

# COP29 climate hosts say they'll keep expanding fossil fuels

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The incoming president of the COP29 UN climate summit in Azerbaijan told AFP on Friday that his country would keep increasing fossil fuel production "in parallel" with investments in cleaner alternatives.

Mukhtar Babayev defended his country's hosting of the world's most important [climate](#) summit despite its surging natural gas exports, even as UN chief Antonio Guterres renewed calls this week for countries to "phase out" fossil fuels.

In an exclusive interview in Bonn with AFP, the COP29 organizers said they would also call for a "COP truce" and ask nations to observe a conflict ceasefire during the marathon negotiations in Baku in November.

It comes as diplomats are meeting in the German city this week and next to take stock of global climate action, including a pledge made at last year's COP in the United Arab Emirates to transition away from [fossil fuels](#).

Environmental activists have expressed dismay that the climate talks are being held a second year running in a nation committed to developing even more of the fuels most responsible for causing global warming.

Azerbaijan's president recently described his country's gas reserves as a "gift of the gods" and pledged to defend other fossil-fuel economies wanting to extract more oil and gas.

## **Gas and green**

Babayev, a former oil executive turned ecology minister, said Azerbaijan was a gas-exporting nation and they would keep ramping up production to meet demand.

This includes from the European Union, he said, which signed major gas contracts with the former Soviet nation after the outbreak of the Ukraine war caused an energy crisis.

"We are planning in several years (to) increase the volumes of natural gas but, at the same time, our renewable energy projects," Babayev told AFP.

"I think in parallel—natural gas production and renewables—possibly will move together at the same time," he added, saying his country was already investing in major clean energy projects.

The UAE, which was accused of using its COP presidency to advance fossil fuel deals—allegations it denies—also defended scaling up oil and gas production capacity in response to demand.

## **Global effort**

Babayev is hoping his COP presidency will lead to a new agreement on money from wealthy nations to help developing ones invest in clean energy and adapt to the impacts of global warming.

This has been a sticking point of climate negotiations for decades, but negotiators hope to land a new fundraising target when world leaders and ministers meet in Baku.

Developing countries want the goal to exceed a previous target of \$100 billion per year.

It is estimated that emerging markets and developing countries, excluding China, will need more than \$2 trillion a year by 2030 to meet their climate and development needs.

Developed nations historically responsible for climate change agree that more cash is needed, but want wealthy economies and major polluters like China to pay in as well.

Raising this money is a "global effort", said COP29 lead negotiator Yalchin Rafiyev. "We cannot single out any party, any country".

"The current flow of finance is not sufficient. And regardless of who will be the contributors, the funding available for the developing countries should be increased," Rafiyev told AFP.

## **Taxing the rich**

Behind closed doors at Bonn, the COP29 team has floated raising money from "innovative sources", including fossil fuel producers who may be asked to fund climate action in vulnerable nations.

"It is a very preliminary idea, and we already had the chance to discuss it with different countries and international financial institutes, and UN institutions," Babayev said, without offering further details.

Rafiyev said the shape of such a fund-raising instrument—a tax, levy or other mechanism—had not been decided but they did not want to "finger-point at any industry".

"We are listening to everybody, and based on that, we will come up with a final product," he said.

Some nations have proposed introducing levies on the fossil fuel industry and other heavily polluting sectors like aviation and shipping, while Brazil is building support for a global tax on billionaires.

## **'COP truce'**

Azerbaijan had less than a year to prepare for the COP29 summit, being named in December at the last minute after Russia blocked other

prospective hosts.

It came just days after Azerbaijan and its arch-foe Armenia announced they would work toward a peace agreement, and in the midst of raging conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza.

Rafiyev said that in Baku they would be calling for a "COP truce" and an appeal "to the international community to observe a ceasefire" for the duration of the two-week summit.

He dismissed concerns about adding another layer of complexity to climate negotiations famous for struggling to reach consensus among nearly 200 nations.

"The wars and [armed conflicts](#), military activities, are one of the biggest emission-generating activities and it is explicitly related to the climate agenda," Rafiyev said.

"It is not a geopolitical or political issue. It also has a very substantive climate dimension."

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