

The Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty



And why your local council should endorse it

March 2024

Your Council is considering a motion to endorse the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty. This briefing explains the thinking behind the proposed treaty and explains why we're encouraging Councillors to back the motion.

What is the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty?

The Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty is a proposal for an international agreement that would plan a fast, fair and financed global just transition away from fossil fuels, in line with the climate science, and to clean energy for all.

Other impactful international treaties have helped manage the threats posed by nuclear weapons, landmines and ozone-depleting chemicals and were negotiated quickly in the face of a crisis. The same could apply to a fossil fuel treaty.¹

Why is it needed?

While the UN Paris Agreement set a crucial global climate target, governments still plan to produce more than double the amount of fossil fuels in 2030 than would be consistent with limiting global warming to that target of 1.5°C.

The text of the Paris Agreement does not mention oil, coal or gas at all, despite the main cause of climate change being the burning of fossil fuels. For the first time, COP28 in Dubai agreed the fairly weak wording for the need to 'transition from fossil fuels' but there was no plan set out in the agreement as to how extraction of fossil fuels might end. UN climate agreements continue to focus on decreasing demand by meeting targets to reduce carbon emissions, rather than cutting supplies – but we need both these things.

The Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty initiative aims to plug this gap by fostering international

cooperation to develop a global treaty to phase out oil, coal and gas; and manage a global transition that is both fast and fair, leaving no worker, community or country behind. It builds on decades of calls and campaigns for a fossil fuel phase out and fair energy transition by governments, civil society, Indigenous, grassroots and other leaders - particularly from the global south - and aims to complement other movements.

What would the Treaty include?

The Fossil Fuel Non Proliferation Treaty would have three pillars:

Pillar 1: End new exploration and production.

A world-wide moratorium on the development of all new oil, gas and coal reserves is needed to prevent expansion of unburnable fossil fuel inventories; to protect workers, communities and assets from becoming stranded; and avoid locking in catastrophic and irreversible global heating. The International Energy Agency confirms the world has a "viable but narrow" pathway to 1.5°C, but this pathway "includes, from today, no investment in new fossil fuel supply projects, and no further final investment decisions for new unabated coal plants."²

Pillar 2: Phase out existing stockpiles and production of fossil fuels.

Phasing out fossil fuel production in line with 1.5°C will require limits on extraction, the removal of production subsidies, dismantling unnecessary infrastructure, and shifting support to safer and more sustainable alternatives. The UNEP Production Gap Report of 2021 confirmed that fossil fuel production must decline by at least 6% per year to avoid more than a one-third risk of exceeding 1.5°C — or roughly 50% by 2030.³

Pillar 3: Accelerate a just and equitable transition.

The scale of the challenge demands urgent collective action that addresses the needs of dependent workers, communities and countries. In particular this requires support for countries in the global south, to help them transition towards 100% renewable energy and diversify their economies. This is particularly important for countries dependent on imports and exports of fossil fuels.

Who is supporting the campaign for a Treaty?

Significant momentum is building for this new treaty, and the proposal is gaining traction around the world. Twelve countries from four continents are spearheading the call for a global agreement, including some of the most climate vulnerable countries such as the Pacific Island nations, but also Colombia, a country that relies heavily on income from fossil fuels. The European Parliament has endorsed the treaty and so have a number of subnational states including Hawaii and California.

Supporting them are 101 Nobel Laureates, over 2,750 scientists and academics, more than 700 parliamentarians from 70 countries, the US state of California, 95 cities including London, Edinburgh, Birmingham, Barcelona, Vancouver and Sydney, as well as more than 2,200 civil society organisations all endorsing the call for a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty. ⁴

What difference could Scotland's support make?

A treaty does not need to be universal to be effective. A grouping of 'champion' countries, can exercise significant influence. Scotland has shown it can be influential on the world stage with its call

for a Loss and Damage fund at COP26 and 27, in which it broke the taboo among the rich countries and successfully got the proposal for the fund onto the agenda. We're calling on the Scottish Government to do the same thing again now by publicly endorsing the proposal for a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty.

What about local Councils?

We need to accelerate a just transition away from fossil fuels and towards a zero carbon world: local Councils are an essential element in making this happen. Local authorities are also on the vanguard of climate solutions, developing sustainable energy alternatives, retrofitting buildings and divesting from fossil fuels. As such, this Council's support for a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty would positively reinforce the Council's commitment to tackling climate change.

A number of councils in the UK have endorsed the treaty already including Brighton, London and Birmingham. Edinburgh was the first council in Scotland to endorse the treaty ahead of COP26 in Glasgow. Edinburgh council produced a report on the fossil fuel treaty that can be found online (see endnote for url link). ⁵ The council leader also wrote to then First Minister Nicola Sturgeon calling on her to support a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The Council's championing of a fossil fuel treaty will send a clear message to the Scottish Government that this is an important treaty for Scotland to back and creates greater awareness about the initiative. Your Council will also become part of a global movement committed to phasing out fossil fuels via an international treaty.

You can find more detail about the Fossil Fuel Treaty on the Fossil Fuel initiative website: fossilfuel treaty.org

1 <https://productiongap.org/>

2 <https://www.iea.org/reports/net-zero-by-2050>. www.bicusa.org/en/Document.102339.aspx

3 <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/production-gap-report-2021>

4 <https://fossilfuel treaty.org/#endorse>

5 Edinburgh Council report on the Fossil Fuel Treaty - <https://democracy.edinburgh.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=40761>
