

Targets to end fossil fuel at COP28 crucial: EU climate chief

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A demand for targets for the phase-out of fossil fuels in the final agreement of COP28 in Dubai is not frivolous but an urgent request backed by "crystal clear" science, Europe's climate commissioner told

AFP on Tuesday.

The European Union is willing to take "additional steps" to help developing countries, particularly regarding [climate](#) damages, revealed the newly-minted commissioner Wopke Hoekstra, who has been under fierce scrutiny for his past experience in the oil industry.

But that means all [wealthy nations](#) need to start contributing, he added from the capital of the United Arab Emirates, where ministers and negotiators gathered for two days of preliminary meetings ahead of COP28 next month.

Key issues

At the advanced meeting, the EU addressed "core elements" that the Dutch commissioner said would "determine the outcome and the success" of the upcoming United Nations climate talks.

Those elements range from mitigation, the loss and damage fund, to adaptation.

Within mitigation, Hoekstra said, the EU has a "desire to drive out [fossil fuels](#)", to peak global GHG ([greenhouse gas](#)) emissions by 2025, tripling renewable energy and doubling energy efficiency by 2030,

"Of course some of these items are less controversial: it will be easier to rally around [renewable energy](#) targets and [energy efficiency](#) targets" than phasing out fossil fuels, he said.

Referring to a speech by Sultan Al Jaber who will be hosting the talks, in which he said "science should lead us", Hoekstra said that should not be applied "a la carte" but across policies and decisions.

"We also need to acknowledge that more money is needed. Scientists say to us that is needed and the window is closing," he added.

Climate finance

The European Union has been a leader among developed nations in working to fulfill a promise to provide \$100 billion in annual aid to developing countries, by contributing a "very substantial" \$26 billion toward it, he said.

"We are very much willing and committed" to help set up the new loss and damage fund for vulnerable nations.

While the precise parameters of the fund remain hotly debated, he cautioned that "we can only do this right once".

This fund is meant really for those most in need... in particular, [small island](#) developing states who are clearly most on the receiving end of climate change and have no responsibility whatsoever for what is happening," he said.

Those contributing to the funds should be broadened, he said, "to everyone who has the ability to pay among nations".

Not singling one particular country out, he said by ranking countries by GDP, it is clear who has seen economic progress and "with being a sizable economic power, comes a lot of responsibility".

However the two days of pre-COP28 talks wrapped up in Abu Dhabi on Tuesday with plenty of positive comment but no agreement.

A key issue that emerged in earlier talks this year over the structure, beneficiaries and contributors of the fund is that richer nations want

China, the Gulf [nation](#) and Singapore to pay into it.

The fund not only addresses the hazards that climate change—instigated by the most industrialized nations—has imposed on poorer nations, but would also foster "that amazingly important, yet intangible thing called trust" between the North and the South, said Hoesktra.

Fossil fuel end date

Asked whether the EU will be seeking a final agreement on targets to phase out fossil fuels at the COP28 talks, Hoekstra replied; "the most renowned experts in the world (are) actually telling us that we need more action".

That action requires "rapidly driving out fossil fuels in general, and coal in particular," he said.

"This is not the frivolity of the European Union," he said. "It is not a matter of picking and choosing, or of political maneuvering."

The world cannot wait 10 years to set a scheme, he said, because "the window of opportunity is closing" and "future generations need us to act now".

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