



PRESS RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

'IMMEDIATELY SHIFT INVESTMENTS FROM FOSSIL FUELS INTO RENEWABLES INCLUDING ENERGY ACCESS AND EFFICIENCY AND NATURE PROTECTION AND RESTORATION,'

Civil society said to government, bank and business leaders convening in Davos for the World Economic Forum (WEF).

Thursday 23 January 2020: For the first time, the latest edition of the World Economic Forum's (WEF) Global Risk Report identifies failure to mitigate and adapt to climate change as the greatest risk the world faces in the short and long term (10 years).

It took the destruction of forests, farmland, animals and peoples' livelihoods in Australia and the Amazon and a devastating year of extreme weather events including typhoons and cyclones that killed thousands and ravaged Africa and Southeast Asia for the Forum's network of business leaders, academics and NGOs to join the chorus in sounding the alarm on the climate emergency.

Yet, key speakers at the meeting came across completely out of tune with the WEF's main topic this year: 'Climate change and building a cohesive, inclusive and sustainable economy'. Although the USA is the second largest global emitter of greenhouse gases, President Donald Trump delivered a re-election speech instead of focusing on what his government will do to tackle climate change, the world's greatest threat.

Additionally, Greenpeace International highlighted in a new report that 24 banks, regularly represented at Davos, have provided US\$1.4 trillion to the fossil fuel industry since the adoption of the Paris Agreement in 2015 through to the end of 2018.

The report also looks at how pension funds and insurance companies, whose CEOs go to Davos, have been propping up fossil fuels. In response to President Trump's speech, Greenpeace International Executive Director Jennifer Morgan said, "It seems to escape the President that no money can be made on a dead planet - there can be no jobs, no economic growth."

Against this backdrop, 2019 marked a series of summits that exposed the brazen lack of political will by large emitters to listen to the rising calls from scientists and people to act on the global emergency. These include the UN Secretary General's Climate Action Summit in New York and the UN Conference (COP25) in Madrid.

Despite the highest ever carbon pollution by fossil fuels in 2018 and 2019 and three scientific reports in the last two years, delivered by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), highlighting the best and newest science on potentially devastating impacts on nature and people, governments of rich nations try to muddle through. Added to that, millions of people, particularly youth flooded the streets of many cities, demanding climate and social justice to transform the present system. Yet highly polluting and rich governments still failed to deliver commitments to raise climate ambition and action to limit dangerous climate impacts.

While in 2018 the IPCC Special Report on 1.5°C stipulated that limiting global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial would require rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all spheres of society, the UN Production Gap report released in December 2019 showed that governments are not committing to what they signed up for in Paris in 2015. They are, in fact, planning to produce about 50% more fossil fuels by 2030 than would be consistent with limiting global warming to 2°C levels and 120% more than would be consistent with limiting warming to 1.5°C.

The report makes clear that participants in Davos hold direct responsibility in tackling the climate crisis as it says that the "continued expansion of fossil fuel production is underpinned by ambitious national plans, government subsidies and other forms of public finance."

Ironically, in the days leading to this year's WEF where VIPs, royalty and others flocked in private jets to celebrate the Forum's 50th anniversary and discuss climate change in Davos, Oxfam released its "Time to Care" report. The report makes clear that global wealth is increasingly founded on inequality. It concludes that just over 2,000 individual billionaires control more money than 60 percent of the world's poorest population. This wealth is generated through the unpaid labor of the poorest women who are also on the front line of climate impacts in vulnerable countries.

In light of all this, civil society, supported by Greta Thunberg and Bank of England Governor Mark Carney, demands that the world's most influential business and political leaders convening in Davos immediately halt investments in fossil fuel exploration and extraction, end fossil fuel subsidies and completely divest investment in fossil fuels.

Representatives of banks, companies, governments and other institutions currently participating in the WEF must respond to the emergency they acknowledge and build a cohesive and sustainable economy by investing in the energy transition and supporting the sustainable management of nature to achieve resilience.

The wealth owned by only just over 2,000 people is equivalent to 30 times the global annual investments into renewables. This shows how easy it would be to triple investments in renewables annually and start responding to the emergency.

Climate Action Network (CAN) Executive Director Tasneem Essop said:

“In what is a first, the WEF Global Risk Report this year identifies climate change as the greatest global risk. This is encouraging, but we would need to see real and meaningful actions to address this risk. This would require the powerful elite; political leaders, CEO’s and other decision makers who gather in Davos, to take actions in line with the science, to heed the UN Production Gap Report, listen to the call of the people and immediately stop all investments in fossil fuel exploration and production. The WEF needs to take a stand and end the social license of the fossil fuel industry or risk losing credibility.”

Members of Climate Action Network (CAN) said:

May Boeve, Executive Director, 350.org:

"Those most responsible for the climate crisis in the first place were gathered at the World Economic Forum. Because of the power and the money represented at Davos this week, we've seen increasingly devastating climate impacts every year. These same wealthy people have stood as a wall separating governments and any real climate action. The climate movement is breaching that wall. It is because of the power of millions of people who took to the streets that these few billionaires are now feeling the urgency of tackling climate breakdown. As we enter the new decade, we need the world to know that the fossil fuel era is over. The financiers and industry leaders would be wise to see the writing on the wall and get out of this toxic industry in their own self-interest, if not in the interest of the planet as a whole."

Gavan McFadzean, Climate Change and Clean Energy Manager, Australian Conservation Foundation:

“Australia is the third largest exporter of fossil fuel emissions, behind only Russia and Saudi Arabia. The emissions from these fuels are turbo-charging climate change, which has contributed to our unprecedented bushfire season. If we don't urgently stop digging up and burning coal, oil and gas, future bushfire seasons will be even worse than this year's devastating Australian summer.”

Sven Harmeling, Global Policy Lead on Climate Change and Resilience, CARE International:

“The climate crisis is a harsh daily reality for hundreds of millions of people, particularly women and girls, a fact which the leaders gathered in Davos must put at the center of their actions. The increasing risk of failure to prevent a complete climate breakdown is a direct threat to us all, but particularly the poorest and most vulnerable. 2020 must become the year where true and meaningful action on emission cuts and climate adaptation substitute lukewarm rhetoric and empty promises.”

Dr Kat Kramer, Global Lead - Climate Change, Christian Aid:

“WEF participants represent those businesses and interests that have brought the world to its knees. Both the climate and biosphere are in a state of crisis and we have failed to tackle poverty. These powerful participants have the choice to break the world through continuing with business-as-usual malevolent practices. Alternatively, they can help to make a new future, one that respects planetary limits and the rights of all to thrive. This visionary future will require a rapid phase out of all fossil fuels – gas included – electrification of the global economy through clean renewable technologies and access to energy for all. It will require the rich to consume less. It will require the conservation of remaining wild places, and restoration of ecosystems that have been destroyed or degraded in rapacious search of profits. The fate of the planet and its people is in the hands of WEF participants. Will they choose to destroy or to create hope?”

Jennifer Morgan, Executive Director, Greenpeace International:

"The banks, insurers and pension funds here at Davos are culpable for the climate emergency. These money men say they support the Paris Agreement, but since its signing they have been actively undermining the accord by propping up the fossil fuel industry to the tune of US\$1.4 trillion dollars. The finance sector is leading us into another financial crash in the midst of this climate emergency. The regulators must do their jobs before it is too late and financial actors have to start acting now on the scientific and economic warnings."

Harjeet Singh, Global Lead on Climate Change, ActionAid:

“Global elites in Davos are trying to disguise their lack of real climate action to reduce emissions and shift away from fossil fuels. They are trumpeting weak and false solutions such as tree planting initiatives and technologies that don’t yet exist.

"Meanwhile, across our dangerously warming planet, people are already experiencing the agonising effects of the climate emergency. Bushfires continue to rage in Australia, while 45 million people in Southern Africa are facing severe food insecurity brought on by the worst drought the region has seen in 35 years.

"It’s time for the rich countries and polluting industries that have caused climate change to meet their obligations to those least responsible, but who are suffering the most. We need transformational system change and finance to tackle the crisis, not business as usual and greenwashing.”

Sriram Madhusoodanan, Deputy Campaigns Director, Corporate Accountability:

“Impacts of the climate crisis are endured daily by people on the global frontlines -- young people, communities of color, people in the Global South, women, and indigenous people. The global movement to demand climate justice is growing and inescapable — and the latest report from the World Economic Forum in Davos further forces the recognition of the grave societal impacts of the climate crisis.

But, the cheap words and greenwashing ploys that some of the world’s dirtiest corporations have issued are unacceptable. It is high time that the those most responsible for the global climate crisis be held accountable for the devastations they are knowingly driving, and high time

for finance that addresses climate impacts and paves the way for real solutions. People around the world are demanding it. And we are resolved to make it a reality.”

Ronan Palmer, Director, Clean Economy, E3G:

“It’s hard to believe how tone deaf and out-of-tune Davos has been this year. It should have been a gathering of leaders to actually lead change and development, cohesion and sustainability. It turns out to be lots of words, that are just not up the scale of the real horror that has unfolded in Australia, or the creeping destruction of habitats and of livelihoods caused by Climate Change. In a year where there was at last a real political space opened up by crowds of people, of voters, of consumers on the streets looking for change, we just got more words. In the year we really need to act to save our economies and standards of living, we got no action. Davos should be better than this. The fact that it isn’t is a serious indictment of world business leaders.”

Sue Willsher, Senior Policy Advisor for Climate Change at Tearfund, said:

“The fact that climate change has been highlighted as a key risk facing the world today at Davos is hugely encouraging. But the sheer lack of inaction, disguised in 'green policies' by the businesses, leaders and governments represented there, is astonishing.

If we are to have any chance of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees (in line with the Paris Agreement) we need sharp and urgent cuts in emissions from governments and businesses in 2020. This includes an end to investments in fossil fuels and a switch to renewable energy.

Young people hitting the streets in their hundreds of thousands have shown us they want action on climate change and are willing to make changes in their own lifestyles, but as individuals we can only do so much. How will history judge all of us on what we have done to combat climate change?”

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Contact:

Hala Kilani

Senior Communications Officer,

Climate Action Network

E-mail: hkilani@climatenetwork.org

Tel: +961 3 567 928