

COP28 CLIMATE SUMMIT

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Activists, including Vanessa Nakate, of Uganda, right, protest against fossil fuels at the COP28 U.N. Climate Summit in Dubai on December 5, 2023. | Photo Credit: AP

For the first time, a key document being negotiated at the U.N.'s annual climate summit has underlined the need for the world to do away with all fossil fuels, in its draft text. As the first week of negotiations at COP 28 nears an end, the latest version of the [Global Stocktake](#) includes a clause committing all signatories to “an orderly and just phase out of fossil fuels”.

The summit's location in the United Arab Emirates, a petro state, and the COP leadership's own ties to oil have “influenced language” in the GST, said a person closely involved in negotiations, but who declined to be identified.

In previous years, climate talks have generally circled around the need for the world to wean itself away from coal, given that it is the most commonly used fossil fuel and ranks only after methane in heat-trapping potency. But given the significance of coal to the economies of India, China, and even the United States, negotiations have generally ended in a stalemate, as they demand an end to all fossil fuels — oil, gas, and coal — or none at all.

However, with the science becoming more emphatic that any hope of keeping a global temperature rise below 1.5°C requires significant reductions in emissions, and fossil fuel responsible for 80% of emissions, its mention in an early draft is significant.

Editorial | [Time for action: On COP28 climate meeting in Dubai](#)

The GST, the first of its kind since 2015, is expected to take stock of the implementation of the [Paris Agreement](#); assess the progress made towards its goals of preventing temperature increases from going beyond 2°C, preferably 1.5°C; and guide countries in updating their stated commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The GST is only one of many negotiation tracks. There are separate drafts expected, for instance, on finance and adaptation. After intensive discussions on each draft – expected to last at least until next Thursday – a final agreed ‘declaration’ or ‘agreement’ is expected to take shape.

The GST also includes a clause calling for “...tripling renewable energy capacity globally by 2030 compared to the 2022 level to 11,000 GW and doubling the global average annual rate of

energy-efficiency improvement compared to the 2022 level to 4.1 per cent by 2030.” This was first formally articulated during the G-20 leaders summit in Delhi, though at that time, there was no mention of improving energy efficiency. In Dubai, [India was not among the 118 signatories to the ‘energy efficiency pledge’](#), which laid down this directive, reportedly on the grounds that it came with a caveat to give up the use of coal.

The text also mentions “...the importance of transitioning to sustainable lifestyles and sustainable patterns of consumption and production in efforts to address climate change and encourages efforts towards transitions to sustainable lifestyles, sustainable patterns of consumption...”, a sentiment that undergirds the ‘Mission Life’ movement articulated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

There are 193 separate points spread out over the 24 pages of the GST draft. Several lay out ‘options’ that countries can agree to adopt, reject or avoid mention of in the final agreement.

Independent experts who have seen the draft said that in its current format, it would seed multiple points of contention. “The mention of phasing out of all fossil fuels is quite big. There is also separate language on ending coal as well as phasing out ‘inefficient fossil-fuel subsidies’ that will be disputed,” said Vaibhav Chaturvedi, a fellow at the Council on Energy Environment and Water, a prominent think-tank.

Others described the text as ‘disappointing’, as it gave no clear roadmap yet on how to actually implement the GST. “The text as it stands now is too large, vague and lacks clear language on how countries should report their progress and goals,” said Suruchi Bhadwal, senior fellow and associate editor at The Energy Resources Institute.

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