



December 6, 2022

Simon Stiell
Executive Secretary
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
P.O. Box 260124
D-53153 Bonn
Germany

Dear Executive Secretary Stiell:

We recently attended the twenty-seventh Conference of the Parties (COP) in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt. This was not our first COP, as we have attended numerous other COPs including those held in Paris and Glasgow. We are extremely appreciative of the work that you and the United Nations Climate Change Secretariat do to organize the COPs and to build global support for reducing carbon pollution and combatting climate change.

In addition to the issue of hosting a COP in a country where human and environmental rights defenders are routinely imprisoned, it did not escape our attention that more than 600 fossil fuel lobbyists attended this COP.¹ We urge you to take steps to ensure that the COP itself can avoid direct interference from corporate actors with a vested financial interest in undermining climate action. One of the sponsors of COP27, Coca-Cola, has been found to be the world's top plastic polluter for five years running.² Plastic production, in addition to fouling our oceans, is of course a large source of greenhouse gas emissions.

Beyond companies in the fossil fuel and plastics sectors, hundreds of major corporations attend COPs, often using the occasion to buttress their green credentials. For example, numerous banks and other financial institutions frequently come to COPs to discuss various sustainability initiatives, all while continuing to finance fossil fuel projects around the world.³ What's more, many of these same companies lobby against climate legislation, fund trade associations or other

¹ Ruth Michaelson, "'Explosion' in number of fossil fuel lobbyists at COP27 climate summit," *The Guardian* (Nov. 10, 2022), <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/nov/10/big-rise-in-number-of-fossil-fuel-lobbyists-at-cop27-climate-summit>

² Stuti Mishra, "Cop27 sponsor Coca-Cola named 'top plastic polluter' for fifth year in a row," *The Independent* (Nov. 16, 2022), <https://www.independent.co.uk/climate-change/news/coca-cola-cop27-plastic-pollution-b2225712.html>

³ According to the International Energy Agency, developing new fossil fuel infrastructure is incompatible with limiting global warming to no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius. See, *Net Zero by 2050*, International Energy Agency (May 2021), <https://www.iea.org/reports/net-zero-by-2050>

groups that lobby against climate legislation, donate to candidates who oppose climate action, donate to outside spending organizations that support candidates who oppose climate action, and/or sit on the sidelines and fail to use their influence to support climate action.

Such active hostility to climate action or passive disinterest are incompatible with achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement. Indeed, the Environmental Defense Fund has noted that “[t]he most powerful tool companies have to fight climate change is their political influence.”⁴

We couldn’t agree more, and we were very pleased to see the United Nations recognize in its new Integrity Matters report the centrality of aligning corporate political influencing activities with scientific emission reduction targets.⁵

To this end, we would encourage you to consider instituting new policies for corporate participation at COPs. We would recommend that in order to be allowed to be a sponsor, have a pavilion, be a presenter, or attend a COP, a company⁶ be required to disclose an audited corporate climate political influencing statement. Such a requirement would bring much-needed transparency to corporate climate-related political influencing activities around the world, and would help restore public faith that the COP process is not being abused by companies as an opportunity to greenwash.

We would be happy to discuss this matter with you and/or your staffs at your convenience. Again, thank you for your continued leadership and warmest regards from the United States Senate.

Sincerely,



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

Cc: His Excellency António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations

⁴ The Blind Spot, Environmental Defense Fund (2019), https://storage.googleapis.com/edfbiz_website/Climate%20Policy%20Leadership/EDF008_Blind-Spot_digital.pdf

⁵ See, Recommendation 5, Integrity Matters, United Nations’ High-Level Expert Group on the Net Zero Emissions Commitments of Non-State Entities (Nov. 2022), https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/high-level_expert_group_n7b.pdf

⁶ It would of course make sense to limit such a requirement to larger companies.