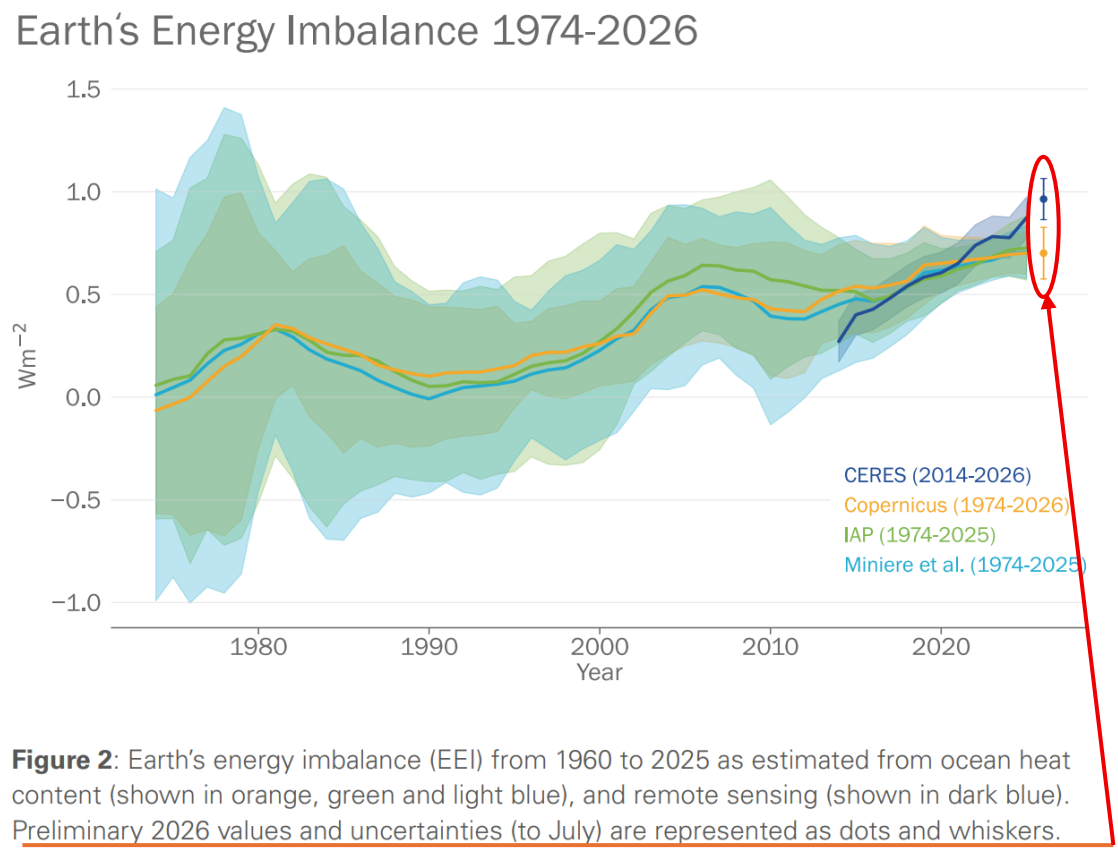

Figure 2: Earth's energy imbalance (EEI) from 1960 to 2025 as estimated from ocean heat content (shown in orange, green and light blue), and remote sensing (shown in dark blue). Preliminary 2026 values and uncertainties (to July) are represented as dots and whiskers. Values are trends over 15 years ending in the year shown. The shaded areas indicate the 2-sigma uncertainty ranges on each estimate. A positive EEI indicates that the total amount of heat stored on Earth is increasing.

EEI is the difference between incoming solar energy and outgoing radiation from Earth. This difference causes Global Warming. It is currently at its highest level since satellite monitoring of Earth began. It tells us Climate Change is accelerating in-spite-of the work of 31 COPs. See **Attachment 4.**

This is not 'good news' but it clearly articulates the global warming problem and this is a key step towards solving it.

EEI is a leading metric causing global warming. The UNFCCC should focused getting it to zero as the route to avoiding dangerous climate change.

See attachments for more detail.

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Attachment 1: What impact did COP31 have on the EU and UK's implementation of CBAM?

Google AI's response to this question:

COP31 in Antalya did not halt or weaken the EU and UK's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanisms (CBAM); instead, both regions solidified their rollout timelines while using the surrounding diplomatic momentum to link their carbon markets.

Although developing nations strongly criticized unilateral climate trade measures during the summit—which ultimately ended without a final consensus text—the EU and UK held firm on their domestic carbon border policies. [1, 2, 3]

Key Developments & Impacts

- **No Rollbacks Despite Summit Pushback.** Earlier drafts of the COP31 text included language framing unilateral trade measures like CBAM as unfair cost-shifting onto developing nations. However, because COP31 collapsed without a formal deal, no binding UN restrictions or penalties were placed on the EU or UK mechanisms. Both blocs affirmed that their CBAM frameworks will proceed as planned. [1, 2, 3, 4, 5]
- **UK-EU Carbon Market Link & Mutual Exemptions.** In a major parallel development alongside COP31, the UK and EU struck a landmark agreement in Brussels to link their respective Emissions Trading Systems (ETSs) starting in **January 2028**. Once linked, UK and EU businesses will be exempt from each other's CBAM tariffs, eliminating bilateral trade friction on heavy industrial goods. *(Note: Because the UK CBAM launches in January 2027, a one-year gap remains before the 2028 exemption takes full effect.)* [1, 2, 3, 4]
- **Strict Rules on International Carbon Credits.** Amid debates at COP31 over UN oversight, the EU tied the recognition of international carbon credits under its CBAM directly to the findings of UN technical reviewers under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement. This gives UN auditors direct financial influence over whether imported goods qualify for carbon-price deductions. [1]
- **Geographic Expansion of the EU CBAM.** During the week of the summit, the EU confirmed that its CBAM will expand to cover imports entering **Norway and Iceland** starting in **January 2027**, aligning with the UK's scheduled CBAM launch. [1]
- **Global Domino Effect.** Rather than isolating the EU and UK, COP31 highlighted how their CBAM policies are driving global adoption. Host nation **Türkiye** announced plans at the summit to design its own EU-compatible CBAM, while representatives from **Australia and Canada** met to discuss establishing their own mechanisms. [1, 2, 3]

It includes news of the UK & EU aligning their scemes, Norway and Iceland joining the EU CBAM and Australia and Canada discussing establishing their own mechanisms

Attachment 2: WMO adopting Earth's Energy Imbalance as a Key Metric

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) defines Earth's Energy Imbalance (EEI) as the net difference between the rate at which solar energy enters the Earth system and the rate at which thermal energy leaves it. It is measured at the top of the atmosphere.

The WMO officially adopted it as a key global climate indicator in March 2026. [1, 2, 3]

WMO Definition & Metrics for EEI

- **Core Concept.** Under a stable climate, incoming energy from the sun roughly equals outgoing energy radiated back to space. When rising greenhouse gas concentrations trap heat, less energy escapes, creating a positive net surplus (measured in watts per square metre) where the planet continuously accumulates heat. [1, 2, 3]
- **Where the Excess Heat Goes.** According to the WMO, this accumulated energy distributes across the entire Earth system:
  - Oceans: ~91%;
  - Land (continents): ~5%
  - Ice (cryosphere): ~3%
  - Atmosphere: ~1% [1, 2, 3]
- **Official Adoption Date** for EEI as a Key Metric was 23 March 2026 when WMO announced EEI as a key global climate indicators included it in its flagship State of the Global Climate 2025 report. [1, 2]
- **Prior Tracking**. While the Global Climate Observing System (GCOS) —co-sponsored by the WMO— had already recognized EEI as a fundamental metric for tracking climate stabilization, 2026 marked its elevation to the WMO's core headline indicators alongside global temperatures, greenhouse gases, ocean heat, sea level, ocean acidification, sea-ice extent, and glacier mass balance. [1, 2, 3]

Attachment 3: Extract from WMO's preliminary State of the Climate Report 2026 published at the start of COP31 LINK

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) released its State of the Climate Update 2026 on November 9, 2026—Earth Information Day at COP31 in Antalya, Türkiye—with the final full report scheduled for **March 2027**. [1, 2, 3]

Key Findings & Figures

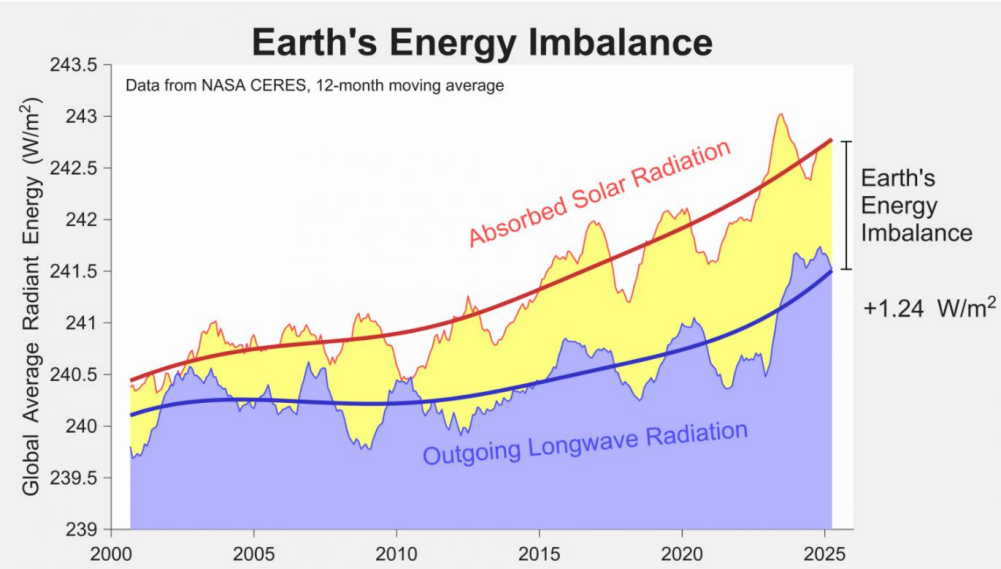
Indicator	What the WMO Reported
Global Temperature	January–September 2026 averaged about **1.47 °C (± 0.13 °C)** above the 1850–1900 pre-industrial baseline. **2023–2026** are on track to be the four warmest years on record, within a **12-year streak (2015–2026)** of record warmth.
Earth's Energy Imbalance & Ocean Heat	Earth's energy imbalance reached its **highest level since monitoring began**, driving accelerating heat accumulation. Roughly **90%** of excess heat goes into the oceans, putting 2026 on course for a **tenth consecutive year** of record ocean heat content.
El Niño (2026/2027)	After starting 2026 under La Niña, a rapidly intensifying El Niño pushed Niño 3.4 sea-surface temperature anomalies from **0.2 °C** in March to **2.5 °C** in August, with forecasts reaching **3.7 °C** for October–December—potentially the strongest on record and likely to amplify heat and extreme weather into **2027**.
Sea Level Rise	Global mean sea level reached a **record high** in the satellite era (begun in 1993), including record highs across June–August 2026, heightening risks for roughly **900 million people** in low-lying coastal zones.
Greenhouse Gases	Atmospheric concentrations of **carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide** hit record levels in 2025 (with CO_2 rising **2.8 ppm** from 2024 to 2025, above the 10-year average growth rate) and continued climbing in real-time 2026 data.
Ice & Freshwater	Around **3%** of long-term excess energy has gone into melting ice; glaciers lost roughly **400 gigatons** of ice in 2025 (equivalent to about five Olympic swimming pools per second), and terrestrial freshwater storage has trended downward since **2014**.

Core Takeaways & Warnings

Supercharged extremes: WMO Secretary-General **Celeste Saulo** warned that the 2026/2027 El Niño is "off the charts" and acts as a risk multiplier by releasing heat from an already record-warm ocean, compounding extreme heat, droughts, heavy rainfall, and high-mountain hazards (such as glacial ice/rock collapses and flash floods in Nepal). [1, 2]

Attachment 4: Understanding Earth's Energy Imbalance:

This graphic from Berkeley, California Earth LINK shows Earth's Energy Imbalance as the mismatch between inbound radiation from the sun and outgoing radiation from Earth.

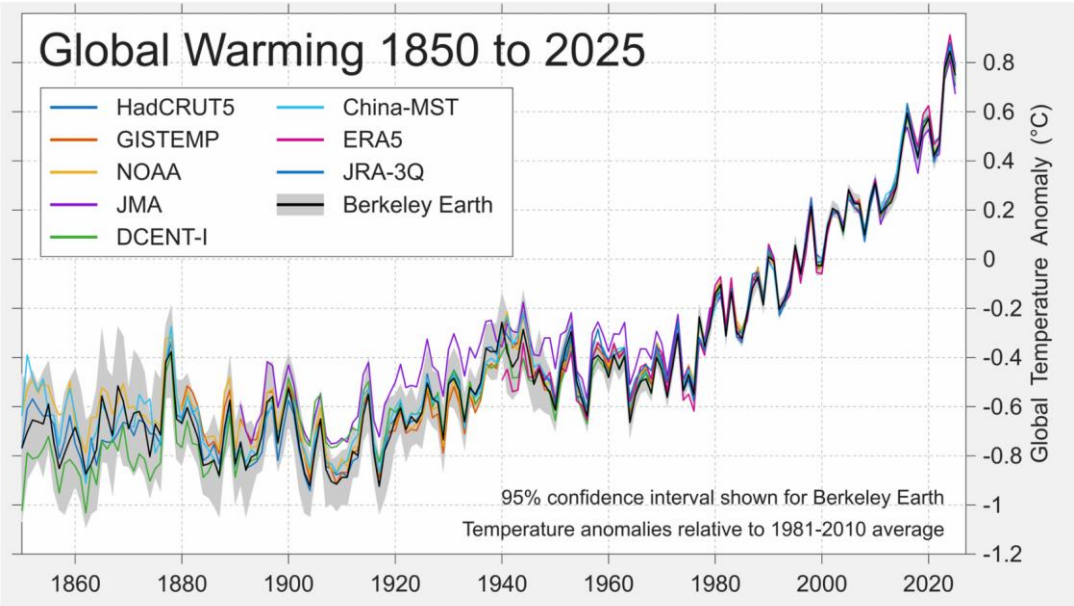


Roughly **93% to 95%** of Earth's energy imbalance for many years has gone into warming the oceans (~90%–91%) and melting ice (~3%–4%). So, it is only **5%–7%** the things we measure namely the land and the air.

Further, Air and Land temperatures vary significantly due to:

- Energy transferring between the ocean and the atmosphere. In particular, due to the El Niño /La Niña oscillation in the Pacific.
- Volcanic eruptions. For example, the 1991 Pinatubo eruption injected roughly 20 million tons of sulphur-dioxide into the stratosphere. These aerosol droplets reflected incoming sunlight back into space cooling Earth by about 0**.5°C** for nearly two years.
- Weather. Two examples: Clouds reflect sunlight and cool the Earth. Changes in weather patters altering the amount of Snow and Ice and hence how much sunlight is reflected into space.

The result is the graph of temperature changes is more volatile than that of energy imbalance.



Comparison of global mean temperature change among major reporting agencies with each time series aligned to the average from 1981 to 2010. All groups produce a very similar understanding of recent climate change.