

ECO

CEASEFIRE NOW

eco@climateactionnetwork.org • www.climateactionnetwork.org/eco-newsletter • December 9, 2023

ECO has been published by Non-Governmental Environmental Groups at most international conferences since the Stockholm Environment Conference in 1972. ECO is produced cooperatively by the Climate Action Network at the UNFCCC meetings in Dubai during the COP 28 meetings.

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Climate Talks Or Fossil Fuel Trade Jamboree? How To Get It Right Next Time

As week 2 of this COP jamboree is ramping up, one thing is clear – it's time to think about how to make host countries and COP presidencies (and no, they are not always the same) do what the Paris Agreement obliges them to do: to fully respect human rights and to ensure open and transparent civic space.

While the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has been around for 75 years, some Presidencies seemingly needed a reminder: in June, the UNFCCC reiterated that its meetings should be convened at a place where human rights and fundamental freedom are promoted and protected. One very basic rule is to make the host country agreement (HCA) for COPs publicly available. ECO has looked and looked for the one for COP28, from the corners of B6 to the basement of B1: it is nowhere to be found. The UNFCCC tells ECO that it can be requested from the UN Treaty system, but not how that can be done. It's like trying to find B7 without a yellow brick road.

We all know by now that there can be no climate justice without human rights, and we simply can't have COP Presidencies going around violating basic human rights. So what do we need for the next COP to bring back confidence in the process, and ensure we get the climate action we need? ECO has some ideas (it might seem like a lot but, hey, you've given us over 30 years to think about it).

Scrutinize candidate Presidencies' human rights record. If

freedoms of expression, association and peaceful assembly are not respected, then Parties have no choice but to press for meaningful and lasting reforms. Observers should not have to be terrified into not attending or self-censorship while in the country, fearing for their lives and safety, including when they go back home.

Scale down the COP. Is this annual jamboree really necessary? ECO cares more about what goes on in the negotiation rooms than about how many barrels of oil can be sold or dollars raised for investment into dangerous distractions. Smaller COPs mean more countries can afford to host – after all, countries should invest in mitigation, adaptation and sustainable development, rather than in ensuring that thousands of delegates from overseas get to go home with a nice COP goodie bag.

Put in place a conflict of interest policy. ECO welcomed the new UNFCCC transparency requirements – they sure have made the counting of the almost 2500 fossil fuel lobbyists at COP28 much easier – but more is needed to actually kick big polluters out. Would you let tobacco companies into negotiations to end smoking? We need a clear definition, including for elected UNFCCC officials, and a robust framework for engagement with a strong accountability mechanism behind it. Violations must have consequences.

Kick out the polluters' money. No COP should be sponsored by fossil

fuel companies – be it directly or through other forms of direct or indirect subsidy such as public-private partnerships, or loans of people through staff secondments and consulting contracts to either parties or to host countries.

Publish the HCA. Don't hide it behind some labyrinthine system that saps the will to live of anyone trying to navigate it. If a host country is truly respecting its human rights obligations, then what has it got to hide? ECO would like to see them all, please.

Make COPs accessible to all. Civil society, Indigenous Peoples, young and old, people living with disabilities, of all sexual orientations and gender identities: they should all have equal access. From accessibility requirements to affordable food, hotels and support for visa issues, all these should be on the basic to do list for any host. Host countries have an obligation to welcome all who wish to attend – and that means an active listening skills course may be in order, as well as a firm commitment to respecting human rights. Oh and one last point – next time you invite 70,000 people over for a party, it might be worth checking the size of the dance floor. Enough seating space in negotiating rooms is crucial for meaningful participation. A ticketed presence becomes a token presence – placing an opaque shield in front of transparency.

“Blockbuster Delays: Saudi Arabia’s 50-Year Cinematic Saga of Obstruction”

ECO, like a seasoned librarian with shelves of climate tales, remembers everything since its debut in 1972 and the star-studded premiere of the UNFCCC at the 1992 Rio conference. In this long-running saga, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) has often been cast as the offender, notorious for weaving webs of misinformation, blocking the path to climate progress, and championing the unrestricted use of fossil fuels, especially oil. Holding 20% of the world’s oil reserves, KSA’s role was akin to a dragon hoarding its treasure, with their use threatening our collective carbon budget for the 1.5°C target.

Fast forward to 2019, at COP in Madrid, the scene was set for a climactic moment with the IPCC’s groundbreaking 1.5°C report. However, KSA, ever the skeptic, dismissed this critical scientific script as merely a “gentleman’s agreement,” undermining its foundation in climate negotiations. With a history of amplifying CO2 emissions from 10 to 18 tons per capita between 1998 and 2022, KSA’s stance has been a continual

challenge to the chorus of scientific consensus – a narrative ECO has diligently documented over the decades.

Today, KSA is opposing any language on phasing out or phasing down of fossil fuels, and is not among the now 123 countries to support tripling renewable energy capacity and doubling energy efficiency by 2030 worldwide.

Saudi Arabia, wearing the garb of the Arab group’s leader, finds itself in a role that could either steal the show or drop the curtain on the UAE’s ambitious plot. Backed by the International Energy Agency (IEA), the UAE’s clear and simple goal involves a dramatic twist - phasing down fossil fuel in line with the 1.5°C target within this decade. It’s like choosing between sticking to an old classic or embracing a new blockbuster.

Now, picture the Arab nations as the audience, each with a popcorn tub of possibilities. They’re at a crossroads: to follow the UAE’s lead, akin to opting for a 3D IMAX experience, or let Saudi Arabia keep showing the films in black and

white. This choice isn’t just about box office hits; it’s about their own backyards. Many Arab countries, like actors ready for a role change, have the potential to shift from fossil fuel drama to a renewable energy rom-com, offering energy security and a happy ending for the region and the world.

But here’s the cliffhanger: Will Saudi Arabia keep playing the role of the ambitious dream’s antagonist, or will it join the main cast in a commitment to phase out fossil fuels by mid-century? This is crucial because the Arab world isn’t just watching this show; they’re part of it. Their communities are on the front lines of climate change, vulnerable to its plot twists.

This COP could be the season finale where the MENA region decides to turn the script around. It’s an opportunity for Arab countries to walk in the UAE’s innovative shoes, setting a high ambition that could make this episode a historical hit - not just for the region, but for the global audience. It’s about making a choice that could turn a climate tragedy into a story of success.

Hold Your Breath for Article 6!

Here is a fun exercise for everyone to try out today: try to breathe extremely fast for 1 minute, as if you had to absorb all the oxygen you need for the next 5 minutes, and then stop breathing completely for the remaining 5 minutes. GO!

Did it work? Probably not... ECO calls it the “gram-minute” breathing technique, an innovative measure of oxygen intake. It’s inspired by the “tonne-year” accounting method which some Parties are trying to bring back under Article 6, and which attempts to measure the benefits of short-term carbon storage. The claim is that storing 300tCO2 for 1 year would be considered equivalent to storing 1tCO2e for 300 years. If ECO’s breathing technique is making you suffocate,

you can relate to how the planet feels about tonne-year accounting.

“This is silly,” you say? ECO agrees. Or rather, it’s unscientific. There have been multiple reports about the shortcomings of tonne-year accounting as well as detailed submissions to the 6.4 Supervisory Body, which led the SB to set “tonne-year” aside. Some countries are now calling for its return - ECO thinks it should stay where the SB left it.

(Do not try this at home! Attempts to perform the gram-minute breathing exercise are at your own risk. ECO accepts no liability for delegates passing out in the process of attempting this for the sake of proving their point.)



KEEP UP WITH DUBAI FROM
YOUR SMARTPHONE!

Make it Better, Do it Faster!

ECO has exciting news for you. We know everyone has been waiting impatiently for the results of this year's Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI), an instrument to enable transparency in national and international climate policy, and it's finally here! In its 19th edition, the CCPI assesses the climate mitigation performance of 63 countries and the EU, covering more than 90% of global GHG emissions. More than 450 climate experts have assessed these countries' climate policies. ECO is shocked to report that after all this time none of the countries are doing enough to prevent dangerous climate change! The 'top three' ranks continue to remain

empty this year.

It is no coincidence that the majority of low performing countries are heavily reliant on fossil fuels, both for production and use. Saudi Arabia (67th and last place) - we are particularly looking at you! And Canada (62nd), Japan (58th), the US (57th), and Australia (50th) — don't think we are forgetting you. Here is an exclusive ECO tip: if you want to move up the ranking, it's time to phase out fossil fuels! Fossil fuels are bad for the climate and your CCPI ranking.

A crucial and concrete step at this COP28 would be for the GST decision to call for a fast, full, fair, and funded phase out of all fossil fuels.

ECO wants to see a decline of at least 40% to 45% of consumption and production of all fossil fuels by 2030 in line with pathways below 1.5°C, with developed countries taking the lead and providing finance. We all know that the GST will influence the new round of NDCs, and by the way, the quality of the NDCs is crucial for the assessment in the upcoming CCPIs. What a great opportunity to be rewarded with a better ranking!

It's as simple as this: if you do more, you'll rank higher. Congratulations to Denmark (4th place), Estonia (5th), the Philippines (6th), and India (7th). But don't rest on your laurels - the first three places are still free for a reason!

Listen to Kenya's President: Huge Increase in Debt Repayments

"As a result of rising interest rates, Africa's debt repayments will surge to US \$62 billion this year, up 35 percent from 2022." This brow-lifting remark by Kenyan President William Ruto at the Africa Climate Summit in Nairobi drew attention to the glaringly obvious inhibitions on countries' ability to adapt to climate change due to financial burdens.

"If you don't solve the debt issue, you can't solve the climate issue," Ruto continued.

Similar concerns were expressed at COP28 during the High-Level Ministerial Dialogue and stated by negotiators of developing countries in the Standing Committee for Finance, Long-term Finance, and New Collective Quantified Goals (NCQG).

In a recent OECD report, ECO found that loans represented over two thirds of public climate finance in 2021 while grants accounted for less than 30 percent (\$20.1 billion). According to the Oxfam Shadow Report, 31 percent of climate finance was provided as concessional loans and as much as 42 percent was non-concessional loans in 2019-2020. Like a housing loan, climate loans are meant to be repaid with interest rates. Counting the full face value of loans as climate finance thus



grossly overinflates contributions to the promised \$100 billion, a precedent ECO finds misleading.

The significant increases in interest rates in global capital markets imply higher repayments and further increases in public debt. After ten years with interest rates near zero, non-concessional climate loans mirror the sudden increase in the US Federal Reserve interest rate to five per cent in response to high inflation. Faced with limited options, loan applicants must choose between adverse climate change or agreeing to exorbitant interest repayments. Currently, the World Bank issues IBRD Flexible 20-year loans with interest rates of almost seven percent - equivalent to making borrowers sweat

to make total repayments at a level of about 40 percent higher than the terms for the last ten years!

Taking transformative climate action while managing public expenditures for education, social sectors, health and much more will be even more difficult in the face of increasing interest rates. New countries will surely join the 38 countries already in debt distress or at high risk. Instead, ECO suggests prescribing "preventive medicine" to limit or even avoid non-concessional

loans issued with increased interest rates on the capital markets. Surely it is unjust that the poor and vulnerable in the Least Developed Countries who have contributed negligible emissions - are now being asked to repay money spent on adaptation and resilience with predatory interest rates.

ECO echoes ministers from developing countries: we need a real increase in public grant-based resources for adaptation and resilience. We implore developed countries to comply with the agreement to double adaptation finance. If adaptation finance remains insufficient, the integrity of the NCQG currently negotiated undermines finalizing any agreement at next year's COP29!



There is No Climate Justice Without Human Rights, Fossil of the Day is Awarded to Israel

First Runner Up - Russia

Russia seems to be lost... or at least confused about why we're all in Dubai, as they keep striking fossil fuel deals instead of making meaningful climate pledges. Whilst the world focuses on climate negotiations, Putin showed his face in the UAE for all the wrong reasons; to discuss new oil agreements with UAE and Saudi Arabia. Conveniently for him, we are not in one of the 100 countries which recognise the arrest warrant issued by the International Criminal Court.

Russian is renowned for its skilled chess players, but, let's face it, Putin is no Anatoly Karpov. In a country where nearly half the federal budget comes from revenues generated by fossil fuels, with 40% allocated to finance the war in Ukraine and other armed conflicts worldwide, he's using fossil fuels as a key piece in the geopolitical match, militarising their supply with dire consequences for the climate. Russia's opposition to phase-out language at COP28 is driven by a selfish drive for profit at the expense of people and climate. Their scrutiny of the Tripling Renewable Energy target further undermines the negotiations. This is not how you execute a Queen's Gambit.

Therefore, Russia has been awarded Fossil of the Day for putting more effort into exporting fossil fuels than supporting climate solutions. It's time to End Fossil Fuels, Fast, Fair, Funded, Feminist, Forever and make the just and equitable transition to 100% renewable energy.

Second Runner Up - Australia

Australia has been letting its friends and neighbours down. The neighbourhood watch committee needs to call an emergency meeting to discuss the state of their garden. To be good neighbours and meet their responsibilities as part of 'the Pacific Family', our friends down under must take action now to phase out fossil fuels and pay for their historical and ongoing contributions to the crisis by contributing to the Loss and Damage Fund.

Announcing meagre contributions to their own Pacific Resilience Fund and the Green Climate Fund while subsidising the coal and gas industry to the tune of BILLIONS every year is not what a good neighbour does. The A\$150m contained within their Pacific Climate Finance Package is like forgetting to bring some beers to the neighbourhood barbeque. Australia's order of value is evident. As the third largest fossil fuel exporter it must be held responsible for its actions. The climate crisis is having devastating consequences on the Pacific community.

Fossil of the Day loves to bring levity and humour to the UNFCCC spaces, however, we can't find any humour in the next award.

Fossil of the Day - Israel

Let us be clear, there is no climate justice without human rights. There can be no peace without justice. Just 2,500 kilometres from the COP28 venue, hostilities in Gaza and

Israel have created appalling human suffering, physical and environmental destruction and collective trauma across Israel and the occupied Palestinian Territory.

The international community has a responsibility to use all its influence to prevent further escalation and support an end to this crisis. Over the years, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has resulted in numerous human rights violations and has profoundly impacted the lives of thousands of people over generations. According to various human rights organizations and United Nations reports, these violations have been truly devastating and are ongoing.

All nations have the responsibility to ensure that international laws are upheld and to stop the unfolding humanitarian disaster in Gaza. Today, as we focus on youth and children, the contrast between military spending and the urgent need for climate finance becomes even more stark. This COP, happening amid such a backdrop, is a stark reminder of the interconnectedness of climate justice, human rights, and the need for a global commitment to peace and sustainability.

We award the Fossil of the Day to Israel in acknowledgment of the numerous impacts this conflict is having. We stand with those who grieve and fear for their loved ones, and join the call for peace and safety, where the rights of all are respected without distinction.

Ceasefire now.

Want to talk about climate justice? Check out the Civil Society Climate Justice Hub

Find us in Blue Zone, B7, Building 88 ("Energy, Finance), top floor"

Check out our events schedule

