Electrification done right: civil society conditions for the “35 by 35” target

Open letter to the COP31 Presidencies
Updated version of the 23 September 2026 letter

We, the undersigned civil society organisations, networks and movements, support a global electrification target that is built on renewables, reduces fossil fuel dependence, and delivers for people without energy access, without repeating the harms of extraction. On this basis, we will welcome the COP31 Presidency's proposal to place a global target of 35% electrification of final energy demand by 2035 as a key element of COP31, and the growing political momentum behind electrification as demonstrated most recently by the Electrify Now governments' statement and the COP31 “35 by 35” Global Electrification Pledge.

Such a target should be treated as a floor for collective action on which countries build. But electrification is a means, not an end. Our support for the target is therefore conditional: it counts only if the power is renewable, if it reaches the people who have no electricity today, if the money follows, and if it comes alongside progress in the negotiations on the Just Transition mechanism, finance, and adaptation, and other existing commitments.

Renewables-based electrification is one of the strongest tools available to tackle the climate and energy crises together. This year’s fossil fuel crisis, the largest in history, has shown again what dependence on fossil fuels costs: price shocks felt in household bills and national budgets, and record heat, wildfires and floods made more likely by burning coal, oil and gas. Electric vehicles, heat pumps, electric cooking, and electrified industry use energy far more efficiently than their fossil fuel equivalents. When the electricity comes from sustainable renewable sources, mainly wind and solar, electrification cuts pollution, reduces exposure to volatile fuel markets and can bring affordable power to billions of people.

We are already seeing rising electricity demand used as a justification for new gas turbines, new gas exploration and delayed coal retirements, while governments approving new coal, oil and gas production lock in the supply that electrification is meant to displace. A headline percentage that can be met with more fossil fuels would not serve the climate goal, energy security or people without power today. IRENA's analysis shows that for a 35% electrification target to be aligned with 1.5°C, the share of fossil fuels in total energy supply must fall to 48% or less by 2035.

We call on governments, the COP31 Presidencies and the United Nations to anchor any electrification target and initiative in the following guardrails:

1. Electrification must run on renewables and cut fossil fuel dependence, not extend it.
2. Efficiency and sufficiency come first, and people come before data centres.
3. Electrification must close the energy access gap.
4. A global benchmark must be delivered through national targets and policies.
5. Grids and storage must be built for renewables and respect community rights.
6. Ambition must be backed by public finance and real means of implementation.
7. Transition minerals must not repeat the harms of extraction.

1. **Electrification must run on renewables and cut fossil fuel dependence, not extend it.**

- Explicitly define the electrification target as based on renewable energy, excluding fossil fuels and nuclear power, and deliver it together with the commitments already agreed in the first Global Stocktake: tripling global renewable energy capacity and doubling the rate of energy efficiency improvements by 2030, and transitioning away from fossil fuels in energy systems.
- Treat electrification as a lever to deliver those commitments faster, not as a parallel target that can be counted separately from them.
- Ensure that new electricity demand is met by renewable generation, storage and demand-side flexibility, and is not used by governments or companies as cover to build new gas or coal capacity.
- Pair electrification commitments with credible national and regional plans and timelines for transitioning away from fossil fuel production and end use in a just, orderly and equitable manner.

2. **Efficiency and sufficiency come first, and electrification for people before data centres.**

- Prioritise energy efficiency and sufficiency, particularly in high-income countries, so that electrification reduces overall energy demand rather than adding to it.
- Where electrification is needed, prioritise applications that maximise emissions reductions and deliver wider social benefits, such as electrifying and expanding public transport rather than focusing primarily on private electric vehicles.
- Growing electricity demand from data centres and AI should not come at the expense of a just energy transition. Any data centres built should run on 100% additional renewable energy matched to their demand, support grid stability, be sited to limit harm to nature, land and communities, use water responsibly, minimise embodied emissions, report their energy and water use publicly, and commit to earning and keeping the consent of the communities that host them.

3. **Electrification must close the energy access gap.**

- Put the 655 million people still without electricity, and the many more without reliable or affordable supply of any kind of energy, at the centre of the electrification agenda, together with the around 2 billion people who still rely on polluting fuels and technologies for cooking.
- Recognise that for many countries electrification starts with universal access and green industrialisation, not with transforming existing consumption.
- Prioritise distributed and community-based renewable energy, including off-grid solar and mini-grids, which can reach unserved communities faster and at lower cost than waiting for grid extension.
- Protect affordability, so the costs of new grids and generation do not fall on low-income households and so communities benefit directly, including through local ownership.

4. **A global benchmark must be delivered through national targets and policies.**

- Treat a 35% by 2035 target as a global benchmark, not a one-size-fits-all target, with nationally determined pathways that reflect each country's starting point, development priorities and capabilities, consistent with equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR-RC).
- Adopt national targets and policies for renewable energy, energy efficiency, electrification and fossil fuel phaseout across end-use sectors and infrastructure, and integrate them into NDCs and long-term strategies.
- Establish reporting and monitoring at national and global levels to track progress against 1.5°C-consistent pathways, and use the second Global Stocktake in 2028 to strengthen collective ambition for 2035.

5. Grids and storage must be built for renewables and respect community rights.

- Scale investment in transmission, distribution, storage and mini-grids so that they can support greater shares of renewables-based electricity, with distribution networks receiving the same attention as large transmission lines.
- Address the specific barriers faced across the Global South, where grids remain underfunded and fragmented and where the constraint is finance and infrastructure, not ambition.
- Ensure that the deployment of renewable energy and related infrastructure is just, equitable and rights-based, does not come at the expense of host countries and communities, and supports livelihoods and local economic opportunities.

6. Ambition must be backed by public finance and means of implementation.

- Recognise that new targets without new money will remain targets on paper. Developed countries must provide significantly scaled-up public climate finance, predominantly grant-based and concessional, to support renewables-based electrification and energy access in developing countries, without adding to unsustainable debt burdens.
- Tackle the high cost of capital. Electrification faces the same funding problems that are slowing down the whole energy transition - the cost of capital is high, many governments face limited fiscal space, high debt, and grids and storage still lack investment. Growing political support for electrification must translate into money that tackles these same barriers, not add a new set of asks on top of them.
- Ensure finance reaches small and medium-sized enterprises, local energy providers, cooperatives and communities, and the end uses where electrification happens, such as transport, cooking and productive uses, not only large-scale projects.
- Ensure that the COP31 Climate Implementation Bridge acts as a connector and accelerator, linking national plans to institutions already able to prepare, finance and deliver renewables-based electrification projects, and measure its success by whether public and private finance actually flows to those who need it.
- Operationalise and resource a Just Transition Mechanism to support countries, workers and communities in managing the economic and social changes involved in the energy transition, ensuring that electrification delivers decent work, social protection and shared prosperity.
- Scale up technology transfer, capacity building and international cooperation, and advance reform of the global financial architecture so that it supports a just and equitable electrification of energy systems.

- While guaranteeing energy rights for the people, end public finance for fossil fuel power, and ensure that no electrification finance is directed to fossil fuel generation or infrastructure.

7. Transition minerals must not repeat the harms of extraction.

Batteries, grids and electric technologies require minerals. The transition must not repeat the harms of the fossil fuel era or replace one dependency with another. Governments should:

- Require binding human rights and environmental due diligence across mineral supply chains, and respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples, including free, prior and informed consent, and the rights of affected communities and workers.
- Protect ecosystems, water and critical biodiversity areas, including through no-go zones, and exclude deep-sea mining.
- Enable resource-rich countries to capture value through local processing and manufacturing, with benefits shared fairly with communities and the overall national economy, rather than concentrated among a few companies.
- Reduce primary demand through efficiency, reuse, recycling and circular design, and diversify supply chains to strengthen resilience.
- Connect minerals safeguards to the COP31 Presidency's target to increase the global circular material use rate to at least 15% by 2035, helping reduce demand for newly mined minerals.
- Build on the principles set out by the UN Secretary-General's Panel on Critical Energy Transition Minerals and advance their implementation through a multilateral framework.

From momentum to delivery

COP31 can turn momentum for electrification into faster, fairer progress on the energy transition. That requires a target that is clearly renewables-based, that centers people without access, that is delivered through national targets and policies, that is backed by public finance, and that protects the communities and ecosystems on which the transition's supply chains depend.

We stand ready to work with the COP31 Presidencies and governments to make electrification done right a consequential outcome of COP31.

List of signatories as of 4 November, 2026

1. 350.org
2. 350.org Japan
3. ACF Community Canberra
4. ActionAid Denmark
5. ActionAid International
6. Africa Change Lab
7. Africa Just Transition Network
8. African Center for Health, Climate & Gender Justice Alliance (ACHCGA)
9. Aid Life Learn Environment (ALLE)
10. Amnesty International
11. ARAYARA International Institute
12. Argentina 1.5

13. Asian Peoples Movement on Debt and Development
14. Australian Conservation Foundation
15. Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network
16. Beyond Fossil Fuels
17. BUND e.V. (Friends of the Earth Germany)
18. Business and Human Rights Centre
19. Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment
20. Canadian Association of the Club of Rome
21. Carbon Reckoning Legal Project
22. Center for Spatial Justice (Mekanda Adalet Derneği - MAD)
23. Christian Aid
24. Citizens for Public Justice
25. Citizens' Climate Lobby Canada
26. Climate Action Monaro
27. Climate Action Network Australia
28. Climate Action Network Canada (CAN-Rac)
29. Climate Action Network Europe
30. Climate Action Network International
31. Climate Action Network Japan
32. Climate Action Network Morocco
33. Climate Action Network Zimbabwe
34. Climate Analytics
35. Climate Analytics Africa
36. Climate Analytics Australia-Pacific
37. Climate Analytics Caribbean
38. Climate Analytics South Asia
39. Climate Risk Horizons
40. Coalition for Responsible Energy Development in New Brunswick (CRED-NB)
41. Common Grace
42. Common Threads Indigenous Peoples Organisation
43. Comms Declare
44. Community Development Advocacy Foundation (CODAF)
45. Connected Advocacy
46. Conselho Pastoral dos Pescadores e Pescadoras
47. E+ Energy Transition Institute
48. ECCO think tank
49. ECODES
50. EcoEquity
51. ECOMIND
52. Environmental Defence Canada
53. Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA UK)
54. Enzi Ijayo Africa Initiative
55. Fastenaktion (Swiss Lenten Fund)
56. Forum des Engagés pour le Développement Durable (FORED)
57. Friends of the Earth Australia
58. Fundacion Chile Sustentable
59. GDMR
60. Germanwatch
61. Greenpeace International

62. Greenpeace Japan
63. İklim Ağı (Climate Network Türkiye)
64. Initiative for Social Performance in Renewable Energy (INSPIRE)
65. Innovation pour le Développement et la Protection de l'Environnement
66. Institute for Essential Services Reform (IESR)
67. Instituto de Desarrollo, Energía y Ambiente (IDEA)
68. Islamic Relief Worldwide
69. Jubilee Australia Research Centre
70. Kiko Network
71. Latam Lab
72. Laudato Si' Movement
73. Leave it in the Ground Initiative (LINGO)
74. Lighter Footprints
75. Magamba Network
76. Milieudefensie (Friends of the Earth Netherlands)
77. Mission Possible
78. Mothers Rise Up
79. Natural Justice
80. Negrosanon Initiative for Climate and the Environment (NICE)
81. New Energy Nexus
82. NewClimate Institute
83. Nillumbik Climate Action Team
84. Observatório do Clima
85. Oil Change International
86. Organization For Community Engagement (OCE)
87. Our Kids' Climate
88. Oxfam
89. Peace Point Development Foundation -PPDF
90. Peoples Climate Assembly
91. Polen Transiciones Justas
92. Power Shift Africa
93. Quantum Leap
94. Quest For Growth and Development Foundation
95. Razom We Stand
96. Reclaim Finance
97. Recourse
98. REN21
99. Rencontre pour la Paix et les Droits de l'Homme (RPDH)
100. Renewables First
101. Réseau Action Climat France
102. Riders' Rights
103. SARCAN
104. Saskatchewan Coalition for Sustainable Development
105. Secure Energy Project
106. Seniors For Climate - Canada
107. Seniors for Climate Action Now!
108. Society for Planet and Prosperity
109. Solar Citizens
110. Solutions for Our Climate (SFOC)

111. SOMO - Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations
112. Stand.earth
113. Sustainable Economics and Finance Association (SEFiA)
114. Talanoa Institute
115. The Climate Reality Project
116. The Climate Reality Project Australia & Pacific
117. The Climate Reality Project Europe
118. TRAFFED RDC, Asbl
119. War on Want
120. WECF International
121. World Future Council
122. WWF International
123. Yarra Climate Action Now
124. ZERO - Associação Sistema Terrestre Sustentável