



POLLUTING PARIS:

How Big Polluters are undermining global climate policy



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THE PATNÓW COAL FIRED POWER STATION RELEASES A PLUME OF EMISSIONS IN CENTRAL POLAND.

PHOTO: Will Rose/Greenpeace

Forewords

As a member of the European Parliament, I see the work of lobbyists every day. And while not all lobbying is inherently bad, all too often strong policy proposals are watered down, delayed, or flat out blocked by lobbyists working for special interests.

Nowhere is this problem more pressing than in the politics of climate change. The global community has committed to act on climate change, yet there is a great lack of action and ambition.

It is for this reason that I was heartened to see the European Parliament call on the EU to make rooting out the corporate interference that is delaying action a top priority at COP23. It's simple. Corporations that actively try to sabotage climate

policy should not be welcome at negotiations such as the UNFCCC or included in processes that centre on advancing real solutions to climate change.

I hope that this report by Corporate Accountability and its partners will raise awareness on the issue of corporate capture of public policy, and move governments—including those in the European Union—to action. It is high time that we address this issue once and for all and stop polluting climate policies!

Max Andersson

Member of the European Parliament
Swedish Greens (Miljöpartiet)

The Paris Agreement was applauded by many as the attainment of a great feat and a high point in multilateralism. The world was finally coming to grips with the need for action on climate change. Its aspirations were unprecedented—to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. But the agreement did nothing to get us there and even worse, called for voluntary commitments, not regulation. With such a lax regime, it is not surprising that nations quickly put pen to paper.

As permissive as the Paris Agreement may be, it has turned out that political leaders elected after their predecessor had signed it can turn around and repudiate it. Such is the signal case of the United States, whose president has made a big show of shredding his country's part of the deal. Yet this dissent, rather than shatter it, appears to have strengthened the resolve of the rest of the world to push on with the agreement. That may not have happened, had there been no fracture. Now there are two sad realities. First is that even though the United States has signalled its withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, they will still take their seat

at COP23 and likely remain obstacles to progress. Second, whether the United States remains or not, the commitments to the Paris Agreements do not cut temperature rise enough to stave off the most catastrophic effects of climate change.

What is the point of these negotiations? They are an arena for sharing and contesting ideas about how the global community can tackle a common menace confronting humankind and the planet. They are a spark for social forces to mobilise and show that real climate actions exist. But for the promise of the future to be realized, agro-ecological farming and other people-led actions should be promoted as true climate actions to give us all a fighting chance of preserving a liveable planet. Fossil fuels must be left in the ground and Big Polluters must be delinked from the climate talks. To do this, we must end the corporate capture of the UNFCCC.

Nnimmo Bassey

Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF)



A WOMAN LOOKS ON TO A COAL FIRED POWER PLANT IN CENTRAL JAVA, INDONESIA.

PHOTO: Kemal Jufri/Greenpeace

Introduction

In November 2017, during one of the most unprecedented periods of climate-related extreme weather events and humanitarian crises,^{1,2,3,4} governments will once again gather in Bonn, Germany, for the 23rd Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). High on their list will be to discuss the procedures that will guide the implementation of the Paris Agreement. If the world's governments are to avoid the worst of the climate crisis and keep warming to "well below" 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, and ideally under 1.5 degrees,⁵ they must agree to real, just, and sustainable solutions, and reject the false solutions pedaled by the world's dirtiest polluters and their proxies (including obstructionist governments and industry trade groups).

Big Polluters like oil, gas, coal, and agricultural transnational corporations (TNCs) are not only the largest emitters;^{6,7} their climate denial, lobbying, and policy interference make these industries one of the primary obstacles to sound climate policy at the local, national, and international levels. This undue influence ensures that our economies continue to pollute at dangerous levels, our media continues to doubt the settled science of climate change,^{8,9} and that this treaty process continues to fail to respond with the urgency this crisis requires.

It's time that the Big Polluters, and the business organizations and individuals working on their behalf, no longer be allowed to keep us from developing, financing, and implementing the real solutions to the climate crisis that are needed now.

Enough is enough.

This report exposes how the industries most responsible for climate change, especially fossil fuel TNCs, are obstructing real progress to address the climate crisis across key policy areas where urgent progress over the next couple of years will largely determine how habitable our future will be. Within the U.N. climate talks, key negotiating tracks undermined by industry interference include finance, mechanisms for international cooperation, agriculture, technology, and observer participation. But all is not lost. This report highlights what can be done in each of these tracks to protect against corporate capture and implement the solutions already at our fingertips.

The crisis is now

Forty million. That's the number of people whose lives were affected by the record-setting floods that drowned Southeast Asia in late summer of 2017.¹⁰ That's more than four times the entire population of London,¹¹ or nearly twice the population of Lagos.¹² Just weeks later, Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria rendered the island of Barbuda "barely habitable"¹³ and left half of Puerto Rico without drinking water.¹⁴ Harvey and Irma caused damage equaling half the total cost of all hurricane-related destruction in the U.S.

"Forty million. That's the number of people whose lives were affected by the record-setting floods that drowned Southeast Asia in late summer of 2017."

over the past half a century.¹⁵ And over recent months, severe droughts in Kenya, Somalia, and Ethiopia have contributed to the displacement of over 1 million people and have caused food shortages that have doubled the price of some essential foods.¹⁶

These hurricanes, floods, and droughts—and the immeasurable death and devastation that they bring—only provide a partial picture of what is yet to come. The world has already experienced a pre-industrial temperature rise of around 1 degree Celsius.¹⁷ But despite persistent warnings and a scientific consensus that a world where warming exceeds 2 degrees above pre-industrial levels is one that threatens life itself,¹⁸ today we are on track to a world that could be nearly 5 degrees warmer.¹⁹

The corporate obstacle to climate progress

Yet while people worldwide are already suffering the daily consequences of climate change, Global North governments are standing in the way of the concerted international policy necessary to curb the climate crisis. The immense costs of the resulting inaction are being paid with the lives and livelihoods of those who have done next to nothing to cause this crisis in the first place. Ensuring the complicity of Global North governments, a handful of the world's most powerful industries have continued to orchestrate

economic reliance on their products, while spending hundreds of millions of dollars to muddy the science and undermine the policies that would protect people and the planet.^{20 21 22} Their obstruction not only keeps us from accessing solutions to climate change, it is part of a broader takeover of democracy that increases poverty, worsens racial injustice, and promotes unsustainable development.²³

For example, the fossil fuel industry has known for decades that its products and practices were a danger to the planet.^{24 25} Only 25 fossil fuel producers are responsible for over half of global emissions²⁶ including many corporations that have gone to great lengths to obstruct progress. Climate policy interference by Exxon Mobil, BP, and Chevron ranks among the top ten most obstructive the world over.²⁷ And yet, the fossil fuel industry has leveraged its immense economic power to secure a seat at the head of the international climate policymaking table.^{28 29 30}

“For decades, the U.S. government has used the UNFCCC to advance weak deals and push fossil fuel industry interests ahead of the needs and rights of people.”

At the UNFCCC, fossil fuel TNCs and other industries intent on exploiting the climate crisis are hijacking the talks, stifling ambition, pushing false solutions, and blocking the financing (and therefore withholding the availability) of real solutions. Who can doubt, for example, that the failure of the United States to secure domestic climate legislation, or ratify the Kyoto Protocol or the Paris Agreement, is largely the result of industry interference? Perhaps as troubling is that the UNFCCC not only overlooks this obstructionism but welcomes these industries with open arms, further legitimizing them in the eyes of the world. It might look like world governments are in the driver's seat, but behind the scenes, it is the industries most responsible for, and those seeking to profit from, climate change that are pulling the strings.

The Trump administration in the U.S. is a startling example of how this industry puppet show plays out. And the U.S. is not alone. The EU is up to the same dirty games. For decades, the U.S. government has used the UNFCCC to advance weak deals and push fossil fuel industry interests ahead of the needs and rights of people.³¹ This corporate stranglehold on climate talks may be getting tighter, but it is far from new.

Paris without the polluters

Without the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement, these Global North governments are left free to do the bidding of the fossil fuel industry, while the rest of the world—especially Global South countries, low-income communities, people of color, women and children—continues to pay the price. World governments can use the negotiations at the UNFCCC to insulate climate policymaking from corporate capture at all levels, and to hold recalcitrant Global North governments accountable for doing their fair share to address climate change.

The Paris Agreement as it currently stands is not enough to stop the climate crisis. Even if all countries honor their current pledges to decrease emissions, the world would still warm by 3 degrees Celsius or more.³² Yet without the Paris Agreement and what it could be without the interference of Big Polluters, we are unlikely to achieve the global progress that must be made in an extraordinarily short time.

Governments have the opportunity to ensure that the rules and procedures they are currently developing transform the agreement from words on paper into ambitious action. By the end of 2018 at COP24, countries have agreed to develop the guidelines that will chaperone the implementation of the pledges governments have made. This is our opportunity to make sure that the meaningful, equitable, and sustainable solutions at our fingertips become reality.



PHOTO: Ken Cedeno/Greenpeace

U.S. EPA ADMINISTRATOR SCOTT PRUITT ANNOUNCES THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION'S INTENT TO WITHDRAW THE U.S. FROM THE PARIS AGREEMENT



NEGOTIATORS GATHER IN THE CHAMBER HALL AT THE UNFCCC HEADQUARTERS IN BONN, GERMANY.

PHOTO: UNclimatechange

Industry groups stalk the halls of the UNFCCC

Corporate Accountability

Some of the world’s biggest polluters with the heftiest track records of undermining climate policy are deeply embedded in the UNFCCC climate talks. One major way this influence is exerted and information is gathered for lobbying purposes is by allowing corporate trade associations with financial or other links to big polluting industries to participate in the talks as “observers.”

The Paris Agreement opens the door even wider, allowing participation from business-interest groups and corporations, without any measures in place to address—or even acknowledge—the fundamental conflict between the profit motives of polluting industries and the public interest objectives of the UNFCCC to avoid dangerous levels of emissions.

In May 2017, a years-long movement of world governments, concerned with the influence of business groups and entities with ties to Big Polluters, culminated in a call for a conflict of interest policy that ensures that participants with interests at odds with the objectives of the UNFCCC are not invited to participate. World governments are again slated to take up the issue of conflicts of interest at the climate talks in May 2018.

Like Big Tobacco writing public health laws

When representatives of industry, trade, and business organizations with track records of vehemently opposing climate policy are allowed to participate in climate negotiations, they obstruct progress, weaken policy, and delay urgent action. These groups, and the Big Polluters they often represent, have shown they will choose profit over people or planet at every turn.

The only way Parties to the UNFCCC can develop and implement real solutions to climate change is if those working on behalf of Big Oil, Coal, Gas and other Big Polluters aren’t allowed to weaken the guidelines world governments are currently developing for implementation of the Paris Agreement.

Corporate capture in action

To see the damage this causes, look no further than the handful of examples below. While many of these UNFCCC-accredited organizations publicly declare support for the Paris Agreement and climate policy more broadly, how they spend their time and money paints a different picture entirely:

- The **U.S. Chamber of Commerce** is funded by major corporate polluters (that also sit on its board of directors) and is currently receiving millions of dollars from Exxon Mobil.^{1 2 3 4 5} Even when directly

“These groups, and the Big Polluters they often represent, have shown they will choose profit over people or planet at every turn.”

asked, its executives have not admitted that human activity is the cause of climate change.⁶ The Chamber has criticized both the targets set out in the Paris Agreement as well as the measures proposed to meet them,^{7 8 9} and has aggressively undermined domestic climate policies in their tracks.^{10 11 12 13} Yet it is still granted a seat at the table at the UNFCCC.

- **BusinessEurope**, whose membership and leadership includes many polluting corporations,^{14 15 16 17} has aggressively stymied climate policy initiatives for years.¹⁸ It has influenced European Commission climate policy proposals so successfully that Commission climate policy recommendations have reflected most, if not all, of BusinessEurope's interests, weakening them significantly.¹⁹
- The **Business Council of Australia (BCA)** member base is made up of 127 CEOs from Australia's largest and wealthiest corporations.^{20 21} It is funded by big-time polluters that also sit on its climate change committee.^{22 23} The BCA has given almost no nod to the severity of climate change, its causes, or the dire need for mitigation,^{24 25} and it supports the Paris Agreement only insofar as it does not burden businesses.²⁶ Consistent with this stance, it has opposed climate policies and dismissed key targets of the Paris Agreement as far-fetched.^{27 28}

These organizations, and the countries where they are based (which also have histories of weakening climate policy), may promise they mean well. But for proof that their real intent is more sinister, consider that at the climate talks in May 2017, Global North countries in the pocket of industry refused to even allow Global South negotiators to formally acknowledge the problem of "conflicts of interest" and civil society was censored from using the words "corporate capture."²⁹



A FLOODED EXXON MOBIL HOLDING TANK IN HOUSTON FOLLOWING THE RECORD FLOODING FROM HURRICANE HARVEY

PHOTO: Aaron Sprecher/Greenpeace

The solution: A conflict-of-interest policy for the UNFCCC

Fortunately, the UNFCCC has the capacity to shut one of the doors that is allowing industry lobbyists to walk right in by addressing conflicting interests in observer participation. Parties must:

- Formally adopt the following definition: "A conflict-of-interest may arise when activities, relationships, or situations place a public institution, and/or an individual that represents it, in a real, potential, or perceived conflict between its duties or responsibilities to the public, and personal, institutional, or other interests. These other interests include, but are not limited to, business, commercial, or financial interests pertaining to the institution and/or the individual. A conflict-of-interest, therefore, could be financial in nature or could simply point to diverging interests that may undermine policy objectives or outcomes."
- Look to the abundance of established best practices around the world and put in place a stringent process for admission of UNFCCC observers, one that is rigorous enough to ensure that those allowed to participate in the UNFCCC negotiations share the objective of protecting people and the planet, not private interests or what's good for business.
- Include these policy recommendations in their submissions on how to enhance non-Party stakeholder engagement (due January 31, 2018), in order to do so while avoiding undermining the objectives of the UNFCCC and Paris Agreement.

A binding conflict-of-interest policy will be a significant step forward in preventing corporate capture of the UNFCCC process, and create an essential tool in revealing and limiting corporate influence in its many guises.



FACTORIES AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION IN A HEAVY INDUSTRIAL AREA IN HEBEI PROVINCE, CHINA.

PHOTO: Guang/Greenpeace

Carbon majors masquerading as part of the tech solution

NETH DAÑO, Action Group on Erosion, Technology and Concentration (ETC Group)

Countries cannot adapt to and mitigate the disastrous effects of climate change without developing and accessing environmentally sound, socially acceptable, gender responsive, and equitable technologies. Given this, Parties to the UNFCCC have strived to ensure that global climate policy promotes environmentally sound technologies, such as renewable energy technologies and local innovations that build on proven practices and traditional knowledge, which will allow countries to decrease emissions while providing for their peoples' basic needs and protecting against the detrimental impacts of climate change.

Parties to the UNFCCC established the Technology Mechanism in 2010 at COP16 to speed up development, transfer, and deployment of climate technologies to Global South countries in support of mitigation and adaptation efforts. It includes a policy arm—the Technology Executive Committee (TEC), and an operational arm—the Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN).¹ An advisory board guides the work of the CTCN and ensures coherence with the objectives of and accountability to the UNFCCC. The Climate Technology Network (CTN), a group of 379 organizations, institutions, and corporations, supports the CTCN by providing technical assistance and advice to requesting Global South countries.²

The private sector problem

The UNFCCC Secretariat, on its own or in collaboration with other U.N. agencies and international bodies, has launched numerous partnerships with the private sector aimed at promoting the transfer and deployment of climate technologies in general and pushing for environmentally sound technologies in particular. These include initiatives like the Private Financing Advisory Network of the Climate Technology Initiative (CTI-PFAN),³ which places sound climate technology advancement (as well as its funding and equitable distribution) in the hands of the private sector, with little oversight or ways to hold it accountable.

“At all costs, the UNFCCC cannot be seen to endorse the very technologies that have been proven to cause and aggravate climate change.”

In far more insidious ways, major fossil fuel corporations, such as Shell and industry groups like the World Coal Association, have crept into official processes in the technology sphere of the UNFCCC, where spaces have been opened up in recent years for non-State actors to take active part in policy deliberation processes. These more subtle forms of corporate capture are equally dangerous as these allow polluting corporations to project an image of being part of the solutions to the climate crisis while at the same time continuing their businesses that are primarily responsible for the climate crisis.

The insidious corporate capture of climate technology

As the climate crisis intensifies every day, people in the Global South, who bear the brunt of its impacts, lack access to the technological tools that these countries urgently need to survive the climate crisis. Corporate capture of technology processes in the UNFCCC may not always mean outright promotion of greenhouse-gas-emitting technologies or withholding genuine environmentally sound technologies. It also involves co-opting official processes to masquerade businesses that continue to drive the climate crisis. Participation in official mechanisms that are mandated to enable access to environmentally sound climate technologies for the Global South is reduced to a mere charade, sheer hypocrisy, and publicity stunt when the businesses that they represent continue to reap profits from polluting industries at the expense of the planet and the people. Technical advice for genuinely responsible climate technologies will remain in the margins and will fail to deliver substantial impacts in adaptation and mitigation efforts of Global South countries if the carbon majors continue to plunder the climate.

Corporate capture of climate technology in action

Conflicts of interest that threaten sound technology development are occurring in both components of the operational arm of the UNFCCC Technology Mechanism. For example:

- During the inaugural year of the CTCN, the climate policy head of Électricité de France (EDF), sat on the CTCN's advisory board representing business and industry NGOs.⁴ His successor was the international government relations manager of Shell, who served not once but twice.^{5 6 7 8} So, some of the world's biggest fossil fuel producers and users are playing a lead role providing guidance, technical assistance, capacity building, and policy advice on development of low-carbon, green (non-fossil fuel) technologies. They are given equal rights in the discussions that guide the CTCN's operation and access to information even before it is made public.
- The CTN has a code of conduct that, in theory, should ensure that network members that provide Global South countries with technical assistance are unbiased and objective, and disclose any possible conflict of interest.⁹ But the World Coal Association is a member of the network and a prestigious Knowledge Partner of the CTCN.¹⁰ How can a global coal industry association created to lobby for the continued use of coal¹¹ (the world's dirtiest fossil fuel) provide "objective and unbiased" information and knowledge to Global South countries seeking technical assistance on green energy sources?

The solution: Promote local solutions. Evaluate technology before it gets deployed.

At all costs, the UNFCCC cannot be seen to endorse the very technologies that have been proven to cause and aggravate climate change. In view of the principal role of the fossil fuel industry in causing the climate crisis, the Secretariat of the UNFCCC should not allow industry involvement to compromise the integrity and reputation of its bodies and processes. Fossil fuel corporations must not be allowed to represent the sector in the body that provides advice to the operation of the Technology Mechanism and must not be part of the network that is expected to provide technical assistance and knowledge on environmentally sound technologies to governments. Private sector that has an interest in climate technologies are definitely not limited to fossil fuel corporations. Parties and the UNFCCC Secretariat therefore should:

- Institutionalize the evaluation of potential environmental, social, and economic impacts of climate technologies promoted through the Technology Mechanism.
- Conduct a current review of non-State actors in the operation of the Technology Mechanism to address potential conflicts of interest and broaden the scope of technology experts offering solutions.
- Prioritize the promotion of and support for technologies and innovations developed by local communities for climate adaptation and mitigation.



EMISSIONS RISE FROM AN EXXON MOBIL REFINERY IN NEW YORK, USA

PHOTO: Robert Visser/Greenpeace

Article 6 and the invisible hand of carbon chaos

Corporate Accountability

Global North countries and their polluting corporations are responsible for nearly all of the past emissions that have led to the current temperature increases, which are already intensifying floods and droughts, and rising sea levels that are drowning island nations. As such, the UNFCCC says that Global North countries have an obligation to lead the global charge in addressing climate change.¹ Likewise, the Kyoto Protocol sets legally binding emission reduction targets for Global North countries (aka Annex I Parties).²

Despite agreeing to these reductions, these countries have been consistently unwilling to do their fair share.³ Their inaction has continued to exacerbate the impacts of climate change endured by the very same people that are now having to do far more than their fair share to compensate. Given this, it's no surprise that during negotiations on the Kyoto Protocol, the U.S. gave itself and Big Polluters another out by insisting on including emissions trading as a "flexible mechanism"^{4 5} that would allow Global North countries to trade, buy, and sell their emissions reductions obligations among themselves.⁶ The Protocol also includes two offset mechanisms—joint implementation and the clean development mechanism—that further increase "flexibility" by allowing Global North countries to satisfy their obligations by purchasing offset credits from economies that, having done little to cause the crisis, have larger allowances.

Emissions trading schemes, or "cap and trade," work through setting a global "cap" on carbon and an emissions budget that cannot be exceeded.⁷ Countries, transnational corporations, and/or sectors participating in the scheme receive emissions reduction obligations they must meet to stay under that cap. The size of their respective "pollution allowance" should be based on their contribution to climate change, so that countries and people that have done next to nothing to cause climate change should have larger allowances. Carbon is given a price, and then polluting countries or transnational corporations that are unwilling to meet their emissions reductions obligations can buy "credits" from those that have done more to reduce emissions.

Article 6: Flexible mechanisms 2.0

Carbon markets and offsets fail to decrease emissions globally and to advance climate equity.^{8 9 10 11} But countries can profit from or avoid regulating their industries through the commodification of carbon. So,

"Individuals and organizations representing what's good for corporations, not the people, have wormed their way into the very rooms where world governments are agreeing on the guidelines for Article 6."

during the eleventh hour of Paris Agreement negotiations, the Paris Agreement, the U.S. and EU helped push through a last-minute deal while negotiating Article 6, which includes: 1) a new market mechanism; 2) cooperative approaches linking markets around the world and introducing a new carbon currency—coined ITMOs, or internationally traded mitigation outcomes; and 3) non-market approaches, demanded by Southern delegates and meant to promote real policy solutions not necessarily centered around market mechanisms.¹²

Parties are developing guidelines for these approaches as part of larger negotiations on implementing the Paris Agreement. They are supposed to finalize these by 2018.

Markets: Our saving grace?

Markets are often portrayed as a magical solution to environmental pollution. Policymakers in particular like them because they shift the responsibility for regulating Big Polluters out of their hands and into the invisible hands of the market. The Koch brothers¹³ and others who profit from driving climate change have pushed this neoliberal approach in an effort to deepen their profits. When this approach can be sold as “efficient” and a lighter lift for policymakers already bearing heavy loads, it is appealing to say the least.

In theory, the magic trick works like this: Polluting corporations will buy excess “pollution allowances” from entities that have done a better job of reducing pollution. And because one “cancels out” the other—one pollutes less while the other pollutes more—we all win. Voila! The magic of the market makes the problem disappear.

Or does it? Study after study shows that carbon markets make things worse. Not only do they not address the problem, they create new ones. The European Union Emissions Trading System (EU-ETS), the longest operating trading scheme, has utterly failed to reduce emissions.¹⁴ Regulators set the cap far too high and handed out pollution allowances for free to Big Polluters. These allowances were so huge that there was little need to decrease emissions. Beyond these errors, emission trading schemes like this one give way to short-term profit-seeking, fraud and speculation, and environmental injustice; enable windfall profits by those who receive free allowances (including Big Polluters); hinder innovation; and impede the systemic changes required to implement a low-carbon economy.¹⁵

While Article 6 does not establish a global carbon market, it may provide a formalized incentive for countries to set up or expand national carbon markets so that they can pretend to meet their Nationally Determined Contributions without really doing anything to regulate emissions. It is also likely that Article 6 will link national carbon markets to each other, which means that Big Polluters that participate in national carbon markets would then be able to trade in carbon markets in other countries. This would create a network between Big Polluters all around the world, where they can buy up extra credits and continue emitting egregiously—facing no consequences and skirting all responsibility. And so Big Polluters reap the greatest benefits, because they not only avoid regulation, but are handed out extra polluting allowances that free them to continue polluting.

Markets: A distraction from real solutions

In addition to the fact that they don’t work, carbon markets displace attention from real solutions. Governments at these climate talks are wasting time fiddling with rules of markets—already shown to be a dead end—while the planet burns.

Carbon markets benefit the countries and the corporations most responsible for fueling the climate crisis, while people continue to unjustly pay the cost every day with their lives, their homes, and their

livelihoods. We are already on track to far surpass the 2-degree target. Any so-called solution that enables Big Polluters to buy more wiggle room to continue to emit only locks people into decades more of devastation.

How this plays out: Corporate influence on Article 6 negotiations

Individuals and organizations representing what’s good for corporations, not the people, have wormed their way into the very rooms where world governments are agreeing on the guidelines for Article 6. The International Emissions Trading Association (IETA) is a case in point. IETA exists to advance the economic agenda in climate policy, or in its words: “to be *the* trusted business voice on market-based climate solutions.”¹⁶ ¹⁷ Big Polluters BP and Rio Tinto helped set it up in 1999. Today, its corporate members still include BP and Rio Tinto, as well as Chevron, BHP Billiton, Dow, Duke Energy, Repsol, Xcel Energy, Veolia, Statoil, and Total.¹⁸ A Rio Tinto executive sits on its board of directors, and senior staff from BP, Shell, Chevron, and BHP Billiton direct it.¹⁹

Individuals with close ties to IETA are actually negotiating on behalf of countries at the policymaking table. The current negotiator on the Panama delegation, and a co-coordinator for the G77 & China on market mechanisms,²⁰ is currently a board member of IETA and was its president for almost eight years.²¹ His position as a government delegate is a privilege that has allowed him to attend closed negotiations on Article 6.

The solution: Equity in climate action. And no markets.

Markets are not real solutions. It is *past* time to reject them and their profits-over-people agenda and use the Paris Agreement to embrace the real solutions that work. Many of these solutions are discussed throughout this report. Now must be the time to support real people to carry out activities that lead to real emission reductions. Specifically, governments, while creating the guidelines for Article 6 and implementing them, should:

- Reject carbon markets and the commodification of carbon.
- Put in place regulations at the international and national level that require corporations to equitably and drastically reduce emissions (not just shift them around the planet).
- Advance non-market approaches to international cooperation that hold the greatest potential to decrease emissions. These include direct finance at the national level that supports Global South countries in realizing the evidenced benefits of approaches such as energy transformation, technology transfer, forest preservation, and sustainable agricultural development.

We are faced with a climate crisis because of the historical emissions of Global North countries and the polluting corporations on their turf. Their failure to own up to their fair share has intensified and hastened this crisis. Equitably addressing climate change means that these countries must take responsibility for their emissions, rather than sweeping that responsibility under the market rug.



PLUMES OF EMISSIONS RISE FROM COAL-FIRED POWER PLANTS IN THE NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIA REGION OF GERMANY.

PHOTO: Bernd Lauter/Greenpeace

The corrupting influence of corporations' COP sponsorships

Pascoe Sabido, Corporate Europe Observatory

For almost as long as the UNFCCC has existed, the very same transnational corporations whose profits depend on the burning of oil, coal, and gas have been permitted to bankroll the U.N. climate talks. This has long been a contentious issue because it allows some of the world's dirtiest corporations to buy access to these talks by writing checks to bolster the COP Presidency's budget, providing services such as cars for delegates,¹ or even building the negotiating halls where world leaders gather to address climate change.² Ahead of the November 2017 COP23 meetings, Fiji (the first small-island developing country to preside over these climate talks), established a trust fund to help them finance the COP, and is actively requesting financial support from corporations.³

Blue- and greenwashing Big Polluters

Behind the "we're all in it together" rhetoric that sponsoring corporations continuously parrot, COP sponsorship is not just a prime greenwashing platform. It also swings the door open even wider for Big Polluters to expand their influence over climate policy. The dirtiest polluters have long used their sponsorship of climate talks as part of a PR strategy to pretend they are part of the solution. By sponsoring these talks, a Big Polluter can prop itself up as a legitimate actor, which in turn makes politicians more receptive to its deceptive lobbying. In fact, since corporations are able to effectively buy their way into high-level events attended by world climate leaders, sponsorship itself often directly provides corporations the lobbying prospects they need to undermine climate policy.

Allowing corporate sponsorship is a symptom of a deeper problem: Our political leaders view climate-trashing corporations as partners in solving a crisis they not only profit from, but have lobbied against solving from day one.^{4 5} This is particularly true within the UNFCCC, which has created endless opportunities for Big Polluters to wrap their backwards motives in the U.N.'s official colors (i.e. "bluwashing").

Energy companies and other corporations that depend heavily on coal, oil, and gas know that addressing climate change demands transitioning away from fossil fuels, so it should surprise no one that they are bent on obstructing climate policy. But in many cases, governments with Big Polluters at home are all too quick to look after their own financial interests by defending the corporate "losers" in their country.

"Allowing corporate sponsorship is a symptom of a deeper problem: Our political leaders view climate-trashing corporations as partners in solving a crisis they not only profit from but have lobbied against solving..."

Instead of siding with the people, these governments help paint Big Polluters as “climate friendly” so that they continue to operate in their countries. That’s why we have seen Poland using the COP to legitimize its coal industry, even organizing a coal summit on the fringes of COP19, at which the UNFCCC Executive Secretary gave a keynote speech.^{6 7} For these countries, the climate talks are not about protecting the climate, but preserving economic power.

Why we can’t curb the climate crisis while corporations bluewash their image

Transnational corporations use the access to the UNFCCC that sponsorship buys them to undermine progress and push false solutions (like failed carbon trading or carbon capture and storage schemes). While addressing sponsorship alone will not fully reveal the wolf in sheep’s clothing, eliminating corporate sponsorship would chip away at the green and blue façades Big Polluters have erected. It would also provide space for an honest conversation on what role Big Polluters should have in solving a crisis they continue to profit from.

How this corporate capture plays out in action

These examples of recent COPs highlight just how skewed climate policy becomes when corporate sponsors set the scene:

- **COP21, Paris, 2015:** Heralded as the “make-or-break” talks for the climate, the line-up of polluting sponsors included dirty energy company Engie (ex-GDF Suez), fracking enthusiast Suez Environnement, and car manufacturer Renault. All three corporations also sponsored the COP21-endorsed “Solutions COP21,” which in turn provided them access to a “communications and networking area” inside the rooms where the negotiations were taking place.⁸
- **COP19, Warsaw, 2013:** The football-stadium-turned-conference-center where the talks took place was covered in corporate logos, including PGE and LOTOS, both majority state-owned coal and oil companies.⁹ Not only did the Polish government co-organize the “International Coal and Climate Summit” alongside the industry-funded World Coal Association, they also used their official COP19 website to push for oil drilling in the Arctic (which LOTOS is involved in).¹⁰ Worryingly, Poland will also host COP24 in 2018, when the guidelines and procedures for implementation of the Paris Agreement will be agreed upon.
- **COP17, Durban, 2011:** Corporations were given a choice by the South African government to fund entertaining jazz concerts, fancy gala dinners, or a lounge.¹¹ The British-South African mining giant, Anglo American, sponsored a number of keynote events, including the official opening ceremony.¹² It also co-hosted a cocktail function hand in hand with the South African government, during which its chief executive warned that “an energy future without coal is not an option.”¹³ Coincidentally, its mining project was the only one that enjoyed the official endorsement of the UNFCCC.¹⁴

Beyond sponsorship, Big Polluters have been brought into the fold by the UNFCCC for decades. From facilitating advanced meetings between Big Polluters and negotiators to providing digital platforms and dedicated days where the same polluters show off their incremental efforts, the UNFCCC has bent over backwards to involve them in the process.^{15 16 17 18 19} All of these initiatives serve to further bluewash Big Polluters and show how deep the problem goes.

And what will happen at COP23, held in Bonn, Germany but hosted by Fiji? When it first set out, Fiji needed to find US\$26 million to finance COP23 activities.²⁰ Since then numerous countries and businesses have written Fiji checks, including Fiji Airways, which now sports the COP23 logo on one of its planes.²¹ To add to the irony, many Global North contributors such as the U.S., the EU, Australia, and Japan²² show no sign of moving away from fossil fuels. The U.S. finances the Fijian COP even after having reneged on its financial contributions to the UNFCCC or the Green Climate Fund, which aims to help countries like Fiji respond to climate change.

The solution: It’s time to show Big Polluters the door

Ending corporate sponsorship is a concrete first step toward revoking the social license that allows fossil fuel interests and others to interfere in policymaking at both national and international levels. That is why world governments must act by:

- Putting in place a policy that rejects contributions—financial or otherwise—from corporations whose interests are irreconcilably in conflict with the objectives of the UNFCCC and Paris Agreement.
- Agreeing to instead finance COPs based on equity-based contributions from its member states. The amount of these respective contributions should be based on each country’s fair share of emissions, in order to avoid Global South countries being forced to foot the bill for a problem they didn’t cause. The reason the UNFCCC is struggling for money to begin with is because Global North countries historically most responsible for the crisis are refusing to pay up. (Case in point: the U.S. intending to pull its UNFCCC funding while still contributing to Fiji’s budget.)

If world governments are serious about tackling climate change, they must first recognize that the process meant to solve this crisis will never work if it’s bankrolled by the very industries that have caused it.

The US and Trump: Big Oil, Gas, Coal's marionette show

Corporate Accountability

The Trump administration's ties to the fossil fuel industry run deep. Donald Trump has appointed climate skeptics to lead several key agencies in the U.S.^{1,2} Rex Tillerson, the recent CEO of Exxon Mobil,³ is at the helm of foreign policy as secretary of state;⁴ Scott Pruitt, a former attorney general with a cozy relationship to the fossil fuel industry,⁵ who sued the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) more than a dozen times,⁶ now leads that very agency; and Rick Perry, heading domestic energy policy, has received more than \$11 million in campaign donations from the industry.⁷ Trump himself has proclaimed climate change a hoax.⁸

The consequences for our planet of this fossil fuel industry capture are damning. Since taking office, The Trump administration's agenda includes:

- Trying to slash the budget of the EPA by nearly one-third.⁹
- Rolling back more than 50 environmental regulations.¹⁰ These include policies equaling nearly three-quarters of the U.S. commitment to cut emissions by 26 - 28% before 2025,¹¹ an already low-ambition target that only amounted to 20% of its fair share.¹²
- Withdrawing the Clean Water Rule, placing the drinking water of one-third of Americans at risk.¹³
- Approving the Dakota Access and Keystone XL pipelines.¹⁴

By June 2017, when Trump announced he was backing the U.S. out of the Paris Agreement altogether¹⁵ (a move denounced by some industry players in public but encouraged by their cronies behind closed doors),¹⁶ he had already broken numerous commitments the U.S. had made under global climate agreements, including withdrawing its finance responsibilities. Yet even while reneging

on its responsibilities to decrease emissions and provide its financial dues, the U.S. can continue to take part in Paris Agreement talks until November 2020 (the earliest date it can formally withdraw).¹⁷ This is a win-win for the fossil fuel industry, which can continue to undermine the climate talks, all while Trump undermines climate progress at home.

If that wasn't bad enough, Trump consistently threatens to renegotiate the Paris Agreement to get "a better deal" that is "pro-America."^{18,19} Such a deal would undoubtedly please the likes of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and Rex Tillerson's former employer, but condemn the people in order to fulfill a U.S. corporate hegemonic vision.

But these games are anything but new. Over the past quarter-century, the U.S. has consistently been the biggest obstacle to progress on climate policy.²⁰ This is not the first time the U.S. has pulled out of a global climate pact. After successfully weakening the Kyoto Protocol, the U.S. failed to ratify, and then withdrew its signature to avoid its historical responsibility. The U.S. went on to push through weak deals in the Bali Action Plan, the Copenhagen Accord, and Durban Platform.²¹ The U.S. is up to its same old tricks, but with Trump, the corporate capture is out in plain sight.

At COP23, the U.S. now wants to have it both ways. On one hand, it will continue to be the world's biggest historical polluter and one of the most fossil-fuel-captured governments. And on the other, it hopes to maintain the façade that it represents the interests of people and the environment. World governments must tear down that façade. They must treat the Trump administration and its negotiators at COP23 as the bad faith actors that they are and reject their obstruction and bullying. People and the planet depend on it.

...and the EU is up to the same tricks

Corporate Europe Observatory

The European Union is often painted as a climate hero—but the dirty truth is that national governments and the European Commission itself are colluding with Big Polluters. Criticism is frequently aimed at Poland and its majority state-owned coal industry, in part because it's often difficult to distinguish government's interests (and staff) from that of the coal industry.¹ Yet Germany, a country lauded for its renewable energy program, is the world's leader in burning brown coal (lignite), the most polluting out there.² COP23 will be taking place in Bonn, in the heart of the Rhineland coal mining region, where a few kilometers down the road energy company RWE (whose biggest shareholders are German municipalities)³ is trying to expand its lignite mine. The mine is already Europe's biggest human-made hole, and greatest single source of coal on the continent.

In Brussels, the European Commissioner for Climate and Energy, Miguel Arias Cañete, used to be the president of not one, but two, oil companies while still serving in the Spanish Parliament.⁴ When first proposed as commissioner, Cañete held shares in the two companies.⁵ His boss, European Commission Vice President for Energy Union Maroš Šefčovič, has been the most vocal supporter of the not-yet-built Euro-Caspian Mega-Pipeline (ECMP—officially known as the 'Southern Gas Corridor').⁶ It is supposed to transport gas from Azerbaijan to Italy, but has been mired in human rights abuses and corruption scandals, including the Azerbaijani Laundromat money-laundering scandal, in which a slush fund channeled \$2.9 billion through four shell companies.⁷

The ECMP is just one part of a continent-wide gas infrastructure building program pushed by the commission and member states that will lock the EU and all those that supply it into 40 - 50 more years of fossil fuel dependence.⁸ It is the result of the symbiotic relationship between polluters and politicians: the European Union itself created a gas industry lobby group, the European Network of Transmission System Operators for Gas (ENTSOG),⁹ to forecast future gas demand and then propose infrastructure to meet it. After being finalized by national governments, its members would then go and build with the political and financial support of governments and the Commission. As a result, there are currently more than 70 gas projects agreed upon as part of this scheme.

At the UNFCCC, Commissioner Cañete was heralded a hero of COP21 in Paris, yet the EU has consistently tried to get away from its climate debt as a historical emitter, and instead pushed for false solutions like failed market mechanisms. At home, its flagship emissions trading scheme has not succeeded in cutting emissions, and instead handed billions in taxpayer-funded compensation to the same corporations it is supposed to be regulating.¹⁰ No wonder, as it was shaped by oil and gas major BP.¹¹

The EU can point a finger at overtly fossil-fuel-cozy governments such as the Trump administration in the U.S. all it wants, but instead, it may want to hold a mirror up to survey its own reflection.



CHILDREN PLAY ON A POLLUTED BEACH NEAR A COAL-FIRED POWER PLANT IN JAVA, INDONESIA

PHOTO: Kemal Jufri/Greenpeace

Fighting corporate interests in the Green Climate Fund

LIDY NACPIL, Asian Peoples' Movement on Debt and Development

Climate finance is the foundation for a just, fair, adequate, and effective global response to the climate crisis. The mobilization of finance is urgently needed, both to enable people and communities to deal with present and future impacts of climate change, as well as to make the systemic transformation necessary to stabilize emissions and prevent greater climate catastrophe.

Article 4 of the UNFCCC requires *developed country Parties* (also referred to as Northern countries) to provide new and additional financial resources to meet the costs incurred by *developing country Parties* (Southern countries) in implementing climate projects and programs.¹ This climate finance is an obligation of Northern countries and part of their fair share of global climate actions, not aid or assistance for countries of the South.

The delivery of climate finance for adaptation in the South is in recognition that Northern countries are largely responsible for climate change and its impacts on peoples of the South who have contributed the least to the problem yet bear the brunt of its devastating consequences. While Northern countries should do their utmost domestically, they will still not meet their fair share of reductions due to their huge historical accumulated emissions. They must provide finance to Southern countries so these countries can undergo transformation in a way that makes up for the gap between Northern countries' actual and fair share of reductions.

To date, almost without exception, Global North countries are falling inexcusably short of their fair shares in climate action, including the delivery of their climate finance obligations.² Further, many Northern governments are facilitating the domination of climate finance by corporate interests.

We can't secure the climate without securing the Green Climate Fund

To ensure that Global North countries fulfill their obligations to Global South countries, the Green Climate Fund (GCF) was established in 2012 as the operating entity of the financial mechanism of the UNFCCC.³ While the GCF is still in the process of fully developing its policies and programs, the Fund has been operational since 2015.

The Green Climate Fund is central to the delivery of climate finance to Southern countries. It is tasked with resource mobilization as well as allocation and disbursement of these funds. Thus it is crucial to ensure

“To date, almost without exception, Global North countries are falling inexcusably short of their fair shares in climate action, including the delivery of their climate finance obligations.”

that the GCF plays this role in the best interest of the people and communities of the South. Unless these funds find their way into the hands of the national and local climate actors that need them and know how to make the best use of them, countries enduring the realities of the climate crisis risk their very survival. There are huge challenges to this, not least of all is the need to prevent the GCF from being an outright instrument of corporate interests.

Corporate capture of the GCF

Civil society groups engaging around Green Climate Fund activities see clearly that corporate influence on decision-making in the GCF is definitely not limited to what happens during decision-making sessions (such as board meetings, which include the presence of corporations and industry groups as “observers”) nor done mainly through what is conventionally considered lobbying. The sheer economic power of corporations and the pervasive and insidious hold of the neoliberal ideology of free-market and corporate-led growth push decisionmakers to go towards particular policy positions that favor the private sector and big business at the expense of communities and people on the frontlines of climate change impacts.

How this plays out

Channeling public money into private hands

One of the most controversial features of the GCF, the Private Sector Facility (PSF), actively promotes and seeks out private sector projects to fund both directly and through intermediaries.⁴ In 2011, COP17 approved the inclusion of the PSF as part of the design of the GCF, despite vigorous objections from several Southern country Parties, civil society organizations, and peoples’ movements. The PSF is the main mechanism by which the GCF allocates a proportion of available funds not for public programs for people and communities and other local actors on the ground, but instead for private sector projects and private corporations including multinational firms and big banks.

Some of the more problematic features and implications of the PSF are:

- Public funds being used to subsidize profit-making investments of private corporations;
- Public funds being used for private entities and projects that are not publicly accountable;
- Private corporations (and their profit motives) being deeply embedded at the heart of responding to the crisis they have helped create and seek to profit from;
- The involvement of the GCF in risky financial instruments of the private sector; and
- The lack of corresponding investment, risk, accreditation, and safeguard policies that will prevent the GCF funds from being used for fossil fuel projects or support private entities that invest in fossil fuels.

Accrediting big private banks and their allies

Institutions have to be accredited by the GCF to submit project proposals, channel funds (financial intermediaries), or receive funds (implementing entities). The existence itself of the Private Sector Facility does not automatically mean that private entities have to be accredited. Public institutions can be intermediaries for financing of private sector projects, as indeed they are in a number of projects already approved. However, the GCF accreditation rules do allow private entities to be accredited, further exposing what little climate finance exists to the risk of corporate seizure.

To date, 27 of the 59 accredited entities of the GCF are international institutions.⁵ Four of these are transnational banks engaged in fossil fuel financing, including HSBC, Deutsche Bank, Crédit Agricole, and the Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi (BTMU).^{6,7} At least eight are multilateral banks, like the International Finance Corporation, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and the European

Investment Bank,⁸ which explicitly subscribe to “private-sector-led growth” and have major programs for private sector development.

As of October 2017, the GCF had approved 43 projects across Southern countries.⁹ Thus far, the GCF has approved fewer private sector projects—17 out of 54 projects—but more than 50 percent of the allocated funds are for these 17 projects, totaling \$1.74 billion. The allocation for the 37 public projects is only \$1.3 billion.¹⁰ Only five large international entities manage nearly 75 percent of the GCF’s funds.

Curtailing civil society engagement

Many civil society groups and movements have been actively engaged in challenging and shaping the design, policies, and operations of the GCF. Collective efforts have led to some successes but it is a continuing fight to assert, defend, and expand civil society voice and participation. One of the more blatant efforts to curtail the voice of civil society occurred at the July 2017 GCF board meeting. For the first time, the active civil society observers¹¹ were not allowed to speak before a decision was taken on the accreditation of entities to the GCF board. The board knew that civil society would express vigorous objections to two of the entities up for consideration—the Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi and Japan International Cooperation Agency—both of which have a track record of financing fossil fuels.¹² When finally allowed to speak after all applicants were approved including these two institutions, the CSO representative was not allowed to say the names of these institutions.¹³

The solution: Strengthen accountability and protect against conflicts of interest

We must work towards ending corporate capture of the GCF if we are to ensure climate finance is indeed mobilized and used for the interest of people and communities and for decisive, effective, just, and equitable climate solutions. This can be done in part by ensuring:

- The creation of a GCF policy or guideline that keeps banks and entities with conflicts of interest (which includes the funding of fossil fuel projects) from being accredited.
- The creation of an “exclusion policy” that will prevent GCF funds from being used in fossil fuel projects.
- Fully transparent, rigorous, and critical scrutiny of applicants for accreditation to the GCF and of project proposals being submitted for funding.
- Strengthening of accountability mechanisms: Private banks must be held to the highest level of accountability in terms of financing and implementation of projects.
- Stronger and more vigorous implementation of GCF principles and policies on direct access and country ownership by Global South countries, and on stakeholder participation especially of civil society, indigenous peoples, and other communities and constituencies most affected by the climate crisis.

Five years after the Green Climate Fund was established, climate justice activists are still fighting and will continue to fight for a financial mechanism that will effectively serve people and the planet before profits.



A MAN SPRAYS CROPS IN THE SHADOW OF A STEEL PLANT IN JIANGSU PROVINCE, CHINA.

PHOTO: Lu Guang/Greenpeace

Weeding out “Climate-Smart” distractions from agriculture

TERESA ANDERSON, ActionAid International

Climate change is jeopardizing food systems everywhere. Erratic and extreme weather events undermine crop yields and food security, risking the livelihoods of millions of local farmers and threatening hunger around the world.¹ At the same time, the agricultural industry, and large agribusiness TNCs (“Big Ag”) in particular, are responsible for between a fifth and a third of all global emissions, making it one of the worst industries most responsible for driving climate change.²⁻³ Given this, it is not surprising that agriculture is one of the issues at the heart of addressing climate change concerns.

The U.N. climate talks aim to address these challenges under the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA)⁴ negotiations on Agriculture. These negotiations, set up to develop advice and propose climate policies on issues relating to agriculture, present a pivotal opportunity for governments to work to safeguard food security. They have the potential to help farming systems become more resilient to climate change, and to discourage the farming practices that damage the climate.

Big Ag’s false solutions: weakening food systems and harming the climate

As agriculture has steadily industrialized over the last decades, its harmful contribution to climate change has escalated dramatically. Corporations began producing and pushing synthetic nitrogen fertilizer over less harmful and more natural alternatives such as compost. Synthetic fertilizers are now the central pillar of Big Ag approaches to farming. But there are three major problems with this: 1) Producing fertilizer requires burning huge amounts of fossil fuels, leading to significant carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions; 2) When this fertilizer is applied to soil, it releases nitrous oxide (N₂O), a pollutant that is 298 times more potent than CO₂;⁵ and 3) Synthetic nitrogen fertilizers also cause organic matter that was safely stored in the soil to release into the air as CO₂ emissions.⁶⁻⁷

And the problems keep piling up. These industrial agriculture products sold by Big Ag make crops less able to survive the extremes of climate change. Soils that are fed with synthetic fertilizers dry out quickly, because they contain much less of the useful organic matter that holds water like a sponge. This means that the crops planted in them are more likely to die and wither in the face of droughts and floods. Instead of spreading risk by growing many different kinds of crops that are adapted to cope with different conditions and weather challenges, “monocultures”—where farmers grow just one or two types of seed varieties peddled by agribusiness giants like Monsanto—are becoming the only viable option for farmers otherwise unable to compete in a regulatory market created to favor the giants. In the face of unpredictable weather events, monocultures are more likely to lead to widespread crop failure, further contributing to food shortage.⁸⁻⁹

These industrialized agriculture approaches have taken root in Global North countries where most Big Ag corporations are based, and the massive emissions that result from these bad practices form a major part of these countries’ per capita contribution to climate change.

“Because of this lack of criteria, corporations are able to employ practices that are destructive to the climate, the environment, and farmers’ resilience, and call them ‘Climate-Smart.’”

But the transnational agribusiness corporations that have both driven and are benefiting from the industrial transformation of agriculture are well aware that meaningfully addressing this issue would require necessary regulations of their industry, and Big Ag doesn’t want restrictions on its growth—or to miss out on new opportunities to deepen its pockets.

Corporate capture of agricultural policy in action

To avoid regulation and being seen as the pests at the root of the problem, agribusiness giants such as Syngenta, Monsanto, Yara International (one of the world’s largest nitrogen fertilizer producers), and others are trying to greenwash themselves as proactive climate leaders nurturing solutions.¹²

As part of this scheme, Big Ag and the groups representing its interests now widely promote a concept coined “Climate-Smart Agriculture.” This concept, originally developed by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, lacks meaningful criteria or safeguards. Because of this lack of criteria, corporations are able to employ practices that are destructive to the climate, the environment, and farmers’ resilience, and call them “Climate-Smart.”¹³ Corporations push these false solutions to distract from real alternatives already at hand, such as agroecology and regulating non-CO₂ emissions in agriculture.

Big Ag has been heavily lobbying UNFCCC (and associated) processes to accept its “Climate-Smart Agriculture” solutions in the place of meaningful action. For example:

- Fertilizer companies, including Yara International, have created a significant lobbying presence for themselves by taking leadership roles in the U.N. FAO-initiated Global Alliance for Climate-Smart Agriculture.¹⁴
- Representatives of Yara regularly hold side events during UNFCCC meetings, overselling the benefits of fertilizers as a way to feed the world and prevent additional deforestation while ignoring the agroecological opportunities not beneficial to their own business model.^{15 16}

Rejecting Big Ag’s weedy distractions

The bottom line is that unless Big Ag emissions, particularly from the Global North, are regulated urgently and curbed drastically, we stand little chance of limiting the rising heat in the Earth’s atmosphere to well below 2 degrees Celsius. Instead, agroecological farming practices,¹⁰ which work with nature, use compost instead of synthetic fertilizers, promote agroforestry,¹¹ avoid harmful pesticides, and encourage farmers to use and develop many different varieties of crops and seeds, offer real solutions waiting to be transformed into policy. Governments at the UNFCCC have a key opportunity to do this by agreeing to limit dangerous levels of non-CO₂ emissions in agriculture and to promote agroecology as the best strategy for adapting our food systems to climate change.

- During a Technical Expert Meeting (TEM) on land use in May 2017, agribusinesses like Syngenta and Olam touted their own companies’ efforts as “ambitious” mitigation actions, providing a nice coat of greenwashing for their harmful operations.¹⁷
- Monsanto, a leading producer of herbicides and genetically modified seeds, co-chairs the World Business Council on Sustainable Development’s (WBCSD) Climate-Smart Agriculture working group, using this forum to influence international policy creation.¹⁸
- And even in official climate negotiations, governments with close ties to the agribusiness industry, such as the U.S. and Canada, have regularly tried to weaken climate policy by proposing “Climate-Smart Agriculture” language for adoption in U.N. texts.

The solution: Circling back to the fundamentals of agroecology

Although it may have a nice ring to it, “Climate-Smart Agriculture” is a term the industry has abused and misused to push “unsmart” solutions and advance its own agenda. Governments must look past Big Ag’s “Climate-Smart Agriculture” greenwashing, and instead adopt policies that incorporate the strategies that are proven to help farmers and the planet in the face of climate change by:

- Developing recommendations and policies that promote agroecological farming practices, which both strengthen the adaptation and resilience of food systems to climate change and also benefit farmers, nature, and people.¹⁹
- Regulate and reduce non-CO₂ emissions from industrialized farming systems, in order to transition away from the industry’s reliance on climate-harming synthetic fertilizers. Instead crops can be successfully grown at large scale using compost to provide nutrients, retain water, and avoid the emissions associated with industrial agriculture.²⁰

Getting real about climate change and agriculture means saying “no” to the destructive farming practices, spearheaded by Big Ag corporations, that damage the climate and leave farmers exposed to climate devastation, and saying “yes” to what already works naturally.



THE EIFFEL TOWER ART INSTALLATION AT COP21 FOLLOWING A MAJOR CIVIL SOCIETY ACTION DEMANDING GREATER AMBITION AND CLIMATE JUSTICE.

PHOTO: Corporate Accountability

Conclusion

Corporate Accountability

These policy areas—finance, cooperative mechanisms, agriculture, technology, and public participation—are essential building blocks of climate action on the ground. If countries construct their national climate action plans upon building blocks made of faulty materials, then a future of irreversible climate catastrophe will be set in stone.

Worryingly, corporate capture is occurring locally every day, and the corporations and industry groups working with their governments to manipulate the rules at international climate talks are the same groups wreaking havoc at home. Many of these corporations also steal resources out from under the feet of local populations,¹ bribe government officials,² oppose climate legislation nationally,³ and then send their proxies to the UNFCCC to oppose action at the global scale.⁴

International collaboration on climate action sets the bar for addressing climate change at home. And so it is extremely disturbing that the UNFCCC has promoted its partnerships with the private sector and accepted funding from Big Polluters, while silencing those who speak truth to power about corporate capture.⁵

The future of us all must not be placed in the hands of the corporations that are responsible for great human injustices and outrageous planetary abuses. Governments cannot continue to allow the rules to be written by the very industries whose greed created this crisis. Beyond climate change, this undermines global efforts being made to advance justice and equity, promote health, and develop sustainably.⁶

TNCs will continue to push only those solutions that advance their financial interests. This is why policymakers must:

- Put in place a binding conflict of interest policy for admission of UNFCCC observers that ensures that those allowed to participate in the UNFCCC negotiations share the objective of protecting people and the planet, not private interests or what's good for business.
- Enable a transition away from Big Ag's climate-harming products and develop recommendations and policies that regulate non-CO2 emissions from industrialized farming and promote agroecology practices that are proven to benefit farmers, nature, and people.
- Create binding regulations that require polluting corporations to drastically reduce emissions, and reject carbon markets in favor of advancing the non-market approaches to international cooperation that hold the greatest potential to curb the climate crisis.
- Reject financial and other contributions from corporations whose interests are irreconcilably in conflict with the objectives of the UNFCCC and Paris Agreement, and instead seek to finance COPs with equity-based contributions from Parties.

- Fully evaluate the environmental, social, and economic impacts of climate technologies and ensure that the non-State actors invited to take part in technology development, transfer, and deployment do not introduce potential conflicts of interest.
- Keep banks and entities that have a financial interest in fossil fuels from accessing or dispersing funds from the Green Climate Fund and create guidelines that ensure that entities accredited to access these funds are held to the highest levels of accountability while financing and implementing climate projects.

The greatest storms are yet to come. If we are to survive them, governments must publicly call out corporate capture of climate policy where and as it occurs, and put in place safeguards and policies that protect the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement, as well as its implementation at national level, from industry interference.

Enough is enough.

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CONCLUSION

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