Durham University
Durham Energy Institute

STUDENT ENERGY at Durham

Durham University Student Energy Society
COP31 REFLECTIONS



Benjamin Reeves, President, DUSES

For two weeks, the climate world descended on Antalya, Türkiye. During that time, one of our Advisory Board Members and President of Durham Student Energy, Benjamin Reeves engaged with delegations from across the globe, sat in on negotiations, meetings and high-level ministerial events, and watched international climate diplomacy unfold before his eyes Here's Ben's thoughts on COP31:

This was my first COP, and I did not know what to expect when I walked through the doors of the Antalya Expo Centre. Seemingly endless halls filled with national delegations, research exhibitions and meeting rooms lay ahead. My first day was largely spent finding my feet. COP is an overwhelming process. The opening plenary saw the COP31 President officially elected, while outside, as was often the case throughout the conference, major congestion made navigating the venue a challenge. Yet through that congestion, I was able to network with people from across the globe, from US Civil Society to policy leads at DEFRA. The rest of the first week was filled with a wide array of fascinating discussions, covering topics from geothermal energy to the state of climate policy implementation in the United States. I sat in the hall where the 'Global Geothermal Ambition 2050' was agreed upon, marking a significant moment in the global recognition of this innovative technology's potential in both the energy transition and wider Just Transitions.

Although COP31 failed in reaching an agreement, I am still steadfast in his support for the multilateral process. At the turn of this century we were staring 4 degrees of global warming in the face, and although we will overshoot 1.5 degrees, it is because of the multilateral process that we can have active discussions about adaptation and mitigation. Without COP this situation would be gravely worse. We cannot stop there however, COP32 must be driven with more urgency and ambition, or we risk walking into oblivion.

Aanan Shah, Secretary, DUSES

If you had told me when I was 18 that I would be attending COP31, the largest UN conference on climate change, I would not have believed you. Earlier this year, through Student Energy, an international NGO, I was selected as a delegate to attend COP31 where I got to watch global climate diplomacy unfold right in front of me. Nothing prepared me for the scale of the conference. I found myself surrounded by researchers presenting groundbreaking work, politicians representing their countries and activists demanding change. As an observer, I got to watch climate documents being debated in front of me and speak with MPs I had never dreamed of meeting, having only ever seen them through the news.



As a student, entering such an intense environment was intimidating. However, my experience at COP31 and the conference's failure to reach an agreement on the cover decision showed me how important it is to have diverse perspectives in these spaces. Climate change does not affect everyone equally, so bringing together people with different backgrounds is vital. Our generation will have to live with the consequences of the decisions being made today, so we must also have a voice in shaping them.