



By: TA | AP Insight

# Prince William at COP30 – a statesman ready to be king



We've seen a lot of Prince William recently — and we're going to see a lot more.

The heir to the British throne will be on the streets of Rio de Janeiro this week to promote his **Earthshot Prize**, an initiative to find solutions to major environmental issues.

That will be followed by the United Nations Climate Summit **COP30**, also in Brazil, where William will represent his father, King Charles III, and the U.K. government.

William's trip to the Brazilian metropolis known for Copacabana Beach and the annual Carnival is the latest installment in the monarchy's drive to portray the prince as a statesman ready to be king.

The scale of the task facing him has been underscored by the king's dramatic decision to strip his brother **Andrew** of his royal title and Windsor home over his friendship with sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

William was consulted on the move to take away Andrew's honors as allegations against the king's brother threatened to envelop the royal family.

In recent weeks, William has appeared alongside his father at a gala COP30 event in London, wiped away tears while talking to a grieving widow about her husband's suicide, and given an interview to actor **Eugene Levy** in which he discussed his plans for the monarchy.

"He is sending a lot of signals about how he wants to be monarch when his time comes," said Sally Bedell Smith, author of "Prince Charles: The Passions and Paradoxes of an Improbable Life."

"And given the fact his father has been ill now really for almost two years, I think that it would be irresponsible for them not to be paving the way for what we hope won't happen any time soon."

Charles, to be sure, shows few signs of slowing down, hosting U.S. President Donald **Trump's**

**state visit** in September before jetting off to pray with **Pope Leo XIV** a month later.

But behind the vigor is the reality that the king will turn 77 this month and has been undergoing treatment for an undisclosed type of cancer since early 2024.

And so the palace prepares, discreetly, as it always does.

## Plan and then plan some more

Unlike the prime minister and Parliament, which exist in the day-to-day realities of electoral politics, Britain's hereditary monarchy thinks years, if not decades, ahead, said Craig Prescott an expert on the monarchy and constitutional law at Royal Holloway University of London.

He describes the institution as being somewhat like an oil tanker, which takes so long to turn that small course corrections now will lead to big changes later on.

"They always need to have a watchman looking ahead for icebergs," Prescott said. "And in a sense, that's what they do."

## William likes to think big

So it's no coincidence that William's Earthshot Prize is arriving in Rio just as world leaders prepare to gather in Belem, the gateway to the Amazon River basin, for the latest effort to solve the global climate crisis.

Earthshot, which offers \$1 million prizes in each of five categories, is one of William's signature big ideas, the type of project he may focus on when he becomes king.

**William's goal is to accelerate the pace of environmental innovation**

He launched the prize in 2020, inspired by U.S. President John F. Kennedy's 1962 "**Moonshot**"

**speech** that challenged Americans to go to the moon by the end of that decade.

William's goal is to accelerate the pace of environmental innovation to combat problems such as climate change, ocean plastic pollution and loss of wildlife habitat by 2030.

## Change on the horizon

As it enters its fifth year, Earthshot appears to be shifting gears.

Until now the prize has focused primarily on small startups in hopes that their technologies could be scaled up to address global problems.

There is now greater recognition that policy innovation, bringing countries and communities together, will be crucial in addressing these existential issues, said Bob Ward, policy and communications director at the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment at the London School of Economics and Political Science.



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This year's finalists include the United Nations High Seas Treaty, which seeks to protect marine environments outside of national jurisdictions; the city of Guangzhou, China, a leader in the electrification of public transport; and Lagos Fashion Week, which promotes sustainable, craft-based clothing makers to counter the wave of fast-fashion rejects that literally wash up on African shores.

The winners will be announced Wednesday night after three days of policy discussions and photo opportunities such as William playing volleyball on Copacabana Beach and taking part in a soccer penalty shootout at Maracanã stadium.

William will then travel to the COP30 summit of world leaders where politicians, environmental campaigners and community organizations will debate ways to accelerate efforts to cut the carbon emissions that cause global warming.

While Charles has represented Britain at previous climate conferences, lending his cachet to an issue he championed long before most other leaders, this year his eldest son will take center stage.

It's a chance for William, a 43-year-old father of three, to demonstrate what he discussed with Levy on his Apple TV+ show "The Reluctant Traveler."

"I think it's safe to say that change is on my agenda, change for good," he told Levy after a tour of Windsor Castle. "I embrace that, and I enjoy that change. I don't fear it. That's the bit that excites me."

William will take that agenda to the COP summit.

"He will also, of course, be speaking as, you know, a person of a younger generation from his father and emphasizing that this is an issue that endures," Ward said. "And of course, it remains true that the people for whom this matters most are the youngest people in the world and future generations who will have to live longer with the consequences of our ability, or otherwise, to deal with this problem now."