

Open letter calling for rules to protect the integrity of climate policy-making from vested corporate interests

Dear UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and UNFCCC Executive Secretary Christiana Figueres,

We are writing to you as a group of civil society organisations, groups and social movements deeply concerned with the fate of the climate. The devastating consequences of super typhoon Yolanda are the latest reminder of the cost of inaction, and the urgency of the task ahead.

Yet the 19th Conference of the Parties (COP19) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), hosted this year by the Polish government in Warsaw, has taken unprecedented and damaging steps towards embracing the same corporations that profit from continued emissions while actively lobbying against effective and just climate action. The Warsaw COP has official corporate “partners” which include the fossil fuel industry and major polluters like PGE, Alstom, LOTOS, ArcelorMittal, BMW, General Motors and Emirates Airlines. Along with a large number of corporate-affiliated side events and the exclusive access to negotiators granted to corporate lobby groups during the business-only pre-COP in October, the hosting Polish government’s Ministry of Economy has teamed up with the World Coal Association – a coal industry lobby group – to put on a parallel “International Coal and Climate Summit”, falsely presenting coal as a central part of the solution to climate change and development. Added to this, the UNFCCC secretariat has created the appearance of sanctioning the coal lobby’s agenda by allowing executive secretary Christiana Figueres to address the coal summit, despite calls from both the youth constituency and from environmental and development groups not to attend.

At risk are both our climate and the integrity of the UNFCCC as a multilateral process to tackle climate change. Therefore there is an urgent need for rules to govern the relationship between the UNFCCC and the fossil fuel industry, including obligations for COP Presidents. Rules that would ensure the current damaging situation is avoided, by ending the undue access and influence of polluting businesses and industries, recognising that their direct commercial interests are fundamentally and irreconcilably in conflict with the urgent need for an equitable and ambitious climate policy.

The UN Global Compact’s recently released “Guide for Responsible Corporate Engagement in Climate Policy” (produced in cooperation with the UNFCCC and others), recognises the damaging effect of the fossil fuel industry on climate policy, but its recommended voluntary guidelines for corporate lobbying around climate are woefully inadequate in light of the planetary emergency. To protect the climate and the UNFCCC, an approach corresponding to the scale of the climate crisis is needed.

Other UN bodies have faced similar challenges in addressing the undue influence of harmful industries and dealt with the situation effectively, such as the UN World Health Organisation (WHO). Article 5.3 of its global tobacco treaty, the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), enshrines in international law the principle that the tobacco industry has no role in public health policy-making, due to the “fundamental and irreconcilable conflict between the tobacco industry’s interests and public health policy interests” and states that “Parties shall act to protect these policies from commercial and other vested interests of the tobacco industry”.

We urge you to look at such examples and take commensurate action to protect climate policy-making from the vested interests of the fossil fuel industry – or companies whose core business model depends on the excessive emission of greenhouse gases – and their attempts to undermine and subvert urgently needed action.

Yours sincerely,

The undersigned organisations

350.org
350.org Durban
Aitec-Ipam
Alianza para la Conservacion y Desarrollo
Amigos de la Tierra España, Friends of the Earth Spain
Arab Youth Climate Movement (AYCM)
Asociación Ambientalista de Chiriqui
Attac France
Beyond Copenhagen Collective, India
Bharat Jan Vigyan Jatha (India People's Science Campaign), India
Biofuelwatch UK/US
BlueLink.net, Bulgaria
BUND (Friends of the Earth Germany)
Carbon Trade Watch
Center for Environment, Bosnia and Herzegovina
Clean Beach and Development, Ghana
Climate Policy Program - Institute for Policy Studies (USA)
Conseil de la Jeunesse (Belgian French-speaking youth council)
Corporate Accountability International
Corporate Europe Observatory
Earth in Brackets
European Coalition for Corporate Justice (ECCJ)
Ecologistas en Acción, Spain
EcoNexus
El Comité de Solidaridad con América Latina
Environmental Rights Action, Friends of the Earth Nigeria
FERN
Food & Water Europe
Food & Water Watch
Food Recovery Network
Foundation for Environment and Agriculture, Bulgaria
Friends of the Earth Canada
Friends of the Earth International (FoEI)
Friends of the Earth Scotland
Friends of the Earth United States
Friends of the Siberian Forests (FSF)
Gaia Foundation
Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA)
Global Witness
Green America
groundWork, Friends of the Earth South Africa
Gujarat Forum On CDM, India
International Institute of Climate Action and Theory (iicat) Climate Justice Project
Justiça Ambiental (Friends of the Earth Mozambique)
La Plataforma Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, Democracia y Desarrollo (PIDHDD)
National Ecological Center of Ukraine
NATIONAL TOXICS NETWORK INC., Australia
Nature Code, Austria
Ong AFRICANDO, Canary Islands (Spain)
ParyavaranMitra, India
People & Planet, UK
Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement (PRRM)
Pick Up America/The Harvest Collective, USA
Red de Accion por los Derechos Ambientales, Chile
Regional Advocacy Center "Life", Ukraine

Regional Centre for Development Cooperation(RCDC), India
SEE Change Net
Soldepaz Pachakuti
South Asian Dialogues on Ecological Democracy
South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (SDCEA)
Spinwatch
SWARNA HANSA Foundation
Taiwan Environmental Protection Union
The Corner House, UK
United Kingdom Youth Climate Coalition (UKYCC)
UNIÓN UNIVERSAL DESARROLLO SOLIDARIO
Vision for Alternative Development (VALD), Ghana
Women for Peace and Ecology
World Development Movement (WDM), UK
World Rainforest Movement (WRM)
Za Zemiata - Friends of the Earth Bulgaria