

COP28: UN climate talks go big on ending fossil fuels

Published
2 hours ago



Almost 100,000 people are at the UN climate talks in Dubai, UAE

By Georgina Rannard and Esme Stallard

Climate reporters at COP28, Dubai

Countries and oil companies at the UN climate talks have promised to make major progress in tackling global warming in a large new energy pledge.

Around 100 countries promised to treble world renewable energy use by 2030.

And 50 oil and gas companies including Saudi giant Aramco pledged to stop adding to planet-warming gases by 2050.

That only covers emissions from production, not the burning of fossil fuels and critics said it would not meaningfully tackle climate change.

But countries pledging to triple renewable energy at the COP28 summit in Dubai said it would help remove fossil fuels from the world's energy system by 2050 at the latest.

Supporters, including the EU and COP28 host country the United Arab Emirates (UAE), want the pledge to be included in the final deal made at COP, meaning all of the nearly 200 countries represented here would sign up.

Climate groups cautiously welcomed the promise to ramp up renewables, but said that promises by oil and gas companies were "greenwashing".

"I am very sceptical," said Prof Bill Hare, CEO of Climate Analytics and author of numerous UN climate change reports. "The real challenge for the oil and gas sector is to move away from producing oil and gas," he said. "Nothing else really matters in the end."

More on the COP28 climate summit

- [What is COP28 and why is it so important?](#)
- [Four ways climate change worsens extreme weather](#)
- [Really simple guide to climate change](#)
- [Pope Francis calls for end to fossil fuels at COP28](#)

Fatih Birol from the International Energy Agency told BBC News that the fossil fuel industry should reduce its emissions from production by 2030, 20 years earlier than the date promised. They account for around **15% of global emissions** - and that's before you even count the gases given off when their products are used to power vehicles and heat homes.

He said it is "facing a moment of truth now in Dubai... Is it going to be partnering with the rest of the world.. Or is it going to stick to their business plans?".

Addressing the summit on Saturday, COP28 President Sultan al-Jaber said the new pledge "adds up to more countries and more companies from more sectors than ever before, all aligning with our North Star of 1.5C".

World leaders agreed in Paris in 2015 to limit global warming to that amount.

Burning huge amounts of oil, gas and coal is driving climate change but leaders cannot yet agree on how fast the world should stop using them.

Mr Jaber called Saturday's pledge "a great first step".

"Whilst many national oil companies have adopted net zero 2050 targets for the first time, I know that they and others, can and need to do more," he said. "We need the entire industry to keep 1.5C within reach and set even stronger ambitions for decarbonisation."

The UAE says the Decarbonisation Charter will speed up climate action as oil and gas companies that account for 40% of the world's emissions promise to become net zero by 2050. Reaching net zero means stopping adding greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.

Carroll Muffett, president of the Center for International Environmental Law, however, said that the only way to 'decarbonize' carbon-based oil and gas is to stop producing it "quickly, completely, and permanently".

"Anything short of this is just more industry greenwash."

The 50 companies, which also include the UAE's state oil company, also pledge to almost entirely stop releasing the potently planet-heating gas methane during oil and gas production by 2030.

On Saturday UN Secretary-General General António Guterres told the talks that the world must "phase out fossil fuels" in time to keep global temperature rise below 1.5C above pre-industrial levels.

"The rapid acceleration of clean energy is needed, and we've called for the tripling of renewables. But it is only half the solution," said Tina Stige, Climate Envoy for the Marshall

Islands, which is one of the nation's most vulnerable to climate change.

"The pledge can't greenwash countries that are simultaneously expanding fossil fuel production," she adds.

- **COP28 host UAE to ramp up oil production, BBC learns**

The UAE's presidency of the COP28 talks has attracted criticism because the country is one the top 10 oil and gas producers in the world and the summit's president Sultan al-Jaber also heads the giant Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (Adnoc).

More world leaders are addressing COP28 which is in its third day.

In a speech read on behalf of Pope Francis - who cannot attend due to illness - he said renewable energy was crucial to saving the world as well as "the elimination of fossil fuels, and education in lifestyles that are less dependant."

Lula's bid to style himself climate leader at Cop28 undermined by Opec move

Jonathan Watts

Brazilian president's plans to approve new fossil fuel projects sit awkwardly with pledge to meet 1.5C target

Sat 2 Dec 2023 12.00 GMT

-
-



- Brazil's president, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, speaks at the Cop28 climate summit in Dubai on Friday. Photograph: Giuseppe Cacace/AFP/Getty Images

- The Brazilian president, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, has roared into Cop28 with a mega-delegation of more than 2,000 people and grand ambitions to address inequality and protect the world's tropical forests.

Lula, as he is known, said his country was leading by example: “We have adjusted our climate goals, which are now more ambitious than those of many developed countries. We have drastically reduced deforestation in the Amazon and will bring it to zero by 2030,” he said.

But any pretensions he might have had to broader climate leadership on cutting fossil fuels were weakened on Thursday when his energy minister, Alexandre Silveira, chose the opening of the planet's biggest environmental conference as the moment to announce that Brazil plans to align itself more closely with the world's biggest oil cartel, Opec.

Brazilian climate campaigners said the timing and symbolism were horrendous and a sign of the divisions within a country that has made huge strides to reduce deforestation of the Amazon, even as it has ploughed ahead with oil exploration in ecologically sensitive areas.

“This statement is a scandal. Celebrating entry into the oil club in the middle of a climate conference is as if the minister of mines and energy were disavowing President Lula’s own environmental speech,” said Marcio Astrini, the executive secretary of the Brazilian Climate Observatory. “With ministers like this, the president doesn’t need enemies.”

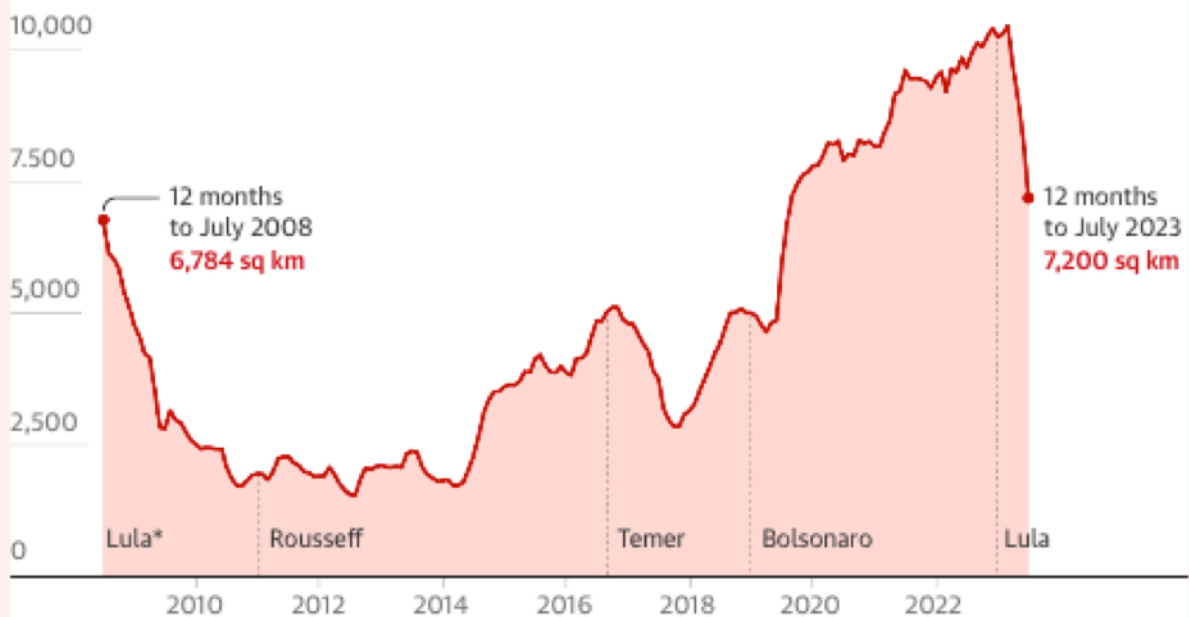
At the end of the world’s hottest year on record, scientists, activists and politicians in many affected countries have called on delegates at the UN climate summit to set a goal of phasing out fossil fuels.

They had hoped that Brazil, which will host Cop30 in two years’ time, might be an ally. Since taking power in January, Lula - a veteran of the Workers party - has repeatedly declared the climate crisis is a priority and supported measures taken by his environment minister, Marina Silva, to reverse the ecological devastation of the previous administration of his rightwing predecessor, Jair Bolsonaro.

This has given Lula strong cards to play at the summit. Deforestation, which accounts for about half of Brazil’s carbon discharges, has fallen to the lowest level in five years. His government has strengthened emission-cutting targets, pledging a 53% fall by 2030 compared with 2005, and net zero by mid-century.

Forest loss in the Brazilian Amazon

Sq km, 12-month moving average



Source: Amazon Monitoring. Alerts averaged from Deter and Sad monitoring systems. Note: data is for Brazil's Legal Amazon, a socio-geographic division containing all nine states in the Amazon basin. Lula first took office on 1 Jan 2003

Ani Toni, the government's climate change secretary, told reporters that Brazil had already saved 250m tonnes of carbon this year, equivalent to the total for Argentina. "Brazil arrives at Cop28 with its head held high," she said.

As well as setting a positive example, Brazil organised a conference of Amazon nations earlier this year and tried to build an alliance with other ecological superpowers, such as Indonesia and Congo.

At Cop28, it is calling for the establishment of a forest fund that would reward nations for reducing deforestation and provide incentives for forest residents to avoid destructive practices such as logging, ranching and mining. It is hoped that the fund, which would be managed by the World Bank or another multilateral organisation, would start at the relatively low level of \$100m and steadily increase to the billions needed to stabilise and recover the world's great terrestrial carbon sinks, rainfall regulators and homes of biodiversity.

A separate loss and damage fund has already been agreed to support the nations and communities most vulnerable to extreme weather, and Brazil is expected to demonstrate leadership among developing nations by pushing for wealthy

nations, who bear most responsibility for the climate crisis, to make sizeable contributions.

Foreign ministry officials say Brazil will also act as a defender of the world's most ambitious climate goal, to limit global heating to 1.5C (2.7F) above pre-industrial levels, despite growing scientific evidence that this target may be breached sooner than expected. For there to be even a remote chance of preventing this, emissions have to start declining, and rapidly, which will require a rapid phase-out of fossil fuels.

This is where Brazil – like the US, UK, UAE, Norway and a host of other countries – is on shakier ground, because all these countries are planning to approve new oil projects that are incompatible with the 1.5C target. The day after Cop28, Brazil will stage an auction for hundreds of oil drilling blocks, many of them in ecologically sensitive areas such as near the mouth of the Amazon river, according to Carol Pasquali of Greenpeace.

“Brazil is caught in contradictions,” she said. “On one hand, it is looking forward and walking in the right direction on forests. But on the other, it carries the weight from the past when it comes to exploring for oil. Brazil needs to be more consistent if it wants to assume a role as a climate leader ahead of Cop30.”

Challenges within the government do not help. To get elected, Lula had to call on a broad front of politicians ranging from leftwing climate justice campaigners to rightwing agribusiness advocates.

Brazil's indigenous communities have a stronger voice than before thanks to Lula's appointment of the country's first minister of indigenous peoples, Sonia Guajajara. She is one of 15 ministers in Brazil's delegation, which is more than three times the size of any the country has sent before and reportedly the biggest in the history of UN climate summits. A broad church, it includes civil society activists, businesspeople, academics and Indigenous representatives.

“This Cop needs to make Indigenous people feel that they are truly heard and have their rights guaranteed, especially when it comes to demarcation of territory,” said delegate Neidinha Cristóvão Kanindé.

US lays out plan at COP 28 to slash greenhouse gas methane from oil and gas

By [Nichola Groom](#) and [Valerie Volcovici](#)

December 3, 2023 6:56 AM GMT+13 Updated 2 hours ago



An oil pump jack is seen in the Loco Hills region, New Mexico, U.S., April 6, 2023.

REUTERS/Liz Hampton/File Photo [Acquire Licensing Rights](#)

DUBAI, Dec 2 (Reuters) - The Biden administration on Saturday unveiled final rules aimed at cracking down on U.S. oil and gas industry releases of methane, part of a global plan to rein in emissions that contribute to climate change.

The rules, two years in the making, were announced by U.S. officials at the United Nations COP28 climate change conference in Dubai. The United States and other nations attending the summit are expected to detail how they will achieve a 150-country pledge made two years ago to slash methane emissions by 30% from 2020 levels by 2030.

Advertisement · Scroll to continue

Methane tends to leak into the atmosphere undetected from drill sites, gas pipelines and other oil and gas equipment. It has more warming potential than carbon dioxide and breaks down in the atmosphere faster, so reining in methane emissions can have a more immediate impact on limiting climate change.

"These new standards will help us meet our international commitments to aggressively tackle climate change, while improving air quality for communities all across the country," U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Michael Regan told a news conference in Dubai.

Advertisement · Scroll to continue

Vice President Kamala Harris cited the methane regulations among several U.S. initiatives to fight global warming and said they showed the Biden administration had restored the United States as a global leader in the fight against climate change.

"Today, we are demonstrating through action how the world can and must meet this crisis," Harris she told the conference.

EPA's new policies would ban routine flaring of natural gas produced by newly drilled oil wells, require oil companies to monitor for leaks

from well sites and compressor stations and establishes a program to use third party remote sensing to detect large methane releases from so-called "super emitters," the agency said in a statement.

Advertisement · Scroll to continue

The rules would prevent an estimated 58 million tons of methane from reaching the atmosphere between 2024 and 2038 - nearly the equivalent of all the carbon dioxide emissions from the power sector in the year 2021, EPA added.

New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham, whose state already put in place methane regulations that served as a model for the EPA, said that the new methane rules enables the United States to lead by example and encourage other countries to take similar measures.

"Now we've got credibility to make sure that we can demonstrate to the whole world that we can hold polluters accountable and move the needle," she told the press conference.

Some environmental groups praised the rules.

"Strong methane standards are essential to curb climate pollution and better protect the health and safety of workers and communities living near fossil fuel extraction," Earthjustice's vice president of litigation for climate and energy, Jill Tauber, said in a statement.

The rule will produce climate and health benefits of up to \$7.6 billion a year through 2038, EPA said. It will also increase recovery of up to \$13 billion of natural gas over the time period.

The rule differs somewhat from draft proposals EPA released in 2021 and 2022, in part by giving the industry more time to comply.

The agency also tweaked the Super Emitter Program so that third parties send information on methane leaks to EPA directly for verification. Previously they would have been able to send the information directly to companies, a provision the oil and gas industry said would put too much power in the hands of environmental groups that search for methane leaks.

The American Petroleum Institute, an oil and gas industry trade group, said it was reviewing the rule.

"To be truly effective, this rule must balance emissions reductions with the need to continue meeting rising energy demand," Dustin Meyer, API senior vice president of policy, economics and regulatory affairs, said in a statement.

Exxon CEO Darren Woods told Reuters at COP28 that it still needs to review the rule but: "Conceptually, we're supportive of it as long as it's a reasonable and sound policy."

BP said it "actively collaborated" with EPA as it worked on the final rule and "welcomes the finalization."

Reporting by Nichola Groom and Valerie Volcovici in Dubai; editing by Diane Craft and Giles Elgood

Our Standards: [The Thomson Reuters Trust Principles](#).

Pledge to Triple Nuclear Capacity

in Push to Cut Fossil Fuels

The group, including Britain, France and the United States, said the agreement was critical to meeting nations' climate commitments.



President Emmanuel Macron of France at the United Nations climate summit in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, on Saturday. He said nuclear power was an “indispensable solution” in efforts to curb climate change.

Credit...

Peter Dejong/Associated Press

By Jenny Gross

Reporting from COP28 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Dec. 2, 2023

Updated 5:49 a.m. ET

[Get it sent to your inbox.](#)

The United States and 21 other countries pledged on Saturday at the United Nations climate summit in Dubai to triple nuclear energy capacity by 2050, saying the revival of nuclear power was critical for cutting carbon emissions to near zero in the coming decades.

Proponents of nuclear energy, which supplies 18 percent of electricity in the United States, say it is a clean, safe and reliable complement to wind and solar energy. But a significant hurdle is funding.

Last month, a developer of small nuclear reactors in Idaho said it was [canceling a project](#) that had been expected to be part of a new wave of power plants. The cost of building the reactors had risen to \$9.3 billion from \$5.3 billion because of increasing interest rates and inflation.

Britain, Canada, France, Ghana, South Korea, Sweden and the United Arab Emirates were among the 22 countries that [signed the declaration](#) to triple capacity from 2020 levels.

Tripling nuclear energy capacity by 2050, which would also help Europe reduce its dependence on Russia oil and gas, would require significant investment. In advanced economies, which have nearly 70 percent of global nuclear capacity, investments has stalled as construction costs have soared, projects have run over budget and faced delays. On top of cost, another hurdle to expanding nuclear capacity is that plants are slower to build than many other forms of power.