

Hundreds of groups say Biden has no place at Climate Ambition Summit until he stops new oil projects



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Washington, June 16 (RHC)-- More than 500 advocacy groups from six continents urged U.S. President Joe Biden on Thursday to declare a climate emergency and halt the further expansion of fossil fuel production ahead of United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres' September 20 Climate Ambition Summit in New York City.

Such a step, the groups wrote in a letter to Biden and the heads of key U.S. federal agencies, would help make the nation "a first mover in ending the fossil fuel era to right a legacy of historic harms and prevent global climate catastrophe."

"You cannot claim legitimacy as a domestic or global leader if you continue to speed the destruction of the planet," reads the letter, which was signed by 350.org, Oil Change International, Climate Action Network Zimbabwe, Fridays For Future South Asia, and hundreds of other groups from more than 60 countries.

"It's time for the United States to answer the call to protect the future of the planet and use its unparalleled power to show what real climate leadership looks like," the letter continues, specifically calling on the Biden administration to reject all federal permits for new fossil fuel projects, revoke any "illegally granted" permits for fossil fuel projects, use its authority to limit U.S. oil and gas exports, and declare a climate emergency.

The groups issued their demands shortly after climate campaigners, including signatories of the new letter, announced plans for a global mass mobilization ahead of Guterres' summit and the subsequent COP28 conference in the United Arab Emirates.

Allie Rosenbluth, U.S. program co-manager at Oil Change International, said Thursday that Biden's "approach to the climate crisis is nothing short of hypocritical," noting that the U.S. under his leadership remains "the world's top oil and gas producer and exporter and is planning the largest expansion in oil and gas production over the next decade."

To the dismay of climate advocates and scientists, the Biden administration has worked to advance several major oil and gas initiatives in recent weeks, including the Willow Project in Alaska and the Mountain Valley Pipeline in Virginia.

"Every new fossil fuel project is incompatible with a livable future," said Rosenbluth. "As the world's biggest historic polluter, the U.S. has a responsibility to lead a global and just transition away from fossil fuels. Voters are not going to ignore Biden's disastrous climate record unless he starts keeping his climate promises and paves the way for a sustainable future to avert further climate disaster."

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The new letter takes key federal agencies to task for failing to act in line with the president's climate rhetoric, which has deemed runaway planetary warming "an existential threat."

"Your Department of the Interior should be overseeing a fast and justly managed decline of fossil fuel production. Yet, your administration is actively expanding fossil fuel infrastructure," the letter states. "It is approving new drilling permits at a faster rate than the previous administration."

"Your Department of Transportation's Maritime Administration should be rejecting deepwater port permits for mega-polluting crude oil export facilities," the letter continues. "Your Department of Energy should be a

firewall against a flurry of over 20 gas export terminals proposed by industry across the Gulf coast, which could lead to over 1.1 billion metric tons of new emissions. Agencies like your Army Corps of Engineers continue to approve key permits for fossil fuel mega-projects despite clear legal mandates to protect the public interest."

When he announced the Climate Ambition Summit late last year, Guterres said there is a "non-negotiable" price of entry for world leaders that wish to attend: "credible, serious, and new climate action and nature-based solutions that will move the needle forward and respond to the urgency of the climate crisis must be presented."

"It will be a no-nonsense summit. No exceptions. No compromises," he added at the time. "There will be no room for back-sliders, greenwashers, blame-shifters, or repackaging of announcements of previous years."

Nicole Ghio, senior fossil fuels program manager at Friends of the Earth, said Thursday that unless Biden quickly changes course, "there should be no place for him" at the summit.

"Regardless of how the White House spins President Biden's actions, he cannot be a climate leader while continuing to expand fossil fuels," said Nicole Ghio, senior fossil fuels program manager at Friends of the Earth. "The world desperately needs Biden to start living up to his rhetoric and address the root cause of the climate crisis."

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