

EU to seek virtual elimination of fossil fuels at COP28

October 17 2023, by Julien GIRAULT



Dubai will host the COP28 UN climate talks aimed at reducing the effects of climate change.

The EU will seek a global phase-out of fossil fuels and for their use to reach a peak in this decade, according to the member states' common

position adopted unanimously late Monday.

At the COP28 UN climate talks in November, the bloc will also call for eliminating "as soon as possible" subsidies for [fossil fuels](#) which do not serve to combat [energy poverty](#) or ensure a "just transition"—but without setting a deadline as NGOs hoped.

"(The European) Council stresses that the transition to a climate-neutral economy will require a global phase-out of unabated fossil fuels and a peak in their consumption in this decade", said a statement released after the meeting of EU environment ministers.

At the same time the 27 European nations will advocate "the importance of having the [energy sector](#) predominantly free of fossil fuels well before 2050", a formula expressed this time without the mention of "unabated".

EU ministers meeting in Luxembourg bitterly clashed over the inclusion of the word in the negotiating mandate for new EU commissioner for climate matters, Wopke Hoekstra, who will represent them at COP28 in Dubai from November 30 to December 12.

Brussels is looking to triple the amount of global renewable [energy](#) used by the end of this decade and double energy efficiency in line with the goals of the COP28 presidency.

The EU has already set itself a horizon of 2050 to abolish "unabated" fossil fuels—meaning those reliant on coal, oil and gas that do not have mechanisms to capture or store carbon.

The issue is expected to be bitterly fought over at the UN climate conference in Dubai, and has been the subject of strained debate between EU countries.

Together with NGOs, some governments wanted the "unabated" label withdrawn or have strict conditions attached to the use of carbon capture technology, to prevent them being used as justification for continued fossil-[fuel](#) burning.

"There's no alternative for driving down emissions across the board," Hoekstra said.

"However some sectors are extremely hard to abate" and thus carbon-capture technology was needed "as part of the total solution space," he said.

France's energy transition minister Agnes Pannier-Runacher called such tech "of interest" but added that it should be reserved for sectors that were unable otherwise to decarbonize.

In the end, the term "unabated" was retained in the agreed text but is no longer mentioned in the formulation of the long-term objective of an energy sector predominantly free of fossil fuels "well before 2050".

'Driving force' for change

In the immediate future, carbon capture technologies "should be tied to those sectors where it's going to be difficult to engage in decarbonization, where it's difficult to wean themselves off fossil fuels for some of the [industrial process](#)", explained Spain's ecological transition minister Teresa Ribera, whose country chaired the Luxembourg meeting.

"The long-term objective is that fossil fuels should be phased out of our energy mix as we tried to promote decarbonization," she said.

At COP28 many countries will push to secure an unprecedented

commitment to move away from "unabated" fossil fuels.

But a global commitment to eliminating fossil fuels entirely would be "very complicated", Hoekstra said.

And, when it comes to an accord to be taken up by UN member countries, "it takes 192 to tango," he said.

The EU is also calling for "striving for a fully or predominantly decarbonized global power system in the 2030s".

The bloc also called for global action towards the tripling of installed renewable energy capacity by 2030 as well as a doubling of energy efficiency, in line with the roadmap of the president of COP28.

The Europeans also debated whether to maintain in Dubai their legally established objective of a 55 percent reduction in the bloc's greenhouse gases by 2030 or the 57 percent that it should de facto reach under policies already adopted.

A 57 percent announcement would reinforce Europe's ambition to be a global leader on combating [climate change](#), said European Commission Vice President Maros Sefcovic and other officials.

In the end, they simply updated their submission to indicate the bloc was aiming to reduce its emissions "by at least 55 percent by 2030 compared to 1990 levels".

"It was very important that we insisted on the factual effect of what we were doing," said Ribera.

By its example "the EU is a [driving force](#) for change", she said.

The bloc will also call for strengthening existing funding arrangements evoked in COP27 to compensate poorer countries as they shift to greener energy production and use.

© 2023 AFP

Citation: EU to seek virtual elimination of fossil fuels at COP28 (2023, October 17) retrieved 2 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2023-10-eu-virtual-fossil-fuels-cop28.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.