

G-7 nations tussle over bid to phase out coal power by 2030

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Group of Seven nations are butting heads over the timeline for phasing out coal-fired power ahead of next weekend's summit of top energy and environmental ministers.

Draft communique documents circulated before negotiations resume Tuesday and seen by Bloomberg News show the European Union, the U.S. and Japan expressed reservations about a U.K. proposal to set a 2030 deadline for phasing out unabated domestic coal power generation.

The language, which won France's backing, also would have recognized the need to "cancel the pipeline of new global coal power generation projects," and therefore have the G-7 countries committing to end construction of new domestic coal-fired power plants and work with international partners to end similar efforts globally.

While Japan, the U.S. and E.U. indicated reservations, Germany offered alternative language that would have emphasized the goal of phasing out domestic unabated coal power generation "ideally by 2030" or "in the 2030s." Japan, which hosts the G-7 this year, has proposed reaffirming the commitment in last year's G-7 leaders' statement "to achieving a fully or predominantly decarbonized power sector by 2035."

Representatives with the E.U. Commission and Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry did not immediately respond to requests for comment lodged during a European holiday and outside normal working hours in Asia. The U.S. State Department did not comment.

The deliberations may reflect uneasiness about the technical ability of central and eastern European countries to meet a 2030 deadline and, in the U.S., about the political repercussions of the federal government embracing a firm end date for coal. But they risk showing G-7 nations are less resolved to consign coal to history months ahead of a critical U.N. climate summit in Dubai where nearly 200 nations will be pressed to phase out the fossil fuel.

The risk is that the final G-7 communique from the summit on April 15 and 16 in Sapporo, Japan, will provide fodder to other countries critical

of rich nations' progress on and commitment to combating global warming, said Alden Meyer, a senior associate at the consultancy E3G.

"Every time they start having carveouts on fossil fuel finance or [road transport](#) or unabated coal, they give other countries excuses to say, 'Well you talk a big game, but you're not delivering at home,'" Meyer said. "They should be trying to build on the last two G-7s under the U.K. and Germany, but they're in danger of at least stalling out—if not backsliding—on some fronts."

Negotiators, who huddled for a week in virtual meetings at the end of March, also are still sparring over Japan's push for language endorsing the use of hydrogen and ammonia produced from it as a power source. Several countries have pushed to qualify that support, saying its use must be consistent with other climate and decarbonization goals and only occur when associated nitrogen oxide pollution is squelched.

Amid Russia's war in Ukraine, Japan also has encouraged language supporting investments in [natural gas](#) and LNG to "bridge the gap" securing affordable energy supplies—an effort that dovetails with an appeal by many U.S. business groups. But several countries have pushed back, with the U.S. encouraging a caveat that natural gas should be a transition energy source only "for those countries that can afford it and are committed to" a shift toward net zero energy.

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