

# Was the Bonn climate talk promising for the upcoming COP30?



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This year's June Climate Meetings (SB62), also known as the Bonn Climate Change Conference, under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), concluded on June 26 in Bonn, Germany. The mission of these annual mid-year meetings is to draft decision texts on the agenda items for final approval at the upcoming Conference of the Parties 30 (COP30), to be held in November in Belém, Brazil. Overall, the agenda comprised approximately 50 items and 30 mandatory events.

However, actual negotiations were delayed due to disagreements over the addition of two new agenda items proposed by the powerful Like-Minded Developing Countries (LMDCs) and the Arab Group, consisting of China, India, South Africa, Bolivia, and Saudi Arabia. The first proposal focused on Article 9.1 of the Paris Agreement (PA), which addresses the obligation of developed countries to provide public climate finance to developing nations. This was a point of contention, as developing countries argue it is a legal obligation that has not been adequately met. The second agenda item proposed was on trade measures, such as the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), that the EU is considering imposing on developing country exports. Finally, a compromise was struck whereby those items were not agreed upon but were reflected in discussions.

This time, the agendas of the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) and Just Transition were prominent. The earlier debate over indicators of the GGA, particularly of "Means of Implementation", such as climate finance, capacity-building, and technology, continued because developed countries reject indicators that can measure their support levels. Finally, a compromised text was adopted: "indicators for means of implementation and other



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factors that enable the implementation of adaptation action are to be included..."

As always, finance negotiations across agendas continued to be the most intractable, this time under new geopolitical scenarios—new wars, the US withdrawal from the PA, and climate and other aid cuts by the US and major European countries. Relying on the private sector to fund climate adaptation, a

strategy promoted by developed nations, is not working. The evidence is stark: private investment has accounted for just two percent of adaptation funding, making this approach especially unsuited to an era of declining global cooperation. Against this poor record, LDCs continued demanding a tripling of adaptation finance by 2030.

Among mandated workshops, the most important was the discussion on Article 2.1(c)

of the PA, which is about aligning finance flows to ensure low-carbon and climate-resilient development. However, even during this third workshop on the issue, there was not much discussion on how to operationalise this goal. There were deliberations on capacity-building for national financial regulators and the private sector. The crux of this issue is how to complement this goal with Article 9 of the PA.

for maintaining or restoring forests.

Now that all rules of the PA are operational, implementation is the focus. The COP30 presidency elaborated on this in its fourth letter, shared on June 20, with a detailed "action agenda". It consists of six themes and 30 key suggested activities, which will be deliberated in Belém. To realise this priority, there is a need for reform of multilateral institutions, including the COP, as recognised by the presidency. But this is likely to be a tall order, at least for the foreseeable future.

Despite all these odds, as an organising principle, the presidency letters explicate the Brazilian indigenous culture-based concept of "mutirão", which means a community coming together to work on a shared task. So the COP30 presidency invites the climate community to a global mutirão against the polycrisis. Some of the excellent ideas contained in those letters are: systemic, non-linear thinking for structural adjustments; forward-looking approaches to solve collective action problems like climate change; and aligning ancestral wisdom with the latest science and social technology.

In fact, in doing rigorous homework, Brazil has taken elaborate organisational initiatives, such as the nomination of 30 prominent international and national envoys, who will work with the leadership. The selected envoys and champions, including former national leaders, veteran lead negotiators and youth celebrities, were chosen for their influence, experience, and credibility among their peers. Besides, the host established four very high-level leadership circles: the Circle of Finance Ministers, the Circle of Peoples, the Circle of Ethics and Stocktake, and the Circle of COP Presidents. The latter two are led by the UN secretary-general and the COP21 president, who led the crafting of the PA.

With all this due diligence, the Brazilian presidency wants to avoid what it calls the continued "brutality of inaction" in the COP process. As an academic negotiator for over 20 years, I have dubbed climate negotiations a process of "active inaction" in my first book on adaptation politics in 2014. Let us hope that COP30, under the able leadership of Brazil, with its stated lofty norms and values guided by the global mutirão, can change the course of negotiations—at least a little.

# How Mamdani toppled a titan and redefined American politics

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In a political landscape engineered to favour dynasties, deep pockets, and establishment darlings, Zohran Mamdani's 2025 New York City Democratic mayoral primary victory was a seismic upset. The 33-year-old state assemblyman from Queens—a democratic socialist, practising Muslim, and vocal critic of Israel's policies—defeated Andrew Cuomo, a former governor with millions in donations and a once dominant name. Mamdani's win wasn't just an upset; it was a masterclass in defying a system designed to sideline outsiders like him. Analysts called it the biggest electoral shock since David Dinkins' 1989 victory, a triumph of trust over cash, authenticity over clout. Without an Ivy League degree, political legacy, or billionaire backers, Mamdani's rise offers a blueprint for challenging the status quo.

Mamdani's path to victory began long before his mayoral run, rooted in relentless grassroots activism. As a foreclosure prevention counsellor in 2016, he helped Queens and Brooklyn families fight predatory landlords during the post-recession housing crisis. Elected to the New York State Assembly in 2020 for District 36, he championed the rent stabilisation system, protecting 2.5 million tenants, and co-sponsored the Good Cause Eviction law to shield renters from soaring costs. His 2022 push to cancel rent during Covid, backed by 10,000 petition signatures, made him a hero in places like Jackson Heights, where 60 percent of

loyal following of 500,000 across Instagram and TikTok by 2024. "Zohran was fighting for us when no one else was," a Bangladeshi organiser told *The Juggernaut*. This trust, forged through years of unglamorous work, made Mamdani a household name among NYC's working class, setting the stage for his 2025 upset.

Mamdani's path was fraught with obstacles. As a Muslim of Indian-Ugandan descent, his identity invited scrutiny. His support for Palestinian rights, calling Israel's actions in Gaza a "genocide" and endorsing the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement, drew accusations of antisemitism, which he refuted. His refusal to condemn "globalise the intifada," decried by some Jewish leaders as a call to violence, also fueled controversy, drawing rebukes from institutions like the US Holocaust Memorial Museum. Mamdani faced Islamophobic attacks, including from a pro-Cuomo mailer that darkened his skin and beard, which he condemned as "blatant Islamophobia" at a June 10 press conference. He proposed a \$50 million fund for interfaith community centres, earning endorsements from progressive Jewish groups like "Jews for Racial & Economic Justice". On *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*, he called out the smear as a "desperate tactic by a fading dynasty," earning applause and two million TikTok views. His stance on Palestinian rights, rooted in non-violence, resonated with young voters, progressive Jews, and Muslims.

Mamdani's critique of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, labelling him a "war criminal" over the 2002 Gujarat riots, sparked backlash among some Indian Americans. Groups like Indian Americans for Cuomo called him a "Hindu-hating bigot," and a *New India Abroad* op-ed urged

Viswanath of Hindus for Human Rights, an American non-profit, tweeted support, calling him a "unifier."

His democratic socialist label drew scepticism from moderates wary of his policies—free buses, rent freezes, city-owned grocery stores—which were deemed too radical for NYC's \$115 billion budget. Critics, including Cuomo, attacked his lack of

heritage, releasing Urdu campaign videos and speaking to diverse communities. His refusal to back down on Palestine signalled fearlessness, resonating with voters tired of scripted politicians. A Bangladeshi Uber driver told one outlet, "Zohran is for peace, not war. He's for ordinary people."

Critics, including *The New York Times*, called his ideas "pie-in-the-sky." Yet, his focus

campaign," admitting the old rules no longer applied.

Mamdani's win positions him as New York's potential first Muslim, South Asian, and millennial mayor, but the November 2025 general election against incumbent Eric Adams and possibly Cuomo as an independent will test his coalition. Governing a city with a \$115 billion budget and 300,000



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PHOTO: REUTERS

administrative experience, with the former governor warning that "inexperience is dangerous." The Democratic machine posed another hurdle: Cuomo entered with a \$24 million war chest, backed by billionaires like Mike Bloomberg and airwaves flooded with anti-Mamdani ads. His endorsements included Bill Clinton and labour unions, leveraging his dynastic name and Covid-era nostalgia. Mamdani, with USD eight million from 20,000 small donors and 50,000 volunteers, started with just one percent name recognition, facing a system built to crush outsiders.

Mamdani turned barriers into strengths through authenticity and agility. He embraced his Muslim and South Asian

on affordability connected with working-class New Yorkers. Rejecting corporate cash, he promised to "Trump-proof" the city, positioning himself as a genuine alternative to Cuomo's establishment playbook.

On June 24, 2025, Mamdani stunned the political world, defeating Andrew Cuomo by a strong margin in the final count, winning 56 percent to Cuomo's 44 percent. He won progressive strongholds like Brooklyn and flipped swing districts like Oakland Gardens. His coalition—young voters, Muslims, progressive Jews, and working-class communities—showed New Yorkers craved fresh leadership over Cuomo's "arrogant power grab." Cuomo's concession speech praised Mamdani's "smart and impactful

employees will be tougher, as seen in the struggles of progressive mayors like Chicago's Brandon Johnson. Yet, Mamdani's consultations with experienced municipal officials and pragmatic approach, inspired by Bernie Sanders' Burlington tenure, suggest he's preparing for the challenge.

Finally, Mamdani's victory signals that the Democratic Party's future may lie with those it once dismissed. In a city of eight million, where billionaires and dynasties once ruled, a young organiser with a bold vision proved the system isn't invincible. For aspiring politicians, his message is clear: authenticity, savviness, and a focus on the people can topple even the mightiest giants.

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residents are rent burdened.

Beyond housing, Mamdani helped secure \$1.3 billion in relief for undocumented workers excluded from federal aid. His weekly "Office Hours" at bodegas (small grocery shops, especially in Spanish-speaking neighbourhoods) and subway stops, listening to cabbies and nurses, became legendary. His efforts, amplified on social media, built a

Hindus to reject him. Mamdani countered with a Hindi campaign video featuring clips from the movie *Deewaar* to frame his fight as one for justice, not division. He attended interfaith events, like a May 20 Brooklyn rally with Sikh and Jain leaders, and secured an endorsement from Indian American Impact Fund, a political organisation and lobbying group, for his "inclusive vision." Sunita