

In a moment of great peril, electrification is our salvation

By COP31 President-Designate

Violent ruptures in global markets forbode immense damage. The Gulf conflict has taken an extraordinary – and dangerous – amount of oil, gas and fertilizer off the market. And now a possible “super” El Nino may bring more extreme weather.¹ This year, the annual UN climate summit, COP31, will convene against the backdrop of hundreds of millions of people pushed deep into energy and food poverty and battling natural disasters. Their lived reality will be truly terrible.

This peril underlines the dangers of dependence on imported fossil fuels. 80% of the world lives in net-importing countries. We can now see that this leads to insecurity, rising prices and climate breakdown. And it reinforces the need for the clean energy transition.

This year, we must map that high-level vision onto day-to-day reality. We want to spark a global conversation on electrification. We want to address the real decisions that real people face: the family buying an electric car; the landlord installing solar panels, batteries, or heat pumps; the city authority investing in electric buses; the paper producer electrifying its heating process.

Overall, we are talking about the 45% of global direct emissions that come from buildings, transport and industry. Today, just over 20% of energy demand is met by electricity rather than direct fossil fuels. At COP31, under our Presidential Action Agenda, we want to build agreement on how we can all contribute to a new global target of 35% by 2035, and 50% by 2050.

Importantly, this target derives from data. It is based on the International Energy Agency’s and International Renewable Energy Agency’s assessments of the steps needed to limit global temperature rises to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, as set out in the Paris Agreement.² That overarching ambition is now a decade old. This new target is an important stepping stone.

But we can’t simply electrify daily life. We need to rapidly scale up renewable energy so electrified economies are powered by clean energy. We need expanded and resilient grids to manage the new load. And we need financial support for developing countries to enable action globally.

¹ [What is a ‘super El Niño’ and what might it mean for the global climate? | Environment | The Guardian](#)

² [Transitioning away from fossil fuels: A roadmap based on renewables, electrification and grid enhancement](#)

Previous COPs have set targets for these objectives. At COP28, everyone committed to triple renewable power capacity. At COP29 in Baku, 74 countries recognised the need to boost energy storage capacity six-fold, and add or refurbish 80 million kilometres of grids.³ In the same year, donors committed to mobilising at least \$300 billion annually by 2035 for developing countries.

All these targets matter. Together, they are the architecture for the transition. They send strong market signals, and rally global movements in a fractured world. For them to be meaningful, they must stretch us – even scare us. They should be ambitious, but achievable. Difficult, but doable.

Two things give us hope. First, the extraordinary collapse in costs of essential ingredients like batteries and solar panels. I would note that Türkiye has now provided more permits for batteries than any EU member.⁴

Second, historic moments can lead to historic movements. The 1973 oil crisis triggered unprecedented gains in energy efficiency. Today, another moment of reckoning is unleashing powerful market forces. At COP31 we are determined to harness them towards an historic acceleration in electrification.

There is no one-size-fits-all model. Each country will make a different contribution; each sector will have a different pathway. The challenges and opportunities in Africa vary to those in Europe. Electrifying transport will be different to industrial processes and buildings. No one can impose solutions on anyone else.

Electrifying daily life is how we shield families from spiralling energy prices. We will use the convening power of the COP presidency to focus minds, forge more alliances, and move into implementation mode. At COP31, in a moment of great peril, electrification is our salvation.

³ [COP29 Global Energy Storage and Grids Pledge](#)

⁴ [Turkey to race ahead of EU on battery storage amid fossil fuel crisis | Turkey | The Guardian](#)