



## ENVIRONMENT • COP28

## COP28: 'Phase-out' of fossil fuels not mentioned in draft of final agreement

As demanded by oil-producing nations, the working proposal only suggests a 'phasing down' of coal that is not captured by technology and 'limitations' on new drilling.

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The President of the 28th World Climate Conference, Sultan Al-Jaber (center), in Dubai (United Arab Emirates), on December 11, 2023. PETER DEJONG / AP

Several efforts to reach a consensus coupled with a setback for the most ambitious aspirations. On Monday, December 11, the theoretical eve of the last day of the 28<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties (COP28) on Climate in Dubai (United Arab Emirates), President Sultan Al-Jaber's teams worked and let the hours pass by, "probably to consult certain stakeholders on important points," suggested a source from a European delegation. It was primarily the time to significantly alter the ideas that had been under discussion for about ten days.

Around 5:00 pm, the most crucial final draft agreement of this conference, the "Global Stocktake," an assessment of the Paris Agreement intended to raise the ambitions of nations involved, was released. This time, there were no multiple options to enliven the debates, but much less ambitious proposals, especially regarding the highly anticipated "energy package." For the past ten days, in an unprecedented move during a COP, pressure had been building around the idea of phasing out coal, oil and gas in the long term. However, the term "phase out" of fossil fuels, present in several versions of the document and demanded by NGOs, the European Union, representatives of Pacific islands and countries in Latin America, has disappeared.

This proposal only suggests a "phasing down" of coal that is not captured by technology and "limitations" on new drilling. There is no mention anymore of a long-term phase-out of oil and gas, but an injunction to "reduce" the use and production of fossil fuels to attempt to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. This aligns with scientific findings, namely the repeatedly cited 1.5°C warming limit, the most ambitious threshold set by the Paris Agreement in 2015.

### 'Extremely disappointing'

As demanded by the Gulf Persian oil-producing countries led by Saudi Arabia, the pages of the proposal further highlight the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. The parties thus acknowledge "the need for a profound, rapid and sustainable reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and invite the parties to take measures," as stated in the document. The tripling of renewable energies by 2030 is retained. The UAE presidency also leaves the door wide open to technological solutions to reduce the carbon footprint of fossil fuels. In one paragraph, it is advised to "accelerate technologies," citing carbon capture and storage.

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This proposal must now be discussed in the closing plenary sessions of the COP but can also be reworked in informal discussions until the end of the negotiations. "We have made progress but we

still have a lot to do," said Al-Jaber, on Monday. The upcoming discussions promise to be very complicated, as the parties advocating for the inclusion of a fossil fuel phase-out immediately criticized the choices made by the presidency. "The Republic of the Marshall Islands did not come here to sign our death warrant," John Silk, the minister of natural resources for the nation of atolls in the Pacific Ocean, said. "What we have seen today is totally unacceptable. We will not go silently to our watery graves."

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