

Debates over fossil fuels and Israel's war of aggression on Gaza at COP28 climate summit

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Dubai, December 2 (RHC)-- UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has urged world leaders at the COP28 climate summit to plan for a future without fossil fuels, saying there was no other way to curb global warming.

Speaking a day after COP28 President Sultan Ahmed al-Jaber proposed embracing the continued use of fossil fuels, Guterres said: “We cannot save a burning planet with a fire hose of fossil fuels.”

“The 1.5-degree limit is only possible if we ultimately stop burning all fossil fuels. Not reduce. Not abate,” he said on Friday, referring to nascent technologies to capture and store carbon emissions.

The competing visions summed up the difficulty of the UN climate talks in the oil-producing United Arab Emirates, where divisions over fossil fuels and acrimony over lagging financing and geopolitical tensions around the war in Gaza threatened to distract delegates from making progress.

An agreement was reached on Thursday for the creation of a “loss and damage fund” to help poor countries weather the impacts of climate change, which is largely the result of fossil fuel use by rich countries, which have produced a large share of cumulative emissions.

While such a fund has long been sought by developing nations, which stand to lose the most from climate change and have urged richer countries to provide assistance, only \$700m was dedicated to the fund. Poor countries had said \$100bn is needed.

A member from a developing nation on the summit’s main advisory board also resigned on Friday after reports that the host, the United Arab Emirates, would use the event to try to secure commercial deals on further oil and gas production. “These actions undermine the integrity of the COP presidency and the process as a whole,” Hilda Heine, former president of the low-lying, climate-vulnerable Marshall Islands, said in a resignation letter.

A spokesperson for al-Jaber, who is also the head of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company, has denied the reports and said he is “extremely disappointed” by the resignation. A climate expert with the Palestinian Authority addresses reporters

Some world leaders took their turn at the podium on Friday to criticize Israel’s bombardment of Gaza, breaking an unspoken agreement to steer clear of politics at UN climate summits.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erodgan and South African President Cyril Ramaphosa accused Israel of committing war crimes in Gaza during their speeches while an Israeli official said the military was abiding by international law and was intent on destroying Hamas.

“South Africa is appalled by the cruel tragedy that is under way in Gaza. The war against the innocent people of Palestine is a war crime that must be ended now,” Ramaphosa said.

“As we see in this region, conflicts are causing immense suffering and intense emotion,” Guterres said in remarks on Friday. “We just had the news that the bombs are sounding again in Gaza.” “We are here all together, all the world together, to combat climate change and, really, we’re negotiating for what?” asked Hadeel Ikhmais, a climate change expert with the Palestinian Authority. “We’re negotiating for what in the middle of a genocide?”

Israeli President Isaac Herzog had been scheduled to give a speech on Friday but did not do so after other leaders criticised Israel’s heavy bombardment of Gaza, which Colombian President Gustavo Petro called “genocide and barbarism unleashed on the Palestinian people”.

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