

From Baku to Belém

Why COP30 Must Be Different

EP Desk



As Rio approached its hottest day in a decade, climate activists from around the globe gathered together in February to hammer out Climate Action Network's new five-year strategy and a roadmap toward COP30 in Belém this November. The packed room buzzed with anticipation as Brazil's COP30 presidency made their first official appearance, represented by newly appointed COP President, Ambassador Andr  Aranha Corr a do Lago, alongside Ana Toni, Executive Director of COP30, and Brazil's Lead Negotiator, Liliam Beatris Chagas de Moura.

Tasneem Essop, Executive Director of CAN International, warmly introduced Ambassador do Lago, who humorously broke the ice, referencing his towering height – at a full two meters, the tallest COP president ever.

Humour quickly opened into candid realism as Ambassador do Lago laid out the sobering context facing COP30: unprecedented geopolitical tensions and deepening global polarization. With passionate urgency, he emphasized that COP30 cannot afford to become just another diplomatic talking

shop – it must be genuinely transformative.

When seasoned diplomats like Ambassador do Lago openly call for a COP shakeup, it signals climate negotiations are at a crucial turning point. He said COP30 in Bel m cannot be business as usual – it has to be a really different COP. Not merely because it's a decade since Paris, but because diplomacy is struggling to keep pace with rapid global change. More and more countries, sectors, and corporations are stepping back from the fight against climate change despite the overwhelming evidence that it is affecting everyone's lives – even more so the poorest communities whose people are the least responsible for climate change. Never before has the gap between the reality and commitments been so huge.

Ambassador do Lago addressed the room directly: "This is why we are deeply concerned and counting on your efforts to ensure this COP delivers meaningful progress on the climate agenda." The audience needed no further prompting—their enthusiastic response clearly reflected a shared determination to make COP30 a pivotal moment in building a transforma-

tive multilateral process capable of meeting the climate emergency.

He warned that COP30 would indeed be an "uphill battle," but one we must confront head-on by making the event more than 'just a COP'. He articulated four pivotal pillars for his team's vision of COP30 which positions civil society as an essential driver of change:

Firstly, while the climate negotiations are the center of COPs, negotiators need to shift their focus decisively from meticulous wording to tangible implementation. He candidly stated, "The obsession should not be to get the sentence that sounds amazing and achieves little, but rather to agree something that translates into action.

Secondly, he highlighted the importance of the vibrant parallel events and action agenda at COP that engages the non-state actors (cities, businesses, NGOs etc) who will be present but not directly involved in negotiations. This action agenda must dynamically address the main themes as well as themes inadequately covered by the formal agenda – and this year will include forests, with Bel m's location at the mouth of the Amazon River serving to symbolically and practically posi-

tion biodiversity and indigenous rights at the forefront.

Thirdly, the Leaders' Meeting will be taking place in Belém ahead of COP30's opening, asserting bluntly that it must produce real impact if it is to justify the logistical complexity of the summit.

Finally, Ambassador do Lago passionately emphasized the importance of sustained global mobilization to put pressure on governments – to hold them accountable and ensure meaningful dialogue and progress. He underscored President Lula's commitment to civil society engagement as central for a real dialogue that will drive cohesive outcomes across negotiations, leadership summits, and action agendas.

Shifting gears away from COP but staying on the topic of climate finance, he highlighted Brazil's prominent dual leadership roles – first as last year's chair of the G20, the leading international forum for economic cooperation, and currently at the helm of BRICS, the influential platform driving political and economic collaboration among some key nations of the Global South. He explained Brazil's bold plan to transform a modest mandate of \$300 billion into a groundbreaking \$1.3 trillion.

Ambassador do Lago's vision was straightforward: No vague declarations or last-minute surprises in Belém. Instead, his hope was for a perceivable progressive evolution making each international meeting – from the IMF to the UN General Assembly – a stepping stone toward tangible results.

Closing with refreshing honesty, the COP30 president criticised those countries that have dangerously veered off track. This is why civil society shouldn't be merely an advisory voice but a necessary corrective force, essential for steering the



global community back towards climate action.

In short, diplomacy at COP is changing – gloves off, truth spoken. It's time to get serious – or reality will leave us no choice. Arguably, reality is already leaving us with little choice despite the rattling of populist ideologues.

Ana Toni, newly appointed Executive Director of COP30, followed Ambassador do Lago's remarks. Joining us virtually, she warmly greeted the room and highlighted her own longstanding roots in civil society activism. She celebrated a decade of climate action since Paris, noting significant progress yet emphasizing its insufficiency. "COP is no silver bullet," she stated, urging systemic, integrated actions that amplify rather than undermine each other.

Ana identified Adaptation and Just Transition as pivotal areas for COP30, especially in Brazil, where climate impacts are palpable. She stressed the critical role of national mobilisation around stronger NDCs, emphasizing their importance in establishing context and legitimacy for the negotiations.

COP30 Ambassador Do Lago, Liliam Beatris Chagas de Moura – (Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Ana

Toni (Executive Director of COP) – (virtual participation), Tasneem Essop CAN Executive Director

To close, we heard from Liliam Beatris Chagas de Moura, Brazil's Lead Negotiator, who detailed the ambitious scope of COP30, with mandates to finalize at least 16 decisions across critical areas including Adaptation, Just Transition, Global Stocktake, Transparency, and Gender.

Liliam underscored Brazil's unique advantage in having Ambassador do Lago – a former negotiator – as COP president, a significant asset in navigating these complexities. In closing, she candidly addressed the ongoing challenges, but her message was clear and determined: "Let's make negotiations positive and productive. No more surprises, no more marathon sessions – just real negotiations."

Together, this triumvirate presented COP30 as a critical junction for decisive global climate action – a collective moment demanding clarity, urgency, and genuine commitment. Civil society, negotiators, and leaders must now rise to meet this unprecedented challenge, because if diplomacy does not get serious, reality inevitably will.

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Courtesy: Climate Action Network