INSIDE JOB:
Big Polluters’ lobbyists on the inside at the UNFCCC

Introduction

May 2017 represents an unprecedented opportunity for government delegates to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to meaningfully address climate change. At an upcoming meeting, delegates will take up the issue of conflicts of interest: whether organizations representing the interests of fossil fuel corporations should continue to have an outsized presence at the U.N. climate treaty negotiations. With the destructive effects of climate change growing more dire every day, much rides on the outcomes of this meeting. Will the UNFCCC be able to lead the way in moving the global community to implement urgently needed solutions to climate change? Or will the fossil fuel industry continue to delay, water down, and block such solutions—leading us all to the point of no return when it comes to climate change?

This report provides examples of trade and business organizations based in regions with the UNFCCC delegations that have most vehemently opposed attempts to address potential conflicts of interest. It highlights the irreconcileable conflicts of interest between the corporate interests these organizations represent and the objectives of the U.N. climate treaty and demonstrates that these organizations and their corporate funders cannot be trusted when our future is on the line. The report concludes with recommended actions for a variety of actors, including governments and civil society, to effectively protect the UNFCCC, national governments, and their policies from conflicts of interest.

Industry interference a major obstacle to climate progress.

2016 was the hottest year ever recorded.[1-2] Natural disasters—such as floods, earthquakes, and hurricanes—occurred at record-topping rates, leaving $175 billion of damage in their wake.[3-4] Global carbon dioxide emissions passed the threshold of 400 parts per million (ppm)—a point scientists have described as a “point of no return” leading to an uncertain and unstable future.[5-6] Increasing food scarcity as a result of uncurbed climate change is expected to cause hundreds of thousands of deaths,[7] and nearly two-thirds of the planet’s animal species are set to disappear within the next three years.[8-9] To top it off, in the U.S., the Trump administration—stacked with climate deniers and fossil fuel industry loyalists—has launched a full-scale attack on U.S. environmental policy that includes dismantling the Clean Power Plan and installing Exxon Mobil’s former CEO as secretary of state.[10-14]

In November 2016, the UNFCCC’s Paris Agreement came into force, and as of April 2017, has been ratified by 143 governments.[15] It locked in a crucial commitment to keep global temperature warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, and well below 2 degrees. This is a critical step, albeit long overdue, in the global initiative to mitigate climate change through a legally binding and enforceable treaty.

However, unless a major obstacle is addressed, there is an alarmingly high chance that there will be as little progress made on the Paris Agreement as has been made on the UNFCCC agreements that preceded it: Kyoto, Copenhagen, and Cancún. To date, corporations that have knowingly played a fundamental role in creating the current climate crisis—and whose actions suggest they care more about their profits than our future—continue to interfere and secure a seat at the climate policymaking table. As long as corporations—and the business and industry non-governmental organizations (BINGOs) representing them—are allowed a major stake in climate policy while simultaneously profiting from this crisis, they will choke international efforts to slow climate change, stifling policymaking and financing efforts.

Despite what major fossil fuel corporations may insist about their support for the Paris Agreement, these corporations have consistently used their presence at the UNFCCC to weaken policy rather than strengthen it. Hundreds of BINGOs, many of which have direct links to the industry and its interests, have been granted access to attend UNFCCC negotiations.[16] Under current UNFCCC policies, industry representatives like the World Coal Association, which aggressively promotes a coal-centered agenda,[17-20] sit in the very rooms where delegates discuss policy options to avert climate disaster. These industry representatives are given free access to roam the same halls as world leaders who are working to ensure a sustainable future for all of humanity—not the fossil fuel industry exclusively. Like their fossil fuel funders, these organizations have hefty track records of climate denialism and a portfolio that includes using backhanded tactics to stop key climate policies in their tracks.[21-23]

This is not to say that there is not a role for the industry to play in slowing global warming. The industry must transform its business practices to align with the essential commitments made by the global community to rein in the crisis. It must embrace the many viable solutions created by the scientific and technological community to minimize further irreversible climate devastation while striving to meet the social and economic needs of a rapidly developing world. But it should not attempt to influence and undermine the policies created to address this crisis.

Global South countries demand change; countries in the pocket of industry resist.

For these reasons, UNFCCC delegates representing nearly 70 percent of the world's population took a stand last year. They demanded that the UNFCCC review its procedures and practices to identify non-Parties undermining negotiations because their interests diverge from the objectives of the treaty.

These delegates' demands were met with fierce resistance from Parties who appear more concerned with representing the interests of the fossil fuel industry than the interests of people who are on the frontlines of climate devastation.

Not surprisingly, the delegates who argued against addressing conflicts of interest come from some of the world's wealthiest regions where fossil fuel corporations are based, including the U.S., Australia, the EU, and Brazil. The Australian delegates even stated, "There is no clear understanding of what a conflict of interest is"[24]—an ironic claim, given these three countries, as well as the EU, each have strong domestic conflict of interest policies and procedures, which include detailed definitions of what, precisely, a conflict of interest is.[25-34] Indeed, Australian legislation explicitly considers that someone "has a conflict of interest when the practitioner serves or attempts to serve two or more interests which are not able to be served consistently."[34] Likewise, U.S. federal legislation describes a conflict of interest as "generally defined as a situation in which an official's [or organization's] private financial interests conflict or appear to conflict with the public interest."[32]

A crucial moment for a new way forward.

With the conflict of interest conundrum more apparent than ever, the UNFCCC meeting in May provides a crucial opportunity to address the conflicts of interest posed by these industry organizations. For the first time in more than 20 years, Parties and interested civil society observers will discuss the need to safeguard policymaking from industry interests and interference, and the best way to formalize this process within the UNFCCC. This discussion, which will take place via a UNFCCC in-session workshop, represents a momentous opportunity to protect people and the planet from vested interests and unlock the door to a sustainable future.

A policy that prohibits admission of those whose financial interests are tied to industries driving climate change can clear the way to effectively implementing necessary climate policies and technological solutions before we pass the point of no return. It's time to ensure that such a policy not only stop direct interference from untrustworthy big polluters like Shell, BP, Exxon Mobil, and Rio Tinto, but also put an end to political interference by the BINGOs that are funded by these corporations to promote their agendas at the UNFCCC.

As a global community, we have an unprecedented opportunity to solve the climate crisis head-on at the precise moment when everything—people, justice, and the planet—hangs in the balance. We cannot lose this opportunity. Delegates must take action to prevent business organizations from putting the fossil fuel industry's interests above our survival.

Description of methodology:

To measure and score influence on climate change policy by companies and trade associations, InfluenceMap has developed a comprehensive process involving assessment of hundreds of pieces of publicly available data sources which represent policy influencing activities (e.g. public statements and legislative consultations). These are benchmarked against statements from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and mandated policymaking bodies around the globe. It is a highly objective process that puts each entity in a Performance Band from A (highly supportive of ambitious climate policy to support the Paris Agreement) through to F (opposing and actively obstructing). Full details on all the corporations and trade associations covered are public at this URL: http://influencemap.org/filter/List-of-Companies-and-Influencers

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce

Headquarters: Washington, D.C.
InfluenceMap score on climate policy: F
UNFCCC status: ADMITTED

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce represents 3 million American businesses, making it the largest business organization in the world.[48] The Chamber is funded by major corporate polluters and is currently receiving millions of dollars from Exxon Mobil. Even when directly asked, its executives have not admitted that human activity is the cause of climate change. The Chamber has criticized both the targets set out in the Paris Agreement as well as the measures proposed to meet them, and yet it is still granted a seat at the table at the UNFCCC. Further, it does nothing to promote the cutting of emissions and has aggressively sought to stop domestic climate policies in their tracks.

Links to the fossil fuel industry

In 2015 Exxon Mobil gave the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation US$1,000,000 for "public information and policy research," pledging a total of US$5,000,000 between 2014-2018.[49] It has also received funding from other big polluters, like Chevron[50] and Peabody Energy.[51-52] Executives from Peabody Energy, ConocoPhillips, and Sempra Energy also sit on its board of directors.[53]

What it says about climate change and its causes

The Chamber publicly claims it "strongly supports continued environmental improvements, including sensible approaches to reducing greenhouse gas emissions."[54] In March 2014, for example, Karen Alderman Harbert, president and CEO of the Chamber's Institute for 21st Century Energy, insisted that the Chamber has "been a proponent on research and development, on advanced technologies, [and] the biggest supporter on energy efficiency legislation."[55] But when directly asked four times if the Chamber acknowledges that climate change is real and caused by humans, Harbert did not directly answer. Only after repeated questions on this topic did she concede that "it is caused by lots of different things," going on to describe the scientific debate about the causes of climate change as an "ongoing discussion."[55]

Public stance on the UNFCCC or the Paris Agreement

In response to the Paris Agreement, Vice President for Climate and Technology Stephen Eule lamented "[t]he White House's overall domestic strategy of making energy more expensive and less abundant," which, he said, was meant "to satisfy international constituencies, many of whom compete against the United States."[56] He also described the U.S.' pledged reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to keep global temperature rise under 2 degrees Celsius as "completely unrealistic."[57-58]

Track record on climate policy

- **Disputed Paris Agreement but stresses inclusion in deciding its fate.**
At COP21 in Paris, the Chamber stressed the need for business inclusion at UNFCCC negotiations and called for climate negotiators to "establish a defined and recognized role for business engagement in the final Paris Agreement."[59] But its critiques of critical elements of the Paris Agreement raise questions as to where the Chamber's true interest lies.

- **Opposed GHG emissions reductions.**
In February 2017, the Chamber lobbied for the withdrawal of a policy regulating GHG performance measures, describing it as "a particularly egregious case of regulatory overreach."[60] It asked that the U.S. government "reissue a revised rule without the GHG emissions measure and with any additional changes consistent with the administration's focus on regulatory reform."[60]

- **Top priorities include increasing fossil fuel production.**
Its priorities for 2017 include calls for increases in oil, gas, and coal production[61] and promises to oppose "efforts to regulate greenhouse gases under the existing Clean Air Act."[62]

- **Legal attacks on climate action.**
The Chamber has a history of using legal action to thwart efforts to strengthen climate policy. In 2009, it threatened to sue if the U.S. regulated GHG emissions[63] and in 2016 filed for an immediate stay of the U.S.' Clean Power Plan,[64] central to the initiative to curb emissions in line with the Paris Agreement. Furthermore, in 2014 the Chamber lobbied U.S. state attorneys general to enact legislation against the anticipated Clean Power Plan, even circulating drafts of legislation that could be used to this effect.[65]

- **Promoted misleading research to undermine climate policy.**
"Assessing the Impact of Potential New Carbon Regulations in the United States," a report released by the Chamber's Institute for 21st Century Energy in 2014,[66] has been widely criticized for inflating the cost of the proposed emissions measures and downplaying the benefits.[67-69]

- **Supported controversial pipelines.**
The Chamber applauded executive approval of the controversial Dakota Access pipeline in the face of growing public opposition.[70-71]

CEOs of five global fossil fuel corporations, including Rex Tillerson—now U.S. Secretary of State—testify in front of the House Subcommittee on Energy and Environment in 2010 following the devastating BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.
Courtesy of Mannie Garcia/Greenpeace

The National Mining Association

Headquarters: Washington, D.C.
InfluenceMap score on climate policy: F
UNFCCC status: ADMITTED

The National Mining Association (NMA), which calls itself the "clear voice for U.S. mining," is a trade association "that represents the interests of mining before Congress, the administration, federal agencies, the judiciary, and the media."[83] Exclusively dedicated to promoting the mining industry's interests, the NMA has been granted UNFCCC observer status, despite the fact that the organization does not acknowledge the seriousness of climate change and adamantly opposes the Paris Agreement. Its track record reveals what its funding and name implies—that it will go to great lengths to promote further coal production, thwarting climate policy proposals that stand in the way.

Links to the fossil fuel industry

The NMA has received funding from Peabody Energy.[84] Kevin Crutchfield, CEO of Contura Energy, is chairman of the board.[85]

The NMA represents the interests of some of the world's largest and dirtiest coal mining corporations, such as Peabody Energy, Arch Coal, GE Mining, and the American Coal Council.[86]

What it says about climate change and its causes

Although admitted to take part in climate negotiations at the UNFCCC, the NMA has failed to take a strong public stance on the seriousness of climate change or the role that the burning of fossil fuels has played in causing climate change.[87-88]

Public stance on the UNFCCC or the Paris Agreement

The NMA's vice president, Luke Popovich, has been outspoken against the Paris Agreement and its requirements, comparing it to forcing the U.S. to be "the only 'good kid in the class.'"[89] He has claimed that the rest of the world will continue to increase its production of coal and that more regulation for the U.S. is not the solution to climate change.[89]

Track record on climate policy

- **Sued against pivotal climate policies.**
  In 2016, the NMA was one of the Parties that sued against the Clean Power Plan, which was central to the Obama Administration's UNFCCC negotiating platform.[90] Scott Pruitt, who is now President Trump's head of the Environmental Protection Agency, counseled the NMA and others through the case. A fact sheet recently produced by the NMA titled "An Unlawful, Ineffective, Expensive Federal Government Power Grab" slammed the Clean Power Plan, insisting it would have only a "negligible" impact on the environment but would devastate the economy.[91]
- **Campaigns for coal production.**
  Its "Count on Coal" campaign promotes coal as the "most abundant and affordable energy resource," [92] ignoring the devastating environmental impacts of the dirty fuel's entire supply chain.
- **Supports anti-climate Trump administration.**
  NMA President Hal Quinn welcomed the Trump administration with open arms because of its support of the coal industry and its promises to dismantle the Clean Power Plan—the regulations at the heart of the U.S.'s commitments to the Paris Agreement.[93]
- **Opposed protecting water and wildlife.**
  The NMA commissioned an 82-page report that deconstructs the U.S.' Stream Protection Rule, which aimed to reduce harm to water and wildlife from coal production. Contrary to the analysis done by the Department of the Interior, the report claimed the regulations would cost up to 77,000 jobs.[94] In February of 2017, President Trump overturned this rule, with the praise of the NMA.[95]

Business Roundtable

Headquarters: Washington D.C.
InfluenceMap score on climate policy: E
UNFCCC status: ADMITTED

Business Roundtable (BRT) represents the CEOs of America's largest companies, who rake in over US$6 trillion on an annual basis.[35] BRT's mandate is to represent the transnational corporations that literally fuel climate change. Despite being an admitted observer to the UNFCCC, Business Roundtable has not vocalized strong support for these negotiations, nor has it publicly admitted that climate change and its dangers are a reality backed by an overwhelming amount of scientific data. In fact, it has actively tried to oppose climate policies that are in line with the Paris Agreement.

Links to the fossil fuel industry

Members of BRT include CEOs of some of the world's biggest polluters, including Shell, Chevron, Exxon Mobil, Conoco Phillips, Duke Energy, Phillips 66, Marathon Oil Corporation, Marathon Petroleum Corporation, and Peabody Energy.[36]

What it says about climate change and its causes

BRT has acknowledged "the potential consequences of climate change" and says it "supports both government and private sector actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions globally,"[37] but it has largely refrained from addressing the severity of global warming, only describing the consequences as "potentially serious and far-reaching."[38]

Public stance on the UNFCCC or the Paris Agreement

BRT does not have a clear or strong stance regarding the outcomes of UNFCCC negotiations or the Paris Agreement,[37,39] raising questions as to what its stance on these critical climate change policies is.

Track record on climate policy

- **Top priorities include gaining access to federal lands for drilling.**
The organization's energy and environment priorities for 2017 include calling for "Increase[d] access to onshore and offshore federal lands to ensure reliable supplies of coal, oil, and natural gas in the coming decades."[40] Notably, recommendations for reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are absent.[39]

- **Lobbied against lifesaving climate policies, not just once...**
In February 2017, BRT wrote to the White House requesting reductions in "regulatory burdens [to the U.S. economy]."[41] Among other things, it asked that the Clean Power Plan, the cornerstone of the U.S.' UNFCCC negotiating platform, be "recrafted to address concerns about EPA [Environmental Protection Agency] overreach infringing on state authority."[41] It also asked that federal regulations to protect water sources be "pulled back" and regulations to lower air quality standards be delayed.[41]

- **... but multiple times!**
In a 2015 letter to former U.S. President Obama, BRT expressed "highest concern" over and made recommendations to weaken key U.S. climate policies that are fundamental to meeting commitments in line with the Paris Agreement, including the revision of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for ground-level ozone, GHG emissions regulations, and the New Source Review under the Clean Air Act.[42-43]

- **Linked to climate denialists now in senior government positions.**
Rex Tillerson, U.S. secretary of state and former Exxon Mobil CEO,[44] chaired one of BRT's executive committees from 2011-2015.[45]

- **Applauded highly controversial pipelines.**
BRT praised U.S. President Trump's decision in January 2017 to advance the controversial Dakota Access and Keystone XL pipelines, calling it a "major victory for workers and American families."[46] Its CEO described the Keystone XL pipeline as an "environmentally responsible infrastructure project."[47]

FuelsEurope

Headquarters: Brussels, Belgium
InfluenceMap score on climate policy: E
UNFCCC status: ADMITTED

FuelsEurope
REFINING PRODUCTS FOR OUR EVERYDAY LIFE

Established in 1989,[72] FuelsEurope's 40 members constitute the majority of Europe's refining and fuel industry.[73] Its yearly priorities and activities are approved annually by its corporate members, which include some of the world's dirtiest oil and energy companies.[74] On one hand, FuelsEurope has called for global action to mitigate climate change, even expressing support for the Paris Agreement. Simultaneously, it has not only implied Europe is overambitious when it comes to tackling climate change—suggesting that no further action is necessary at this time—but has also directly opposed attempts to strengthen policies to address climate change.

Links to the fossil fuel industry

Fee-paying members include BP, Exxon Mobil, Shell, Phillips 66, RepSol, Statoil, Total, ENI, Lukoil, and Varo Energy.[75] Executives from all but two of these big polluters were on the 2015-2016 board of directors.[76]

What it says about climate change and its causes

FuelsEurope has acknowledged "climate change is real and warrants action."[76] It has echoed support for "the efforts of the international community to address the risks of climate change," but with the caveat that "the growing global demand of secure, reliable and affordable energy" must still be met. [77]

Public stance on the UNFCCC or the Paris Agreement

The organization has vocalized support for the Paris Agreement, but its president, Michel Bénézit, continues to stress that there remains "a significant role for petroleum products and fuels for many decades into the future,"[76] and that "it is in the interest of the planet" to continue to keep the refining industry based in the EU moving forward.[76] It also insists that Europe's efforts to curb climate change are already enough to meet the 2-degree-Celsius target and warns against a further "increase in Europe's ambition level."[76]

Track record on climate policy

- **Protecting business interests at all costs.**
Although FuelsEurope claims to support the Paris Agreement, its 2015- 2016 annual report expresses worry that these targets will prove burdensome for the industry.[76] It promises its members and shareholders that it will "continue to advocate … so that our competitiveness does not get damaged further,"[76] and its priorities include ensuring continued production of oil and gas now and in the future.[77]

- **Opposed emission trading schemes, lower GHG targets, and more.**
The organization has repeatedly opposed multiple EU climate policies that would strengthen the EU's commitment to slowing global warming. It has warned against intensifying efforts to lower GHG emissions targets,[78-79] adamantly resisted strengthening emissions trading schemes,[80] opposed recommendations that favor renewables,[80] and insisted that no targets "which could harm the competitiveness of European industry" be adopted without the industry's full consent.[80]

- **Shirks the EU's historical responsibility for the climate crisis.**
It also argues for Europe to take a back seat in leading climate efforts: "While acknowledging the desire of the EU to continue to show leadership in upcoming global talks to tackle climate change, we need realism … even the most aggressive reduction measures—if unilateral—would be almost irrelevant in the global balance." [80] Such an analysis ignores the historical emissions of the region and the EU's obligation to support the mitigation and adaptation of other nations.[82]

The Business Council of Australia

Headquarters: Melbourne, Australia
InfluenceMap score on climate policy: E
UNFCCC status: ADMITTED

The Business Council of Australia (BCA) member base is made up of 127 CEOs from Australia's biggest and wealthiest companies.[112-113] The council serves as a "way in" to the world of policy debate for its members.[114] It is funded by big-time polluters that also play a lead role in deciding its priorities, and its president is an executive of a major polluter. The BCA has given almost no nod to the severity of climate change, its causes, or the dire need for mitigation, and it supports the Paris Agreement only insofar as it does not burden businesses. Consistent with this stance, it has opposed climate policies and dismissed key targets of the Paris Agreement as far-fetched.

Links to the fossil fuel industry

Polluters BHP Billiton, BP, Chevron, Exxon Mobil, Shell, and RioTinto all pay to get access to BCA's services.[115] Senior staff from RioTinto and BP Australia sit on three of its committees and task forces.[116-118]

What it says about climate change and its causes

Although the BCA participates in UNFCCC negotiations, its website makes no direct reference to the cause or extent of climate change. In fact, the only strong stance BCA has taken on climate change is to highlight short-term economic costs of climate policies and action.[119-120]

Public stance on the UNFCCC or the Paris Agreement

The BCA has asserted it supports Australia's ratification of the Paris Agreement. However, it has couched this support by stressing the need to meet climate commitments "while maintaining its [BCA's] international competitiveness and achieving sustainable economic growth."[121]

Track record on climate policy

- **BCA president on Big Oil's payroll.**
As of March 2017, current BCA President Grant King was appointed as a director of BHP Billiton,[122] a leading mining corporation with substantial interests in oil and gas, was one of a group of corporations accused last year of polluting the atmosphere to the point of violating human rights.[123] Prior to his post at BCA, King also headed other gas and energy companies, including Origin Energy and AGL Gas.[122]

- **Opposed Australia's carbon tax.**
The BCA lobbied against and supported the repeal of Australia's carbon tax, calling it a "burden on business" and describing its removal as "essential as the first priority."[124]

- **Has denounced curbing global warming as "unrealistic."**
The BCA has opposed further reductions in Australia's emissions targets. It argues that Australia should not prioritize decreasing its own emissions due to the fact that other countries have been slow to act.[125]

- **BCA members at the center of controversial Australian Bight project.**
BCA members, including oil giants BP and Chevron, have been under fire for their controversial plans to drill for oil in the Great Australian Bight, a nature reserve off the coast of Australia.[126] Although BP pulled back from its drilling plans in late 2016 after failing to meet regulatory requirements,[127-128] Chevron is still pursuing its US$400 million scheme with BCA at its side.[129]

- **In BCA's world, there are no climate risks or liabilities.**
BCA's 2014-2015 "A Year in Review" hardly mentioned climate change or mitigating risk to the environment. Its 2015-2016 annual review also fails to commit to climate change as a priority. It does, however, highlight the important role of gas moving forward.[130-131] Its priorities for the year ahead suggest it is only willing to support energy and climate policies that protect industry interests and "support competitiveness."[130]

The International Chamber of Commerce

Headquarters: Paris, France
InfluenceMap score on climate policy: C
UNFCCC status: ADMITTED

The International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) represents 6.5 million members in 130 countries.[96] It is the "business 'focal point' for the U.N. climate talks."[97] It is governed by the World Council, a group of its member business executives,[98] and is made up by sub-chapters, or national committees, from around the world. Even though it is governed by the very individuals that are in charge of ensuring that the fossil fuel industry continues to grow its profits, the ICC is an admitted observer of the UNFCCC. It publicly calls for urgent action on climate change and has praised the Paris Agreement, but its track record shows that its priorities and recommendations operate on the premise of "business first, everything else second." As an observer to the UNFCCC, it offers corporations around the world a way to directly influence climate policy efforts, leaving the door wide open for corporate interest to continue to interfere in the U.N.'s climate proceedings.

Links to the fossil fuel industry

The ICC's leadership across the globe includes executives from the world's major polluters. For example, BP Group Regional Vice President for Europe Peter Mather sits on the members council and governing body of the ICC UK.[99-100] Likewise, Anne Riley, head of Shell's antitrust team, is also on the members council and chairs an ICC UK committee.[97,101] Mark W. Albers, Senior Vice President of Exxon Mobil, and J.G. Clarke, former director and senior vice president of Exxon Corporation, are both trustees of the U.S. chapter.[102] The board of directors includes Neal Goins, vice president of international government relations at Exxon Mobil, and Maria Pica Karp, vice president and general manager of government affairs at Chevron.[103] Pierre Todorov, group secretary general of EDF (Électricité de France), is on the ICC France board of directors.[104]

What it says about climate change and its causes

The ICC claims that "climate change is everyone's business," [105] and that "urgent action to tackle climate change on all fronts" is needed.[106] While it describes global warming as "one of the major challenges of our time," it conflictingly emphasizes the "urgent need for more energy, increased development and population, and greater economic growth"[105]—in essence, industry doublespeak at its finest.

Public stance on the UNFCCC or the Paris Agreement

ICC Secretary General John Danilovich hailed the Paris Agreement as a "truly historic moment in our shared efforts to meet the climate challenge."[107] The ICC has called on businesses to make significant contributions to lowering GHG emissions, use resources efficiently, incorporate good practices, and invest in environmentally friendly technologies.[106] However, while the ICC "talks the talk," there is little evidence that it "walks the walk."

Track record on climate policy

- **Puts business and profits first, disregards climate justice.**

The ICC might applaud the Paris Agreement and may have promised to step up to the plate, but its main concern since the agreement's adoption has been to protect business interests, not to propose stronger climate policies.[106,108] As the ICC's U.S. chapter put it, "if this [Paris] agreement doesn't work with and for business, then it just won't work,"[108]—a thinly veiled ultimatum to governments. The ICC's recommendations on international climate policy have stressed this above all else.[106]

- **Big Business' liaison and lobbyist in climate negotiations.**

Because of the ICC's promotion of business interests above all else, it is no surprise that the ICC's 2016 priorities included advocating for "global business priorities on climate change" to be at the core of any outcomes related to UNFCCC climate policies.[109]

- **Works to maintain its undue access and influence within the UNFCCC.**

When U.S. secretary of state and former Exxon Mobil CEO Rex Tillerson visited the G20 in February of 2017, the ICC's U.S. chapter urged Tillerson to stay engaged in international climate negotiations—not for the sake of the planet or humanity, but for business' sake. The chapter claimed at the time that parts of the "U.N. family are becoming hostile to the private sector."[110]

- **Supports weak regulation and voluntary—not mandatory—action.**

The ICC pleaded with UNFCCC high-level champions to ensure that business stay key to UNFCCC decisions.[111] It recommended weaker regulations for business, including the recommendation that climate action be voluntary for business rather than mandatory.[111]

One of the plenary halls at the 21st Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC where the historic Paris Agreement was adopted.
Courtesy of UNclimatechange

Conclusion

The business organizations highlighted in this report represent just a snapshot of those seeking to influence—and at times undermine—climate policy at the global level. In fact, more than 270 business and industry organizations are admitted to take part in UNFCCC negotiations.[16] BusinessEurope, for example, has aggressively attempted to stymie climate policy initiatives for years.[132-133]

But today, the situation is more dire than ever. As exemplified by the appointment of Rex Tillerson, former CEO of Exxon Mobil, as U.S. secretary of state, climate denialism and industry sympathies are reaching the highest echelons of government. At the same time, climate chaos is undermining global health and social justice, leading to food crises, natural disasters, and poverty. In order to accelerate global action on climate change and achieve the mandate of the UNFCCC, we need to urgently create and enforce a strong conflict of interest policy to strengthen the Paris Agreement.

For decades, the fossil fuel industry has known about the potential consequences of its actions, but has continued its dirty practices for the sake of profit. Indeed, even while the industry is adamant about its role as part of the solution, it continues to profit from the same environmentally destructive practices that helped catalyze the climate crisis. Taken together, the industry's actions have made it clear that fossil fuel corporations and their trade groups should be kept far from the policymaking process. All levels of stakeholders—including government delegates, policymakers, the media, and members of civil society—should also be alert for the industry's attempts to promote false solutions under the guise of "corporate social responsibility" or other public relations schemes.

Therefore, it is critical that governments eliminate conflicts of interest from the UNFCCC. Rather than shape policy, the fossil fuel industry should adhere to UNFCCC policies to transform existing industry practices. In light of the worsening dangers of climate change and all that hangs in the balance, the time to do this is now.

To these ends, when Parties convene for the next session of the UNFCCC in Bonn this May, they should:

1. **Formally reach a consensus on a universal definition of a conflict of interest. This is an important step toward holding those with vested interests accountable for their attempts to unduly influence and undermine climate policy. The UNFCCC should 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."**

2. **Look to the abundance of established best practices that are already embodied in similar legislation around the world and put in place a stringent, transparent process for admission of UNFCCC observers. This process must be rigorous enough to ensure that those allowed to participate in the UNFCCC negotiations are motivated by the sole interest of protecting people and the planet, not private interests or what's good for business. Entities with a profit motive must be kept at a greater distance from climate policymaking than those working for the public interest without ties to the industry. As exemplified by the case studies in this report, such a process must account not only for the industry itself, but for the trade associations, business-interest groups, and front groups that represent the industry and can therefore be expected to be sympathetic to industry interests above all else.**

This May, when UNFCCC delegates from around the world gather in Bonn, Parties have a critical opportunity to strengthen the Convention and the Paris Agreement and protect climate policy from the manipulative influence of the fossil fuel industry by taking a stand against irreconcilable conflicts of interests. It is not only the right thing to do, but also the only thing to do, if we are to avoid the catastrophic and irreversible harm to people and the environment that experts anticipate from climate change.

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Corporate Accountability

10 Milk Street, Suite 610, Boston, MA 02108

CorporateAccountability.org

Info@CorporateAccountability.org

+1 617.695.2525