



WHY CITIES SHOULD ENDORSE THE CALL FOR A FOSSIL FUEL NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY

A new global campaign is underway – an initiative calling for a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty (FFNPT). A FFNPT would be a companion treaty to the UNFCCC/Paris Agreement, focused on winding down the supply of fossil fuels (the Paris Agreement does not mention fossil fuels). The initiative aims to foster a global equitable transition away from fossil fuels to clean, low-carbon energy and economies. The campaign will spur international cooperation to end new development of fossil fuels, phase out existing production within the agreed climate limit of 1.5°C, and develop plans to support workers, communities and countries dependent on fossil fuels to create secure and healthy livelihoods.

The fossil fuel industry has ignored science by planning new projects [that will result in 120 percent more GHG emissions by 2030 than what is needed to limit warming to 1.5°C](#) and avert catastrophic climate disruption. Emissions from existing production capacity alone make it impossible to stay within that threshold.

The FFNPT initiative is seeking endorsement of the treaty by municipal governments, hoping such endorsements will build public profile for the campaign and ultimately put pressure on national governments to sign and ratify such a treaty.

WHY SHOULD CITY GOVERNMENTS ENDORSE THIS INITIATIVE?

Cities can play a pivotal role in convincing national governments to take needed action

There is plenty of historic precedence for such a strategy. Getting dozens of municipal governments in a given country to pass similar motions can often put pressure on senior levels of government, and the very exercise of seeking passage of such motions can be a useful form of citizen mobilization. There is an historic parallel to this element of the FFNPT campaign from the 1970s and 80s, when hundreds of cities around the world declared themselves to be nuclear weapons free zones (NWFZ) as a means of putting pressure on national governments to take bold action on nuclear disarmament. While the act of declaring a city a NWFZ was largely symbolic, the action was helpful in building the overall nuclear disarmament movement.

For more about the FFNPT, see: www.fossilfuel treaty.org

Cities will be hard hit by climate disruption

Municipal leaders know well that their budgets, businesses and residents will be hard hit by the climate crises, as cities wrestle with heatwaves, flooding and wildfire smoke, and seek to accommodate thousands of climate migrants. City leaders know their populations – particularly the most at-risk and vulnerable – will face disruptions to food systems and rising food prices, and are most likely to suffer the consequences of fossil fuel-derived air pollution. And local leaders know it is cities that will face the escalating infrastructure costs of climate adaptation.

Cities are taking climate action, but fossil fuel expansion is undercutting their good work

Numerous cities are already taking substantive climate action and successfully lowering their GHG emissions (and a few countries, such as New Zealand, Ireland, Spain, and Denmark have passed “keep it in the ground” laws and policies such as fracking bans and/or offshore oil and gas moratoria). But their efforts are being undermined by the expansion of fossil fuel infrastructure and production. Cities and their citizens don’t want to be chumps, doing what they should to lower GHG emissions only to have the expansion of fossil fuel industries undo their best efforts. A FFNPT can put an end to this harmful dynamic, ensuring all are pulling in the same direction as we act in the face of the climate emergency. A core appeal of a FFNPT is that it reinforces the efforts cities are already undertaking, ensuring their own actions are part of an overall process of forward momentum. **If your city is already taking climate action, the FFNPT is how to backstop all the good work you are already doing.**

Endorsing the FFNPT is one way to act on climate emergency motions

Over the last two years, hundreds of cities around the world have passed climate emergency motions. But the fossil fuel industry hasn’t gotten the message. Their expansion plans are moving the world in the opposite direction from where we need to go. Pushing for a FFNPT is one way to reinforce a climate emergency motion, signalling to national governments that their economic and energy plans need to align with climate science.

Fossil fuel companies are diverting COVID-19 pandemic recovery funds, siphoning stimulus money that cities badly need.

In July 2020, [EnergyPolicyTracker.org published analysis](#) of where COVID response and recovery funds were going. Their findings: to date, 51% of recovery funding from senior levels of government in G20 countries was going to fossil fuel companies. Not only is

this the wrong path to be taking given the climate emergency, that's billions of dollars that could be going to support municipal efforts to Build Back Better, and to fund the kinds of just recovery ideas advanced by C40 Cities (see [C40 Mayors' Agenda for a Green and Just Recovery](#)) and the Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance (see CNCA's [Open Letter on COVID recovery](#)).

HOW DOES CITY ENDORSEMENT HELP THE LARGER CAMPAIGN?

The global campaign for a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty sees support from municipal governments as a key element of building the profile and momentum of this initiative. The campaign is seeking a few dozen cities – a group of “early endorsers” – to help kick-start the global call for a new treaty.

The campaign hopes to announce its initial group of early endorser cities in November 2020. This group will be calling on their national governments to support the treaty initiative, and will also invite thousands of other municipalities to “join the call.”

The campaign can provide cities with draft motions for treaty endorsement.

OTHER FAQs

The UN Framework Convention and Paris Agreement already exist. Why not use these frameworks? Aren't we undermining them by proposing a new treaty?

Short answer: *UNFCCC is important but inadequate; we need to complement it with an FFNPT.*

We support using the UNFCCC and Paris Agreement to constrain fossil fuel supply. But the UNFCCC and Paris Agreement don't mention fossil fuels, and aren't fit for that purpose. They have not constrained supply and current commitments exceed 3°C by 2100.

The [Production Gap Report](#) says planned fossil fuel supply expansion is 120% greater than the 1.5°C budget by 2030. This is “decade zero” and we need to complement Paris with a treaty focused on fossil fuels.

The world has been moving away from multilateralism and international cooperation. Is now the right time to propose a new multilateral treaty?

Short answer: *To get international cooperation we must demand it*

True, prospects for multilateralism are currently low. But things can change rapidly with new elections and new events – like COVID-19. The pandemic has changed what we thought possible by governments. Now is a time for bold new ideas like the FFNPT.

The large fossil fuel producing countries, such as Saudi Arabia, Russia and the United States are not likely to join such a Treaty, so how would it work?

Short answer: *A club of “first movers” can influence big producers and markets*

We do not expect major fossil fuel producers to join an FFNPT, at least in the medium term. Nor do we necessarily expect a “universal treaty” like the UNFCCC. Rather, we are calling for a group of “first mover” countries to work together. One model is the TPNW, a treaty led by non-nuclear-armed states to stigmatise and ban nuclear weapons. It seeks to change the narrative about nuclear weapons and prohibit producing, manufacturing, acquiring, possessing or stockpiling nuclear weapons. In developing the treaty there are many lessons to learn from other treaties on nuclear and chemical weapons, landmines, cluster munitions, ozone depleting substances etc.

Similarly, we believe a well-designed FFNPT can:

- Strengthen demands on governments;
- Reduce industry’s regulatory and political space;
- Disrupt business-as-usual;
- Increase the risks, costs and uncertainty of fossil fuel expansion & investment; and
- Reduce access to finance and markets for fossil fuels.

In light of the urgency of scaling down fossil fuel production to address climate change, won’t negotiating a new treaty take far too long?

Short answer: *The journey matters*

The experience of treaty negotiation differs – the nuclear NPT took 3 years; others have taken decades. We see the treaty as a “beacon” illuminating a number of important steps, all of which help scale down production.

At the local level it provides a focus for action akin to nuclear-free zone cities.

At the national level it’s a vehicle to engage governments in a discussion about supply side measures.

At the international level it provides context for a club of first movers, a new registry of fossil fuel production, and a global commission on fossil fuels.

It changes the narrative and increases risk to the fossil fuel industry, affecting access to finance. All of the strategies underpinning the treaty initiative – including the research, campaign and regional collaboration – have value individually and collectively. The treaty provides an overarching framework and a demand that can unify these efforts so that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts – a systems approach to systems change.

Isn't the best way to phase out the fossil fuel industry tackling the demand side and allowing the market to phase-out fossil fuels?

Short answer: *Supply and demand must meet, like two arms of a scissors, to cut fossil fuel supply*

Action on emissions and the demand-side is necessary but insufficient. Systems change requires a systems approach, including supply-side measures. The treaty is part of a systems approach involving multiple mutually-reinforcing strategies. Absent a treaty like the FFNPT, industry will continue undermining climate science, policy and action and lock-in production.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty entered into force in 1970 yet nuclear-armed states have not disarmed. Why are you basing a fossil fuel treaty on a treaty that has failed?

Short answer: *the N-NPT is one model among others we're looking at for best practices*

We are using the N-NPT as an analogy not as the sole or only model for a fossil fuel treaty. It is certainly true that the experience of the N-NPT is *mixed*: It *has* limited proliferation. But it has largely *failed* to disarm nuclear-states. They continue to hold 22,000+ warheads.

This led to a second nuclear treaty – the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). The international campaign for this treaty, ICAN, won the Nobel Prize in 2017. As well as the NPT and TPNW, we are looking at numerous other treaties for lessons, and aim to build on the best practices of each.

The FFNPT, unlike the N-NPT, is not seeking merely to prevent the expansion of fossil fuels – it also seeks to create a regime for winding-down fossil fuel production, guided by international agreement and cooperation.

For more about the FFNPT, see: www.fossilfueltreaty.org