

6.1 FOSSIL FUEL NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY

Submitting Councillor: Dr Josh Fergeus

MOTION

That Council endorses the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty campaign.

BACKGROUND

The Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty campaign aims to fast track the phase out of fossil fuels in order to limit the accelerating climate crisis, and to support a just transition for people around the world who are currently working in the fossil fuel industry.

Climate change, like nuclear weapons, is a major global threat. Bold and immediate action is needed to address the climate emergency. A Treaty would see national governments working together to stop the expansion and begin phase out of fossil fuels and ensure a global just transition for all.

The main cause of the climate emergency is fossil fuels. Coal, oil and gas are responsible for almost 80 per cent of all carbon dioxide emissions since the industrial revolution.

Phasing out fossil fuel production, and fast-tracking progress towards safer and more cost-effective solutions, will require unprecedented international cooperation in three main areas – non-proliferation, global disarmament and a peaceful, just transition

Endorsement is consistent with Council’s existing policies on climate change and urgent climate action, including Council’s own actions in transitioning to 100% renewable energy.

At the time of writing the Treaty had been endorsed by more than 400 organisations and governments, including the Australian Capital Territory government and the City of Los Angeles.

The issue of ‘pollution, greenhouse gas emissions and resource use’ has recently been rated one of the top two most important issues affecting liveability by residents and ratepayers in Monash.

OPEN LETTER FROM SCIENTISTS

Thousands of scientists have signed this open letter¹:

“We, the undersigned, call on governments around the world to adopt and implement a [Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty](https://fossilfuel treaty.org/open-letter), as a matter of urgency, to protect the lives and livelihoods of present and future generations through a global,

¹ <https://fossilfuel treaty.org/open-letter>

equitable phase out of fossil fuels in line with the scientific consensus to not exceed 1.5°C of warming.

The fossil fuel system and its impacts are global and require a global solution. We call on governments to urgently commence negotiations to develop, adopt and implement a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty laying out a binding global plan to:

- End new expansion of fossil fuel production in line with the best available science as outlined by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the United Nations Environment Programme
- Phase out existing production of fossil fuels in a manner that is fair and equitable, taking into account the respective dependency of countries on fossil fuels, and their capacity to transition;
- Invest in a transformational plan to ensure 100% access to renewable energy globally, support fossil fuel-dependent economies to diversify away from fossil fuels, and enable people and communities across the globe to flourish through a global just transition.

The scientific consensus is clear that human activities are primarily responsible for global climate change, and that the climate crisis now represents the greatest threat to human civilization and nature. [1]

The burning of fossil fuels - coal, oil, and gas - is the greatest contributor to climate change, responsible for almost 80% of carbon dioxide emissions since the industrial revolution. [2]

To keep warming to below the temperature goal of 1.5°C, as reflected in the scientific literature and the IPCC's special report on 1.5°C, global greenhouse gas emissions need to be *at least* 45% lower globally by 2030. [3]

According to the most recent Production Gap Report, this requires an average decline in fossil fuel production of *at least* 6% per year between 2020-2030. However, the fossil fuel industry is planning to *increase* production by 2% per year. [4] It is vital that the global transition towards a zero carbon world is equitable, based on countries' fair share of expected climate action, their historical contribution to climate change and their capacity to act. This means richer countries must reduce production of fossil fuels at a faster rate than poorer countries that require greater support to transition, including through the redirection of finance and subsidies from fossil fuels to renewable energy.

In addition to climate impacts, new research shows that the air pollution caused by fossil fuels was responsible for almost 1 in 5 deaths worldwide in 2018. [5] These significant health and environmental impacts are derived from the extracting, refining, transporting and burning of fossil fuels and are often borne by vulnerable and marginalised communities. At the same time, centralised, fossil fuel-generated energy often concentrates power and wealth into the hands of a select few, bypassing the communities in which extraction occurs. [6]

The current dominant approach to tackling climate change focuses on policies that restrict greenhouse gas emissions and the *demand* for fossil fuels, for example by fostering the growth of *substitutes* for fossil fuels such as renewable energy and

electric vehicles. [7] But there has been limited focus on policies aimed at constraining the production and *supply of* fossil fuels at the source.

Yet efforts to reduce demand for fossil fuels will be undermined if supply continues to grow. Continued production means either that fossil fuels will continue to be burnt for energy - pushing the world towards catastrophic global warming - or that the industry and countries reliant on fossil fuels will face massive stranded assets, stranded workers, and stranded economies, as government revenue streams currently relied on for development and public sector employment and essential public services evaporate.

While the Paris Agreement lays an important foundation for action on the demand-side of the equation, without international cooperation and policy processes focusing on the supply of fossil fuels, countries will continue to overshoot their already insufficient emissions targets. [8]

Given the significant historical contribution of fossil fuels to climate change, and the industry's continuing expansion plans, we are calling for a solution commensurate with the scale of the problem. Phasing down coal, oil and gas in line with 1.5°C requires global cooperation, in a way that is fair, equitable and reflects countries' levels of dependence on fossil fuels, and capacities to transition. This, in turn, should be underpinned by financial resources, including technology transfer, to enable a just transition for workers and communities in developing countries and a decent life for all.

In this context, we add our voices to the call from civil society, youth leaders, Indigenous Peoples, faith institutions, cities and sub-national governments for a global treaty to address fossil fuels. [9]

References

[1] World Economic Forum, "The Global Risks Report 2020," Insight Report (World Economic Forum; Marsh & McLennan; Zurich Insurance Group; National University of Singapore; Oxford Martin School; Wharton Risk Management and Decision Processes Center, University of Pennsylvania, 2020); IPCC, "Summary for Policymakers," in *Global Warming of 1.5°C. An IPCC Special Report on the Impacts of Global Warming of 1.5°C above Pre-Industrial Levels and Related Global Greenhouse Gas Emission Pathways, in the Context of Strengthening the Global Response to the Threat of Climate Change, Sustainable Development, and Efforts to Eradicate Poverty* (World Meteorological Organization, Geneva, Switzerland, 2018), <http://www.ipcc.ch/report/sr15/>.

[2] Global Carbon Project (2020) 'Supplemental data of Global Carbon Budget 2020 (Version 1.0)' [Data set]. From Friedlingstein et al (2020) 'Global Carbon Budget 2020'. *Earth System Science Data*, 12 (4): 3269-3340.

[3] IPCC, above n 2

[4] SEI et al., "The Production Gap: The Discrepancy between Countries' Planned Fossil Fuel Production and Global Production Levels Consistent with Limiting Warming to 1.5°C or 2°C," 2019, <http://productiongap.org/>; International Energy

Agency, CO2 Emissions from Fuel Combustion 2018, CO2 Emissions from Fuel Combustion (OECD, 2018), https://doi.org/10.1787/co2_fuel-2018-en.

[5] Vohra K et al (2021) ‘Global mortality from outdoor fine particle pollution generated by fossil fuel combustion: Results from GEOS-Chem’. *Environmental Research*, 195: 110754.

[6] Burke M and Stephens J (2018) ‘Political power and renewable energy futures: a critical review. *Energy Research & Social Science*, 35: 78-93; LDC Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Initiative (2017) Framework. Accessed from http://ldcreeei.org/arei_publications/ldc-reeei-framework/.

[7] Fergus Green and Richard Denniss (2018) ‘Cutting with both arms of the scissors: the economic and political case for restrictive supply-side climate policies’. *Climate Policy*, 150: 73-87.

[8] Olhoff A and Christensen JM (Eds.) (2019) ‘Emissions Gap Report 2019’. United Nations Environment Programme, <https://www.unenvironment.org/resources/emissions-gap-report-2019>

[9] For the full list of endorsements, visit: www.fossilfueltreaty.org/endorsements”

OPEN LETTER FROM NOBEL LAUREATES

101 Nobel Laureates have signed this open letter²:

“As Nobel Laureates from peace, literature, medicine, physics, chemistry and economic sciences, and like so many people around the globe, we are seized by the great moral issue of our time: the climate crisis and commensurate destruction of nature.

Climate change is threatening hundreds of millions of lives, livelihoods across every continent and is putting thousands of species at risk. The burning of fossil fuels – coal, oil, and gas – is by far the major contributor to climate change.

We write today, on the eve of Earth Day 2021 and the Leaders’ Climate Summit, hosted by President Biden, to urge you to act now to avoid a climate catastrophe by stopping the expansion of oil, gas and coal.

We welcome President Biden and the US government’s acknowledgement in the Executive Order that “Together, we must listen to science and meet the moment.” Indeed, meeting the moment requires responses to the climate crisis that will define legacies. Qualifications for being on the right side of history are clear.

For far too long, governments have lagged, shockingly, behind what science demands and what a growing and powerful people-powered movement knows: urgent action is needed to end the expansions of fossil fuel production; phase out current production; and invest in renewable energy.

² <https://fossilfueltreaty.org/nobel-letter>

The burning of fossil fuels is responsible for almost 80% of carbon dioxide emissions since the industrial revolution. In addition to being the leading source of emissions, there are local pollution, environmental and health costs associated with extracting, refining, transporting and burning fossil fuels. These costs are often paid by Indigenous peoples and marginalized communities. Egregious industry practices have led to human rights violations and a fossil fuel system that has left billions of people across the globe without sufficient energy to lead lives of dignity.

For both people and the planet, continued support must be given to tackling climate change through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Paris Agreement. Failure to meet the Paris Agreement's temperature limit of 1.5°C risks pushing the world towards catastrophic global warming.

Yet, the Paris Agreement has no mention of oil, gas or coal. Meanwhile, the fossil fuel industry continues to plan new projects. Banks continue to fund new projects. According to the most recent United Nations Environment Programme report, 120% more coal, oil, and gas will be produced by 2030 than is consistent with limiting warming to 1.5°C. Efforts to meet the Paris Agreement and to reduce demand for fossil fuels will be undermined if supply continues to grow.

The solution is clear: fossil fuels must be kept in the ground.

Leaders, not industry, hold the power and have the moral responsibility to take bold actions to address this crisis. We call on world leaders to work together in a spirit of international cooperation to:

- End new expansion of oil, gas and coal production in line with the best available science as outlined by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and United Nations Environment Program;
- Phase out existing production of oil, gas and coal in a manner that is fair and equitable, taking into account the responsibilities of countries for climate change and their respective dependency on fossil fuels, and capacity to transition;
- Invest in a transformational plan to ensure 100% access to renewable energy globally, support dependent economies to diversify away from fossil fuels, and enable people and communities across the globe to flourish through a global just transition.

Fossil fuels are the greatest contributor to climate change. Allowing the continued expansion of this industry is unconscionable. The fossil fuel system is global and requires a global solution – a solution the Leaders' Climate Summit must work towards. And the first step is to keep fossil fuels in the ground."

CONCLUSION

Consistent with Council's decision to move to 100% renewable energy and with Council's Zero Carbon Action Plan Council should endorse a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty.