COP30 in Belém was framed as a moment of truth and implementation, held ten years after the Paris Agreement and intentionally set in the Amazon to centre Indigenous Peoples and the world's largest rainforest. The setting itself demonstrated what is at stake: delegates experienced torrential rains, flooding and extreme heat, a small glimpse of the disruptions already reshaping life in the Pará state and in many other places of the world.

Despite global geopolitical tensions, countries reached an agreement. It was a reminder that multilateral cooperation among 194 nations remains possible even in a fractured world. And at this COP, there were moments of genuine progress built on hard work of feminist advocacy that deserve recognition.

Secretary-General António Guterres meets with representatives of civil society organisations Photo: © UN Climate Change – Kiara Worth

The two big wins: The Belém GAP and BAM!

Advances in Gender Equality

The adoption of the Belém Gender Action Plan marked one of the most significant achievements of the conference. Secured through years of sustained advocacy by the Women and Gender Constituency and its Gender Working Group that LIFE is part of, alongside key country and institutional allies, the Belém GAP will guide gender-responsive climate action for the next decade. It recognises structurally excluded communities, calls for protections for women environmental defenders and addresses care work, health and gender-based violence. With special importance for the Latin American and Caribbean context, it also refers to Afro-descendant women. Gender and age-disaggregated data appear throughout the framework, and the GAP also strengthens coherence across the Rio Convention, the IPCC and wider bodies and the UNFCCC. Additionally, in the context of data integrity and truth, it also plans to address misinformation and disinformation and promotes media literacy on gender and climate matters. Gender mainstreaming into other topics will be supported by capacity-building of constituted body members on the importance of gender responsive climate action.

Problematic, however, is the removal of explicit human rights language and the absence of clear indicators to guide implementation. There is no direct finance for gender-responsive climate action and chronic underfunding across the Convention further threatens the Plan's effectiveness. Another significant setback is the lack of gender-inclusive language, with the text referring only to "all women" and the intersectional aspect is diluted to "multidimensional factors" across activities, which is a missed opportunity to explicitly recognize gender-diverse people. In addition, language on HR was lost despite being part of the draft text. In the initial text we had six footnotes by Malaysia, Indonesia, Iran, the Holy See, Argentina, and Paraguay with specific language on a binary understanding of gender; thankfully, these footnotes did not make it into the final text. Several governments, including Russia, Argentina, Paraguay, and the Holy See (which we think should have an obligation to provide finance and undergo a gender training instead of undermining human rights), pushed strongly for this narrow framing and continued to insist on a binary definition of sex, even during the closing plenary. In summary, the Belém GAP highlights not only the losses faced, but also the significant achievements of the Gender Working Group of the WGC. Within the text we secured important safeguards for frontline communities whose climate action has long been overlooked. The primary objective of the Working Group now is to ensure that these commitments are fully implemented.

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A Mandate for a Just Transition

Another important outcome was the decision to mandate to establish a Just Transition Mechanism. This follows years of work by feminists, trade unions, youth, Indigenous People and environmental justice organisations, who have been advocating for a mechanism, calling it the BAM (Belem Action Mechanism). After years of talks, the Just Transition Work Programme needed a mechanism to move from talking to actual implementation and make sure that transitions are equitable, participatory, and grounded in dignity and justice.

Feminists in the Women and Gender Constituency have been central to securing this mandate. Our advocacy has emphasized that just transitions must confront inequality, protect human rights, recognize care work and the realities of informal and precarious work. A win, the Just Transition Work Programme also includes principles such as social dialogue and Free, Prior and Informed Consent; and it mentions care work, informal labour and Afro-descendant communities, which were for the first time explicitly referenced in a COP decision.

Although the mechanism lacks dedicated finance and does not yet address deeper structural issues such as debt and extractivism, it provides an opening for a governance model shaped by those most affected. Its design in the coming years will determine whether it delivers real, people-centred solutions.

Visibility for LGBTQI+ Communities

The intersectional queer working group of the WGC, which LIFE is part of, hosted the first press conference on LGBTQI+ and climate justice in the history of UNFCCC at COP30. This signals a growing awareness of how climate impacts intersect with discrimination, displacement and social exclusion, but also of the important roles that LGBTQIQ+ frontline activists play. The webcast of the press conference with Elena Georgiadi speaking on behalf of LIFE can be accessed here: https://unfccc.int/event/out-for-sustainability-queer-intersections-for-climate-justice-demands-and-progress-for-cop-30

Persistent Injustices and Failures

Even as Belém was framed as an Indigenous COP, Indigenous Peoples continued to face exclusion of the process. Militarised responses to their protest stood in stark contrast to the ongoing violence faced by land and environmental defenders. The murders of Antônia Ferreira dos Santos and Marly Viana Barroso in Pará, babaçu nut breakers and members of the Interstate Movement of Babaçu Nut Breakers (MIQCB), days before the summit were a devastating reminder of the risks land defenders and especially women environmental defenders are facing every day.

Fossil fuel interests also cast a long shadow over the negotiations. The final decision avoided any mention of transitioning away from fossil fuels despite broad support among many nations. Attempts to enshrine a commitment to phase out fossil fuels or reverse deforestation were shifted outside the formal UN process into voluntary roadmaps.

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Finance remained one of the most contentious and disappointing areas. While adaptation finance was tripled as part of the new collective quantified goal (NCQG) , the target of roughly 120 billion dollars annually was delayed until 2035 while the promise remains vague and intransparent. The compromise reached in the Mutirão decision also lacks a clear commitment to developed countries providing public, grant-based, non-debt-creating adaptation finance, but is instead linked to broader mobilization efforts under the NCQG. Efforts to operationalise Paris Agreement finance provisions were accepted only with limitations that prevent any strengthening of last year's decision. The gap between pledged emissions cuts and those required to limit overshoot of 1.5°C persists, with only a weak accelerator programme established.

Instead of taking responsibility for providing public climate finance and responding to the debt crisis, developed countries such as the EU are planning to rely on market-based cooperative mechanisms in their new climate goals, including off-setting, instead of reducing their own emissions. In the context of the negotiations this is problematic: different countries continue to challenge the frameworks of Article 6 market mechanisms that were agreed to last year in Baku, which means lowering the already insufficient standards. These rules were meant to provide highly integral markets and projects that plan to generate carbon credits under the Paris Agreement. This threatens the credibility of emission certificates to actually represent real, long-term emission reductions that would not appear without these mechanisms. Off-setting

generally contradicts the principle that states must first do all that is possible in their own national context to reduce emissions to a 1,5 degrees-C-pathway. This ambition is not reflected in the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) that were delivered this year and lack so much ambition that we are currently sliding on a 2.3-2.5 °C road, if these plans are even put into practice. Therefore, feminists continue to advocate that firstly, climate finance accounting must not include revenues from market mechanisms, and secondly, that standards for market mechanisms must not be weakened as this puts human rights, gender equality and real emission-cuts at risk.

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People power in Belém

Beyond the negotiation halls, Belém opened itself warmly to civil society. The People's Summit (Cúpula dos Povos) at the Federal University of Pará brought together thousands of activists, Brazilian organisations, Indigenous leaders and international movements. Their discussions culminated in a shared political declaration delivered directly to Minister Marina Silva and the COP Presidency.

In a powerful moment of collective mobilisation, more than 70,000 people marched for climate justice through the streets of Belém - a vibrant, energised 4.5 km walk under a strong 35 °C sun. Organised by the People's Summit, it was the first march outside the official COP venue in years, signalling renewed momentum for global climate action. We were there with RLS and the WGC, advocating for gender and climate justice alongside movements from across Brazil and the world.

The hospitality and solidarity of the people in Belém created space for new alliances, new friendships and renewed determination to continue the fight for climate justice and gender justice.

Read also the statement of the Women and Gender Constituency:

https://womengenderclimate.org/resources/cop30-outcome-statement-feminist-power-delivered-but-the-process-failed-to-meet-the-moment/

And of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation:

https://www.rosalux.de/en/news/id/54088/cop30-belem-delivered-rich-nations-did-not