

ACTION FOR CLIMATE EMPOWERMENT (ACE) AT SB64

Dialogue, Technical Workshop, and Negotiations

Reviewing the Glasgow Work Programme
and the Road to a Successor ACE
Action Plan Ahead of COP31



BONN,
GERMANY



THE ROAD TO COP31



Bonn Climate Change
Conference (SB64)



Bonn, Germany



June 2026

THE SIX ELEMENTS OF ACTION FOR CLIMATE EMPOWERMENT (ACE)



EDUCATION



TRAINING



PUBLIC
AWARENESS



PUBLIC
PARTICIPATION



PUBLIC ACCESS
TO INFORMATION



INTERNATIONAL
COOPERATION



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ACE at the SB64

Dialogue, Technical Workshop, and Negotiations

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About the Action For Climate Empowerment - SB64 (UNFCCC)

Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) is the UNFCCC workstream covering climate change education, training, public awareness, public participation, public access to information, and international cooperation, six elements set out in Article 6 of the Convention and Article 12 of the Paris Agreement. Guided since 2022 by the Glasgow Work Programme on ACE and its five-year action plan, ACE is the process through which Parties and stakeholders build the public understanding, skills, and participation needed to actually deliver on climate commitments, rather than negotiate them in isolation. With the current action plan's term ending in 2026, SB64 carries particular weight: a midterm review now in progress is expected to shape whether, and how, a successor action plan is mandated ahead of COP31.

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Executive Summary

The sixty-fourth sessions of the **Subsidiary Bodies (SB64)** marked a significant moment for **Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE)** under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). As the current Glasgow Work Programme and its associated Action Plan approach the end of their mandate in 2026, discussions in Bonn focused on shaping a successor framework capable of strengthening climate education, training, public awareness, public participation, public access to information, and international cooperation.

Across the **ACE Dialogue**, Technical Workshops, and negotiation processes, participants demonstrated broad agreement on the importance of ACE as a cross-cutting enabler of climate action. Stakeholders repeatedly emphasized the need for stronger policy coherence, improved coordination among institutions, more robust monitoring and evaluation systems, and deeper integration of ACE into national climate strategies and implementation processes. Particular attention was given to enhancing the meaningful participation of youth, children, Indigenous Peoples, women, and other underrepresented groups, while addressing persistent barriers to accessibility and inclusion.

The Technical Workshops revealed strong support for practical implementation mechanisms, particularly the establishment and strengthening of regional and local ACE networks. Participants identified these networks as critical platforms for peer learning, capacity-building, and knowledge exchange among national focal points and stakeholders. Similarly, improved monitoring, evaluation, and reporting systems emerged as a priority area, reflecting a growing recognition that measuring impact, rather than activity alone, will be essential to the effectiveness of any future ACE framework.

Despite substantial convergence on priorities and implementation approaches, finance remained the principal unresolved issue throughout SB64.

Discussions consistently highlighted that many ACE activities continue to face significant funding constraints, limiting their scale, sustainability, and accessibility. While stakeholders broadly agreed on the need for greater investment in ACE implementation, negotiations provided limited clarity on the financial mechanisms through which future activities will be supported. The absence of dedicated financing pathways, combined with the limited compatibility of existing climate finance instruments with education, participation, and awareness-building initiatives, remains a major structural barrier to implementation.

ClimateWatch's assessment of **SB64** finds that the challenge facing ACE is no longer one of recognition or political legitimacy. The value of climate education, public participation, and capacity-building is widely acknowledged across Parties and observer constituencies. Instead, the central question facing negotiators is how these **priorities will be financed**, institutionalized, and measured within the successor action plan. Without clear financial commitments, implementation mechanisms, and accountability frameworks, many of the ambitions articulated during SB64 risk remaining aspirational.

Looking ahead to COP31, the development of a successor ACE Action Plan presents an opportunity to move beyond broad commitments toward operational delivery. To achieve this, Parties should prioritize the identification of concrete financing pathways, resource regional ACE networks as implementation mechanisms, strengthen monitoring and reporting systems, mainstream youth and children's participation across all ACE elements, and establish transparent mechanisms for tracking financial support. The extent to which these issues are addressed in the emerging draft text will determine whether the next phase of ACE can translate growing political consensus into measurable climate action and societal transformation.

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Over the two weeks of SB64, Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) moved through five distinct moments: a civil society press briefing setting expectations, a stakeholder dialogue reviewing the Glasgow Work Programme, two Technical Workshop sessions moving from visioning to drafting, and a negotiation-track update on the politics of securing funding. This combined report follows that arc in sequence.

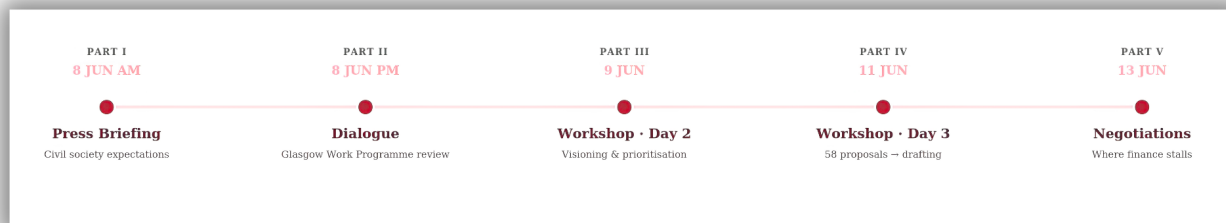


Figure 1. The ACE arc of SB64, 8–13 June 2026 - from press briefing to negotiations

Part I - The Press Briefing: Setting Expectations

8 JUNE 2026 · INTERNATIONAL PRESS BRIEFING, MORNING

Ahead of that afternoon's ACE Dialogue, a civil society press briefing moderated by Satish set out expectations for SB64, framing ACE not as a soft add-on to mitigation and adaptation but as what Satish called the connective tissue holding the climate regime together - set against what she termed a wider “epistemic crisis” over who controls climate information.

Satish grounded ACE in Article 6 of the UNFCCC and Article 12 of the Paris Agreement, and its six cross-cutting elements: education, training, public awareness, public access to information, public participation, and international cooperation.

Culture as the Missing Pillar

Samuel Rubin argued culture is a necessary, cross-cutting enabler for all six ACE pillars, pointing to a position paper submitted for SB64 and a “Culture Global Stocktake” initiative now in its second draft. His ask: that ACE focal points be encouraged to engage cultural ministries and authorities directly, since focal points are often under-supported, and the cultural sector can bring useful resources.

Youth: Tokenism Despite Training

Silvana Condesa (Care About Climate) described training young people in the diplomatic language of UNFCCC spaces so it doesn't itself become a barrier to

participation - yet cited a statistic that 94% of young people feel under-supported, with participation often tokenistic. Her ask was continued funding and guaranteed places in the ACE Youth Hub.

Children: Mainstreaming, Not Mentions

Sahar noted that children are mentioned only four times in the current action plan, informing a joint cross-constituency submission on meaningful inclusion. Her central recommendation: mainstream children and young people across all ACE agenda items, rather than confining them to specific decisions or the midterm review - mirroring how child and youth language has already entered the NDC midterm review text.

She named ACE Finance directly as deserving more attention, since it determines whether education, training, and access to information actually reach communities and children at the local level.

Closing Demands

Satish closed by calling ACE “the people's agenda” and set out demands spanning a guaranteed mandate for a new action plan, intersectional links to NDCs and finance, stronger ties to the Just Transition Work Programme and the Gender Action Plan, a proposed Global Climate Assembly targeting launch by COP31, and - recurring across nearly every demand - dedicated, direct, and adequate finance across all six ACE elements, with simplified access for grassroots, Indigenous-led, youth-led, and Afro-descendant organisations.

Liberia's ACE Focal Point, Teddy Taylor, welcomed the culture focus and cited Liberia's inclusion of children and

youth in its NDC 3.0 as a global model, offering to work with the panel ahead of negotiations.

ClimateWatch Analysis: The Demand List Outpaces the Track's Authority

The closing demands set out on 8 June are comprehensive almost to a fault: a dozen asks spanning finance, governance, gender, culture, and a proposed Global Climate Assembly. Few are individually objectionable; collectively, they exceed what an ACE midterm review, a technical process feeding into a possible future mandate, can plausibly deliver. The risk is not that the demands are wrong, but that bundling a governance innovation (the Global Climate Assembly) with operational asks (direct finance access, focal point capacity) dilutes the latter, which are achievable within SB64's actual mandate. ClimateWatch's own experience convening Climate Betaak suggests the more durable wins come from narrow, resourced asks tied to a specific mechanism, not omnibus demand lists addressed to a process that cannot act on most of them at once.

Part II - The Dialogue: Reviewing the Glasgow Work Programme

8 JUNE 2026 · ACE DIALOGUE, AFTERNOON SESSION

This session reviewed the Glasgow Work Programme on ACE across its four priority areas, Policy Coherence, Tools and Support, Coordinated Action, and Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting (MER), ahead of the Technical Workshop beginning the next day.

Policy Coherence

Facilitators Medina and Henry reported broad agreement that ACE offers a valuable whole-of-society approach, with growing recognition of the roles of children and youth. Persistent challenges included weak inter-ministerial coordination, civil society engagement skewed toward youth at the expense of indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities, and the absence of a global exchange platform for focal points.

The group called for needs-based approaches, fuller use of existing UNFCCC structures, and anchoring ACE as a rights-based agenda tied to its six elements: education,

training, public awareness, public participation, access to information, and international cooperation.

Tools and Support

Facilitators Andrea and Bailey found in-person engagement - particularly the ACE Academy - more impactful than webinars. Gaps included insufficient inclusion of intersectional groups, conflation of "youth" with "children," limited digital accessibility across languages, and financial constraints on participation.

Coordinated Action

Facilitator Joanna (UNICEF), with Kenneth and Veronica, highlighted strong peer-to-peer learning among focal points and growing integration of ACE into national communications and BTRs. Liberia and Morocco (via NDC 3.0) were cited as examples of improved inter-ministerial coordination.

Gaps included thin technical and financial resourcing, weak linkages to other tracks, such as the Global Goal on Adaptation and loss and damage, and underreporting of ACE-relevant activities that were not formally labelled as such.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting

Facilitator Kathleen Brennan (UNESCO) noted the Annual Synthesis Report on ACE as a key tool, with emphasis shifting from activity counts toward genuine impact assessment. Needs identified included indicators adaptable to local contexts, gender-disaggregated data, and clearer quality definitions for each pillar.

Online Discussion Group

A parallel online group echoed similar themes: ACE is still often reduced to awareness-raising rather than treated as cross-cutting; inconsistent engagement tied to project cycles; and MER described as potentially the weakest of the four priority areas in terms of assessing real outcomes.

Lessons from the Gender Action Plan

Claire Newman (ACE Unit) stressed sequencing deliverables deliberately and distinguishing ongoing activities from specific, measurable deliverables. Carol added that ambition must be matched by implementability, with a focus on value over volume and the importance of informal dialogue in building trust before negotiating language.

ClimateWatch Analysis

- Convergence on Diagnosis, Silence on Remedy

The four priority-area reviews converged tightly on the same diagnosis: weak inter-ministerial coordination, thin technical and financial resourcing, and underreporting of activities not formally labelled "ACE." What's notable is that none of the facilitator reports proposed a financing remedy; coordination and reporting gaps were treated as fixable through better process, not better-funded process. This matters for the successor action plan: if Phase 2 of the Dialogue inherits this framing, the new action plan risks repeating the current one's central weakness, comprehensive on what ACE should look like, silent on what it would cost to run it.

Part III - The Technical Workshop: Designing What Comes Next

9 JUNE 2026 · TECHNICAL WORKSHOP, DAY TWO

Convened under **SBI** Chair guidance per COP30 decisions, Day Two combined a lightning talk, a visioning exercise, and prioritisation of existing activities under the current ACE action plan, facilitated by Lucy Shea (CEO, Futerra).

Centring People in Implementation

A Maldivian climate leader and [REScoop.eu](https://rescoop.eu) board director opened the day, arguing that ACE implementation is social and political as much as technical. She noted people's relationship to climate concerns is shaped by daily circumstances -

communities facing food insecurity may not frame their concerns as "climate" even where their work addresses climate vulnerability.

She cited [REScoop.eu](https://rescoop.eu), a federation of cooperative energy communities representing over two million people across Europe - as an example of community-driven finance and engagement operating outside formal international structures, and asked what comparable action is currently going unseen by the international process.

Visioning 2031

Dr. Andrea Ramirez Angelo (UNU-EHS) led a 45-minute exercise imagining a fully implemented ACE action plan by 2031. Participants wrote "impact stories," identified who deserved credit for that success, and built a milestone timeline across 2026-27, 2028-29, and 2030-31, voting on the most significant points.

Prioritising Existing Activities

Four voting stations corresponded to the Glasgow Work Programme's priority areas. Party delegates voted with blue dots, observers with yellow, four dots per person. Top results below - see Figure 2 for the comparative margins.

- Policy Coherence - Activity A2: integrating ACE into national climate policy
- Tools and Support - C3 (43 votes): multilateral action by focal points and stakeholders; C2 (37 votes): youth and inclusive participation
- Coordinated Action - B2 (57.5 votes): regional/local ACE networks, clearly preferred over B1 (21.5 votes)
- MER - D1 (50 votes): strengthening monitoring and reporting; D2 (27 votes): defining evaluation quality

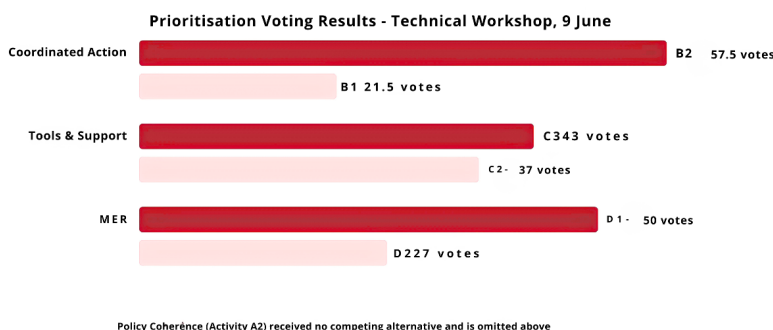


Figure 2. Vote margins by priority area, Technical Workshop prioritisation exercise, 9 June

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A World Café format followed, with breakout discussions on whether each activity's purpose, description, and implementation pathway needed revision.

ClimateWatch Analysis

- A Vote for Networks, Not Mandates

The clearest signal from the prioritisation exercise is the scale of preference for Activity B2 (57.5 votes), regional and local ACE networks, over every competing option. Read alongside ClimateWatch's own work coordinating the South Asian Coalition on the Cryosphere, this is a credible direction: regional networks are where chronically under-resourced national focal points actually get peer support and shared capacity, rather than waiting on Secretariat-level guidance. The risk is that "networks" become the easy, low-cost answer. Parties can agree on precisely because it doesn't require a financial commitment, a coordination fix standing in for a resourcing fix.

Part IV - The Workshop Continues: From Proposals to Drafting

11 JUNE 2026 · TECHNICAL WORKSHOP, DAY THREE

Day three shifted the Technical Workshop from reflection to drafting. Moderated by Lucy Shea (Futerra), the session organised 58 delegate-submitted proposals into eight thematic groupings using an Open Space Technology format, split across four morning and four afternoon sessions - see Figure 3 for how that narrowing unfolded.

Open Space Technology

Shea introduced four guiding principles: whoever comes are the right person; whenever it starts is the right time; whatever happens is the only thing that could have happened; when it's over, it's over, and the "law of two feet," letting participants move freely between groups. "Bumblebees" carried ideas between conversations; "butterflies" observed and reflected.

Morning Groupings

Round 1 covered capacity building for MER (a Saudi Arabia proposal on monitoring and evaluation skills), coherence within the UNFCCC (UAE's proposal linking ACE to climate literacy and green jobs), communications and raising ACE's profile (the largest grouping, spanning a soft-power approach, an ACE visual campaign, gender-tracker capacity building, and Kenya's proposed "ACE Games" awards programme), and multi-level coordination (training proposals from SOS Children's Villages and on civil society entrepreneurship skills).

Round 2 covered an MER framework (proposals from Shamila and Panama on identifying element experts), coherence with the wider UN system (formal linkages to other conventions; a human rights-based approach to ACE), participation and inclusion (a proposed global forum on climate participation; Japan's proposal on ageing-society preparedness; a national consultative platform proposed by Kiran; child-participation guidance proposed by Sari), and the future of the ACE Dialogue and Presidency event (health benefits in the ACE agenda; teacher education; cultural-sector inclusion).

A set of cross-cutting proposals - climate-resilient education systems, higher education's role in ACE, a high-level event on education for climate resilience, qualitative/storytelling-based MER, and private-sector corporate social responsibility - were earmarked for bumblebees and butterflies rather than a single dedicated group.

Drafting Exercise

Each group worked from an empty action plan template to identify at least one new activity and deliverable, with named responsibility for implementation - framed explicitly as shaping implementable ideas, not negotiating final text. Shea's closing guidance: define the problem first, then the activity, and only then the specific deliverables beneath it.

The afternoon was set to cover MER indicators, institutional arrangements, public awareness (including disinformation), and finance, with participants later voting on three groupings to carry forward for extended discussion.

ClimateWatch Analysis

- 58 Proposals, One Missing Theme

Of the eight thematic groupings to emerge from 58

submitted proposals, finance was not one of the morning's four; it was held for the afternoon, alongside MER indicators, institutional arrangements, and public awareness. That sequencing choice, treating finance as one parallel track among several rather than the precondition of the press briefing and later negotiations, both of which named it as, is itself a signal of where the Technical Workshop's design placed its weight. A process built to generate 58 implementable ideas produced exactly that; it was not built to test whether any of them are fundable, and on the evidence of Part V, largely didn't.

Part V - The Negotiations: Where Finance Stalls

13 JUNE 2026 · GYDI BRIEFING ON ACE NEGOTIATIONS

By the close of week one, discussion had shifted from workshop design to the politics of the negotiating text itself - and finance remained the unresolved core.

From Recognition to Action

Manjiri Sonone (GYDI / ECOS) framed the live question as no longer whether ACE matters, but how to make it work in practice. Discussions across groups converged on coordination, clear responsibilities, and resourcing - with finance, in her words, not a separate item but the thread connecting everything else.

The Political Will Gap

Timothy Damon (GYDI; ACE negotiator for Ghana) argued that the binding constraint is not ideas but political will to fund and resource them. He reported that the first informal consultation had mandated co-facilitators and the Secretariat to prepare a draft negotiating text - released after midnight, but that finance discussions had again been deferred.

He noted that finance has been flagged as the missing piece since the Doha and New Delhi work programmes a decade ago, with recommendations accumulating but implementation lagging.

Finance as the Missing Link

Hussein Kassim (AGN ACE focal point) traced this back to a 2016 national strategy that scoped down from all six ACE elements to climate education alone due to

capacity constraints, and reported no GCF or adaptation-fund financing received since.

Asked about COP31 prospects, Kassim said momentum depends on whether finance provisions are locked into the draft action plan at SB64, since arriving at COP with existing text beats introducing new elements cold. He noted EU members, Japan, and Norway have raised budgetary questions, compounded by a wider UNFCCC funding squeeze - including the absence of the US's 21% share of core funding.

On civil society collaboration, Kassim pointed to a national coordination platform but acknowledged that funding limits constrain consistent engagement. On finance mechanisms, the stated goal is improved access to existing funds (GCF, GEF, Adaptation Fund) rather than new structures, prioritising grassroots, youth, women's, and Indigenous Peoples' organisations.

Asked why ACE requires re-negotiation at every session despite prior agreement, Kassim pointed to a deliberate design choice favouring country-driven flexibility, which preserves national adaptability but produces uneven implementation, an unresolved tension between flexibility and accountability.

ClimateWatch Analysis

- Structural Friction, Not Just Political Stalling

Kassim's account of a 2016 national ACE strategy scoped down to education alone, with no GCF or Adaptation Fund financing received since, is consistent with how both funds are actually structured: GCF's investment framework scores projects on mitigation-tonnage and adaptation-vulnerability metrics and requires co-financing ratios, with no comparable results category for education, public awareness, or participation outcomes. That is a structural mismatch, not only a political one; ACE-type activities are a poor fit for funds built to measure tonnes and resilience, regardless of how favourably any Board views them. It is also worth noting that ACE's negotiating track at SB64 produced none of the visible deadlock that defined the session elsewhere: the Global Goal on Adaptation talks collapsed outright when the Africa Group rejected draft text over developed countries' refusal to lock in the tripled adaptation finance promised at COP30, sending that track back to start at COP31. ACE saw no equivalent confrontation, not, on the evidence here, because

finance was resolved, but because the format never forced the question to a head. A track that avoids deadlock by avoiding the hard question is not

evidence of alignment; it may be evidence that the hard question hasn't been asked yet.

From Proposals to Drafting → 11 June Open Space Technology



Figure 3. Proposal narrowing during the 11 June Open Space Technology session

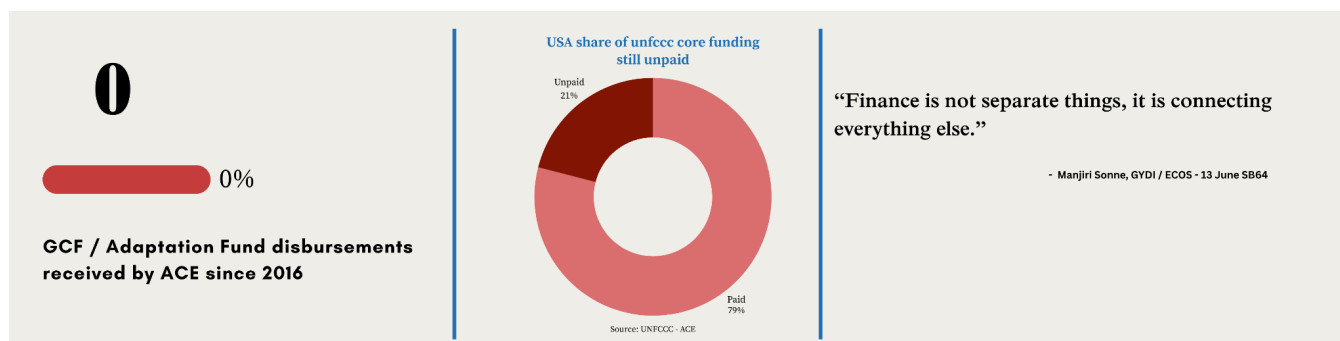


Figure 4. The finance gap, by the numbers

ClimateWatch Recommendations

- I. **Name a finance vehicle, not just a finance gap.** The successor action plan should specify which existing fund or mechanism (GCF readiness windows, the Adaptation Fund's small-grants modality, or a dedicated allocation within the Loss and Damage Fund's capacity-building strand) is expected to carry ACE-specific

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- resourcing, rather than repeating the current plan's pattern of naming finance as a need without naming a payer.
- II. **Require GCF and Adaptation Fund** results frameworks to score education, participation, and access-to-information outcomes, not only mitigation-tonnage and adaptation-vulnerability metrics, the **absence of which is a structural, not only political**, barrier to ACE projects clearing investment committees.
 - III. **Resource regional ACE networks** as a financed line item, not a coordination exercise. Activity B2's decisive vote margin should translate into a specific budget allocation, not only a mandate. **ClimateWatch's** experience coordinating the **South Asian Coalition on climate change and Glacier Schools** indicates that regional networks fail without dedicated, multi-year funding for secretariat functions, not one-off workshop grants.
 - IV. **Mainstream children and youth across all ACE agenda** items in the action plan's operative text, following Sahar's recommendation, with the same drafting approach already used in **NDC** midterm review language, not as a standalone youth section that can be cut without amending the rest of the document.
 - V. **Build a public ACE finance tracker** into the new action plan's MER framework, reporting GCF, Adaptation Fund, and bilateral disbursements against ACE's six elements annually, so that claims like Kassim's, credible but currently anecdotal, become independently verifiable rather than resting on one focal point's recollection at one side event.
 - VI. Improve **access to financial resources** and support mechanisms to enable implementation of ACE activities at national, regional, and local levels, keeping inclusivity in the modalities.

Key Outlook for COP31

Across all **five moments**, one thread holds: the substance of **ACE**, **education**, **participation**, and **capacity-building** is no longer contested. What **SB64** avoided contesting just as consistently is *who pays for it*. That avoidance was easier inside ACE than elsewhere in Bonn: the Global Goal on Adaptation talks broke down in the open, over the same underlying finance question, while ACE's technical workshops produced 58 proposals and a clear activity ranking without ever forcing a **comparable reckoning**. Whether that reflects a track genuinely closer to resolution, or one that simply hasn't reached its point of friction yet, will be tested the moment the **successor action plan's draft** text assigns, or fails to assign, a named source of money to any of the activities prioritised this week. **ClimateWatch** will be tracking that text as it **develops toward COP31**, and intends to submit input to the midterm review consultation directly, drawing on the **Glacier School** and **SACCC** experience of what under-resourced implementation looks like once the negotiating room has closed.

THE END

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