

Nations rally behind renewables at COP28 climate talks

December 3 2023, by Talek Harris, Nick Perry and Laurent Thomet



More than 50 world leaders took the stage at COP28 for the second day in a row.

Nearly 120 nations pledged to triple the world's renewable energy within seven years at UN climate talks Saturday as the United States pushed to crank up nuclear capacity and slash methane emissions.

With smoggy skies in Dubai highlighting the challenges facing the world, leaders at the COP28 conference threw their support behind voluntary pledges aimed at ramping up alternatives to [fossil fuels](#).

A massive deployment of solar, wind, hydroelectric and other renewables is crucial to efforts to replace planet-heating coal, oil and gas and achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

Fossil fuel fight

But COP28 negotiators face far tougher talks on the fate of fossil fuels over the next two weeks.

"Everyone stuck to their traditional positions," said one who spoke on condition of anonymity.

But on [clean energy](#), more than half of all nations signed up to a commitment to triple global renewable capacity and double energy efficiency by 2030, the COP28's Emirati president said.

However, major oil producers including Saudi Arabia, Russia and Iran did not join, nor is top consumer China on the list.

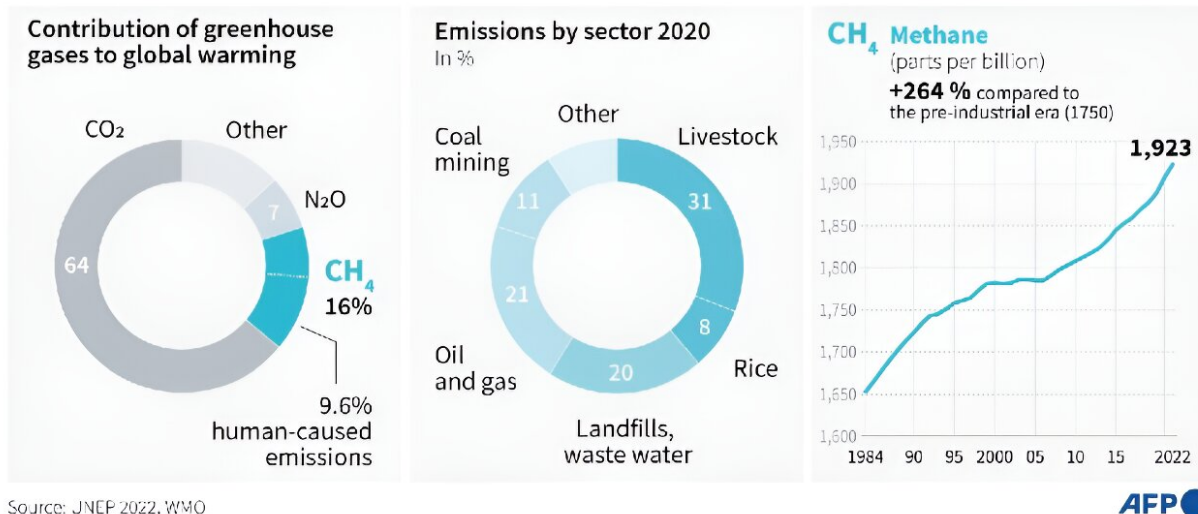
"I do need more, and I'm kindly requesting all parties to come on board as soon as possible please," COP28 president Sultan Al Jaber told delegates.

Clean power advocates welcomed the commitment but said it must be accompanied by the phaseout of dirtier forms of energy.

"The future will be powered by solar and wind, but it won't happen fast enough unless governments regulate fossil fuels out of the way," said Kaisa Kosonen, the head of Greenpeace's COP28 delegation.

Methane: a potent greenhouse gas

CH₄ has 80 times the warming power of CO₂ over a 20-year time scale



Methane: a potent greenhouse gas.

Jaber also announced a pledge by oil and [gas companies](#) responsible for 40 percent of [global production](#)—including Saudi giant Aramco and the UAE firm ADNOC he heads—to decarbonize their operations by 2050 and curb methane emissions.

But the pledges do not include the pollution when the fuels are burned by their customers, and were criticized for repackaging previous, non-binding commitments.

"This charter is proof that voluntary commitments from the oil and gas industry will never foster the level of ambition necessary to tackle the climate crisis," said Melanie Robinson of the World Resources Institute, a nonprofit research body.

'Destructive' methane

It comes after the US Environmental Protection Agency said it would tighten curbs on methane emissions from its oil and gas industry.

The new standards will phase in the elimination of routine flaring of natural gas produced by oil wells, and require comprehensive monitoring of methane leaks from wells and compression stations.

Methane is responsible for about one-third of the warming from [greenhouse gases](#), second only to CO₂.

"It is fugitive gas, and it just is out there doing damage," said US climate envoy John Kerry, who met his Chinese counterpart Xie Zhenhua in Dubai Saturday to discuss how to curb the gas.

Their meeting followed an agreement with the US earlier this month where China for the first time agreed to include all greenhouse gases in its next national climate pledge for 2035.

Kerry also announced that Turkmenistan—which leaks more methane per unit of oil and gas than any other country—had signed up to an existing pledge to curb these harmful emissions.

The [energy sector](#) is the second-largest source of human-caused methane emissions.



Nuclear push: US climate envoy John Kerry.

Agriculture is the first, accounting for a quarter of [methane](#) emissions, mostly from livestock.

The US also joined a coalition of dozens of nations committed to phasing out coal power plants whose emissions cannot be captured.

Nuclear option

While COP28 rallied behind renewables, Washington led a call by more than 20 nations to triple nuclear energy capacity by 2050.

In a declaration, countries ranging from Britain to Ghana, Japan and several European nations said [nuclear power](#) had a "key role" in achieving carbon neutrality by mid-century.

But its use as a cleaner alternative to fossil fuels is highly controversial, with many [environmental groups](#) warning about safety risks and the disposal of nuclear waste.

Yet Kerry insisted "you can't get to net zero 2050 without some nuclear".

Environmental group 350.org said the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster in Japan highlighted the dangers.

"We don't have time to waste on dangerous distractions like nuclear energy," said its North America director Jeff Ordower.

More than 50 world leaders took the stage at COP28 for the second day in a row, with US Vice President Kamala Harris announcing a \$3 billion contribution to a fund to help developing countries with energy transition and the effects of climate change—Washington's first pledge to it since 2014.

© 2023 AFP

Citation: Nations rally behind renewables at COP28 climate talks (2023, December 3) retrieved 4 December 2023 from <https://phys.org/news/2023-12-nations-rally-renewables-cop28-climate.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.