

# Cop28 draft climate deal criticised as ‘grossly insufficient’ and ‘incoherent’

**Text now being considered by governments calls for ‘reducing both consumption and production of fossil fuels’**

**Fiona Harvey, Patrick Greenfield, Nina Lakhani and Adam Morton in Dubai, and Damian Carrington**

Mon 11 Dec 2023 14.54 GMT

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- Activists attend a protest at the Cop climate conference. Photograph: Thayer Al-Sudani/Reuters

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A draft deal to cut global fossil fuel production is “grossly insufficient” and “incoherent” and will not stop the world from facing dangerous climate breakdown, according to delegates at the UN’s Cop28 summit.

The text put forward by the summit presidency after 10 days of wrangling was received with concern and anger by many climate experts and politicians, though others welcomed elements of the draft including the first mention in a Cop text of reducing fossil fuel production.

Some countries are despairing that the text does not require a full phase-out of fossil fuels.

Cedric Schuster of Samoa, chair of the Alliance of Small Island States, said: “We will not sign our death certificate. We cannot sign on to text that does not have strong commitments on phasing out fossil fuels.”

The Cop28 presidency released a draft text in the early evening on Monday, which called for “reducing both consumption and production of fossil fuels, in a just, orderly and equitable manner, so as to achieve net zero by, before or around 2050, in keeping with the science”.

The text avoids highly contentious calls for a “phase-out” or “phase-down” of fossil fuels, which have been the focus of deep disagreement among the more than 190 countries meeting in Dubai.

But instead of requiring fossil fuel producers to cut their output, it frames such reductions as optional, by calling on countries to “take actions that could include” reducing fossil fuels. “That one word ‘could’ just kills everything,” said Eamon Ryan, Ireland’s environment minister.

The text is expected to form the key outcome of this fortnight of fraught talks on the future of climate action, which are scheduled to end on Tuesday morning in the United Arab Emirates.

If the language on fossil fuels survives an expected onslaught from the negotiators of big oil-producing countries, it would mark the first time that countries were being asked under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change to reduce their fossil fuel production.



## Fossil fuel phase-out will ‘not avert climate breakdown without protections for nature’

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Governments will now have an opportunity to make their views known, and are expected to wrangle hard over the wording. For some countries that wanted an unambiguous phase-out of fossil fuels, the failure to mandate a reduction is too much of a weakening.

Mary Robinson, chair of the Elders group of former global politicians, said: “It is not good enough to say you recognise and respect the science but then fail to take heed of its dire warnings in the collective action you commit to ... It is not good enough to use weak language or to permit loopholes for the fossil fuel industry to continue to contribute to the very problem countries are meant to be committed to tackling here in Dubai ... this current version of the Cop28 text is grossly insufficient.”

It is also feared that countries such as Saudi Arabia, which has firmly refused to countenance a phase-out or phase-down of fossil fuels, may use the final hours of these talks to try to weaken the text further.

A spokesperson for the presidency said: “The Cop28 presidency has been clear from the beginning about our ambitions. This text reflects those ambitions and is a huge step forward. Now it is in the hands of the parties, who we trust to do what is best for humanity and the planet.”

The text tackles the issue of fossil fuel production head on, rather than referring to the emissions from fossil fuels. Saudi Arabia has been trying throughout the conference to insist on the term fossil fuel emissions, in place of fossil fuel production, in order to leave room for the use of carbon capture and storage (CCS).

The text also avoids the term “unabated”, which some countries wanted to insert, which also refers to the use of CCS. The head of the International Energy Agency, Fatih Birol, has described the use of CCS to allow oil companies to carry on producing as a “fantasy” and an “illusion”.

The language includes a reference to scientific advice, which many countries are likely to take as a reference to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the body of the world’s leading climate scientists, which has concluded that there can be only a very small role for fossil fuels in 2050, if the world is to meet net zero emissions and limit global heating to 1.5C (2.7F) above preindustrial levels. Fossil fuel reductions “in keeping with the science” would therefore have to be drastic in the next two and a half decades.

David Waskow, at the World Resources Institute, said: “This text doesn’t send the clear signals that are needed to avert the climate crisis. The suggested set of actions is merely a pick-your-own menu ... But you can’t just pick one, or a couple, out of that list. The world is going to need to tackle all of those transformative changes together.”

Seve Paeniu, Tuvalu’s finance minister, told the Guardian: “This is not good at all. There is no reference to a phase-out. That is a worry. And it provides countries with options rather than obligations, and that is worrisome.” He said Tuvalu would continue to press for stronger language.

Teresa Ribera, Spain’s environment minister and a co-leader of the EU delegation, said: “We think there are elements in the text that are fully unacceptable. We want to have 1.5C being the safe space. We are going to fight for 1.5C. The current text provides some reference to the science, some reference to 1.5C, but it is not consistent with dealing with energy.”

Romain Ioualalen, policy lead at Oil Change International, a pressure group, said: “The latest draft is an incoherent and dangerous list of weak measures completely divorced from what is needed to limit warming to 1.5C.”

Meena Raman, a climate policy expert from the Third World Network, said the text reads “like the president is trying to manage a balancing act” between developing and developed countries. “You can never keep everyone happy, that’s negotiating – it’s always a delicate balance. But I am a bit relieved that it’s not completely biased.... For the first time we have language in the text about consumption and production, which is interesting.”

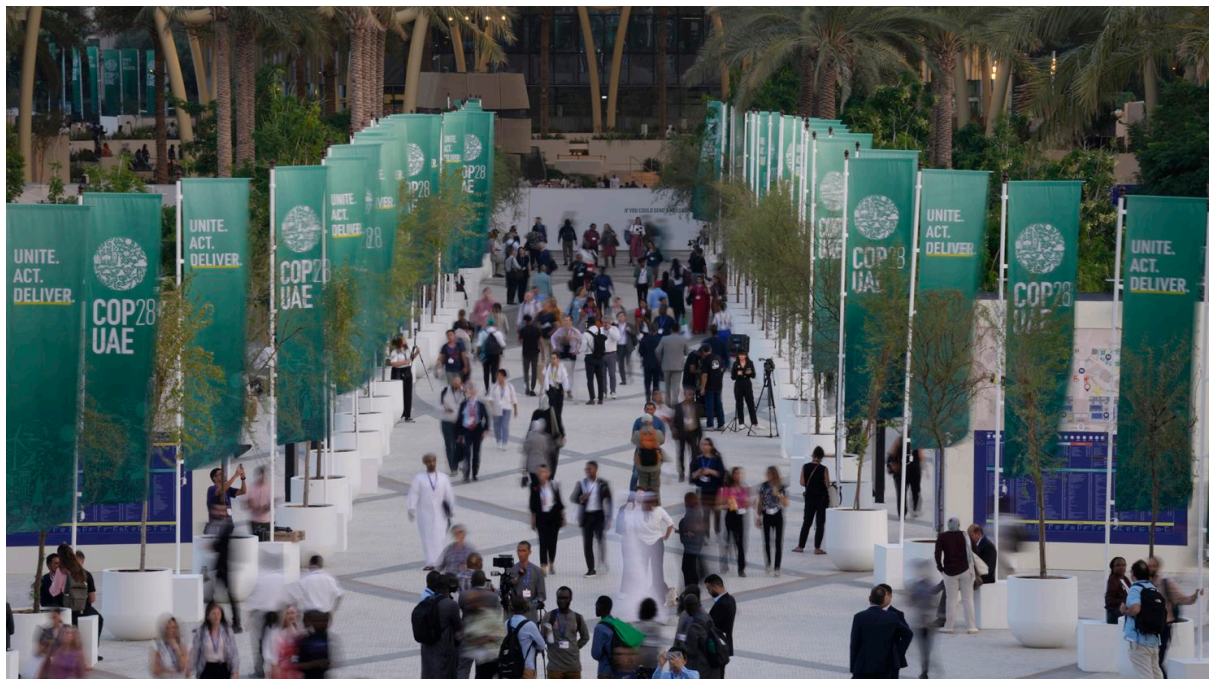
Other campaigners welcomed the text. Mohamed Adow, the director of Power Shift Africa, said: “This text lays the ground for transformational change. This is the beginning of the end of the fossil fuel era.”

## ‘Verge of complete failure’: Climate summit draft drops the mention of fossil fuel phase-out, angering advocates

By Angela Dewan and Laura Paddison, CNN

5 minute read

Updated 1:18 PM EST, Mon December 11, 2023



People walk through the COP28 climate summit in Dubai on Monday, December 4.

Peter Dejong/AP

### **DubaiCNN —**

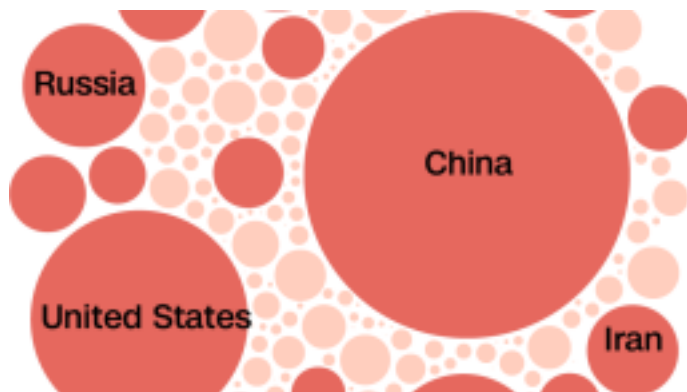
Climate advocates are warning the COP28 climate summit could be on the cusp of failure after a new draft of the core agreement removed a call to phase out fossil fuels, the main driver of the climate crisis.

The draft, posted Monday more than six hours later than expected, instead used watered-down language on fossil fuels in an apparent concession to oil-producing nations that opposed the measure.

It calls on countries to take actions to reduce planet-warming pollution, which “could” include reducing the consumption and production of oil, coal and gas. Many climate experts and observers have blasted the draft for its vague language – including the use of the nonspecific “could” – and a lack of concrete timelines.

More than 100 countries came to the Dubai talks supporting language to phase out fossil fuels, and many are likely to voice their opposition in coming sessions. Others, such as Saudi Arabia, which have pushed against the inclusion of any reference to fossil fuels, may attempt to water the text down further still.

If the current draft does not get widespread support, negotiators may need to return to debate.



As climate chaos accelerates, which countries are polluting the most?

Earlier drafts had included several options that called on countries to phase out climate-polluting oil, gas and coal, which observers said was an encouraging sign that this year’s summit agreement would be stronger than previous years.

Climate advocate and former US Vice President Al Gore said in a post on X the summit “is now on the verge of complete failure.”

“The world desperately needs to phase out fossil fuels as quickly as possible, but this obsequious draft reads as if OPEC dictated it word for word,” Gore said. “It is even worse than many had feared.”

The secretary-general of the oil-producing group OPEC, Haitham Al Ghais, called on members and allies last week to “proactively reject” any language that targeted fossil fuels rather than emissions.

The letter, written before the latest draft was posted, noted the previous option for a “fossil fuels phase out” and said it would be “unacceptable that politically motivated campaigns put our people’s prosperity and future at risk.”



Al Gore calls UAE hosting COP28 ‘ridiculous,’ slams oil CEO appointed to lead climate talks

The new draft calls for countries to take action to reduce planet-warming emissions, with a menu of choices that could include “reducing both consumption and production of fossil fuels, in a just, orderly and equitable manner so as to achieve net zero by, before, or around 2050 in keeping with the science.” It also includes an option for “tripling renewable energy capacity globally.”

“We have made progress. But we still have a lot to do,” COP28 President Sultan Al Jaber said Monday in a summit session. “You know what remains to be agreed. And you know that I want you to deliver the highest ambition on all items, including on fossil fuel language.”

Al Jaber, who is also the head of the UAE’s state-owned oil company, has had a controversial summit.

Shockwaves ripped through the talks shortly after they began last weekend when comments from Al Jaber made in November came to light. In a panel discussion, he said there is “no science” behind the demand that phasing out fossil fuels is necessary to keep global warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius — the goal of the Paris climate agreement.

In response, Al Jaber fiercely defended his commitment to climate science the next day, and said phasing out fossil fuels is “inevitable” and “essential.”

‘Our death certificate’

Monday’s draft came after marathon negotiations and was published more than six hours later than expected. The conference is due to end on Tuesday, but the new draft — which is far from what many nations in Dubai had called for — could prolong one of the most contentious and high-stakes conferences in its nearly three decade history.

The Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), an intergovernmental organization, has already indicated its members will not approve the agreement in its current form and has criticized the negotiations as lacking transparency and inclusivity.



Bear attacks in Japan are at a record high. Climate change and an aging population are making the problem worse

“We will not sign our death certificate,” Cedric Schuster, a Samoan politician and chair of AOSIS, said in a statement. “We cannot sign on to text that does not have strong commitments on phasing out fossil fuels.”

A US State Department spokesperson said in a statement the draft “seeks to balance a variety of interests,” but still “needs to be substantially strengthened.”

Lead negotiators for the European Union described the draft as “insufficient.”

“I cannot hide the fact from you that the text, as it now stands, is disappointing,” EU Climate Action Commissioner Wopke Hoekstra told reporters. “There are a couple of good things in there, but overall, it is clearly insufficient and not adequate to addressing the problem we are here to address.”

Hoekstra added that the EU was sticking to its stance, calling for the for the phase-out of coal, oil and gas, allowing only for fossil fuel use in sectors where renewables are difficult to employ. Heavy industries like steelmaking, for example, can’t use wind and solar power.

Alok Sharma, a British MP and the president of COP26 in Glasgow two years ago, said it’s “difficult to see how this text will help to achieve the deep and rapid cut in emissions we need by 2030.”



“With so many countries backing clear language on fossil-fuel-phase-out, who does this text actually serve?” Sharma said on X, formerly Twitter.



A group of California children sue EPA in federal court, alleging it allows climate pollution to continue despite harms

Harjeet Singh, head of global political strategy at Climate Action Network International, said the latest draft was “a significant regression” from previous versions.

“Astonishingly, it has dropped explicit language on phasing out fossil fuels, opting instead for a vague commitment to ‘reduce both consumption and production’ by 2050,” he told CNN. “This is a clear indication of the fossil fuel industry’s lobbying power, influencing global policies to favor prolonged fossil fuel use.”

Rachel Cleetus, the policy director and a lead economist for the Climate and Energy Program at the Union of Concerned Scientists, said the draft agreement was “extremely disappointing, concerning, and nowhere close to the level of ambition people around the world deserve.”

“This draft comes with a huge qualifier of ‘could’ at the top that makes all the listed actions optional for nations. It has a laundry list of actions filled with glaring loopholes, including a lack of meaningful timelines” she said in a statement.

Some experts were more optimistic. “We are cooking a fossil free meal here in Dubai,” said Mohamed Adow, director of climate think tank Power Shift Africa, in a statement. “People will argue if it’s the correct recipe, but the main thing is that all the right ingredients are there.”

*This story has been updated with additional information.*

*CNN’s Laura Paddison, Ella Nilsen and Rachel Ramirez contributed to this report.*