

Headline: Fossil fuel phaseout can no longer be delayed

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Climate change is wreaking havoc on the planet. Millions of people across Asia, Africa, Latin America, Europe, and North America are now suffering from a spate of heat waves caused by record-high temperatures.

This extreme heat wave is predicted to continue, leading to more wildfires and other catastrophic consequences. Meanwhile, record monsoon rainfall has also been inundating parts of India, Japan, China, and South Korea causing flash floods, landslides, and power cuts that leave hundreds dead and thousands homeless.

As the climate crisis takes hold, it is clear that there is no place on earth that is safe from the impacts of climate change. Despite this, there is tragically a lack of resolve and urgent action to stop the burning of fossil fuels and swiftly make a just transition toward clean, renewable energy.

The amount of carbon emissions in the atmosphere due to the excessive and widespread use of coal, oil, and gas has risen by over 50 percent since the Industrial Revolution, and is still rapidly growing.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change says we have a very small window of time to stop the worst consequences of climate change. Doing so requires the following: 1) ending the expansion of fossil fuel extraction and production; 2) slashing carbon pollution and fossil fuel use by at least two-thirds by 2035; 3) completely stopping the use of coal, oil, and gas before 2040 in rich countries and by mid-century for the rest of the world; 4) rapidly developing 100 percent renewable energy systems to supplant fossil fuel use and address energy poverty; and 5) fully delivering on the promise of rich countries to fulfill their climate finance obligations for a swift and successful energy transition in developing countries.

These demands are echoed in the recent impassioned plea of United Nations Secretary General António Guterres, who called for the phaseout of fossil fuels to avoid a climate catastrophe, and massively boost investment in renewable energy. Yet the fossil fuel industry and its enablers are laying the groundwork for expanding fossil fuel production.

Last month, Norway's government gave oil companies the green light to develop 19 oil and gas fields, saying its oil and gas resources are essential to Europe's energy security and will be needed for decades to come. Governments in Asia and fossil fuel companies sing the same tune in pushing for the expansion of gas in the region as a transition fuel from coal.

Meanwhile, the biggest oil companies have most recently walked back on their pledges, saying that gas and oil projects must continue to ensure "security of supply and an orderly energy transition." These are deceptive and false claims. Oil and gas influence at crucial climate negotiations has been undermining efforts to forge bold commitments to lower emissions and phase out fossil fuels.

Last July 13, the president of COP28 climate summit, due to take place in November in Dubai, said that his plan of action for the summit would include the "phasedown of fossil fuels." A phasedown implies the use of carbon capture and storage (CCS) to reduce emissions to zero by 2050. This means fossil fuels would still be part of the energy mix, but the application of CCS on a massive

scale will capture carbon emissions before they enter the atmosphere and are pumped underground.

Sounds awesome except that CCS, as a technology for emissions reduction, remains unproven. Existing CCS plants have captured about 0.1 percent of the annual global emissions from fossil fuels; 81 percent of the carbon captured have been pumped into the ground to force more oil out. It is apparent that the push for CCS is a scam to legitimize continued fossil fuel production.

The goal of COP28 should be an agreement to phaseout fossil fuels, which means the progressive reduction in the use and production of fossil fuels to real zero by 2050.

According to the International Energy Agency, energy security concerns and the price spikes on imported fossil fuels have motivated countries to increasingly turn to renewables such as solar and wind, so much so that renewables are set to account for over 90 percent of global electricity expansion over the next five years.

Direct transition from coal to renewable energy can and should be done. The expansion of renewable energy systems can and should be pursued at a pace and scale that will address energy security and access, and ensure a swift, equitable, and just phaseout of fossil fuels. The phaseout can no longer be delayed. Humanity is racing against time to survive global warming.

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