

G7: Exit Fossils – Enter Peace

Why the G7 must act now and push the phase-out of all fossil fuels



What is the significance of the G7 meeting?

This year's meeting of the G7 heads of state is dominated by the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and its global impact, particularly on global food and energy security. But the annual G7 summit is also a milestone in the global climate policy agenda and the international efforts to contain the climate crisis. An agreement on ambitious steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the seven leading industrialized countries may create a momentum that could motivate the G20, the twenty most important industrialized and emerging countries, to reach equally progressive agreements. This in turn would facilitate progress at the UN climate negotiations, which traditionally take place at the end of the year. A similar dynamic could be witnessed during the last G7 summit under the German G7 presidency in 2015, when the G7's joint call "to decarbonise the global economy in the course of this century" paved the way for the successful adoption of the Paris Agreement.

Similar momentum must be achieved this year. At the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow last year, the international community pledged to increase their national targets for 2030 once again in 2022 in order to close the gap between what is necessary to stay within the 1.5-degree limit and what individual countries have done to date to achieve it. To fulfil their pledge, the G7 countries must demonstrate their readiness to phase out fossil fuels more quickly than originally planned at the summit in Elmau. Only if the leading industrialized nations of the G7 take decisive action and embark on an emission-reduction path in line with the 1.5-degree limit can they succeed in convincing other top emitters, China and India among others, to follow their lead.

Thus, this weekend's meeting in Elmau will set the stage for a successful COP27 climate summit in Egypt at the end of the year and for progress in the fight against the accelerating climate crisis.

What must be achieved at the G7 summit?

The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine has made us painfully aware of our dependence on fossil fuels from Russia. Becoming independent of gas, oil and coal imports from Russia is a top priority as it is the revenues from these fossil fuels that help finance Putin's war. However, it would be a fatal error to replace Russian gas, oil and coal with equivalent fossil fuel imports from other countries. This response would only drive the climate crisis and, consequently, fuel new crises and conflicts, e.g., when vital resources such as water and fertile land become scarcer. We must not forget that the competition for fossil resources – which some regions of the world have access to while others do not – is in itself a driver of conflicts and wars. Renewable energy sources such as the sun, wind and geothermal energy, on the other hand, are available almost everywhere. Therefore, the systematic switch to renewable energies also serves to secure peace.

In Elmau, Chancellor Scholz must show that he can master the crisis-ridden global situation. There is a common answer to the current crises: phasing-out fossil fuels. To this end, the G7 must present a fixed roadmap for the fossil phase-out in Elmau: **coal must be phased out by 2030, fossil gas by 2035. And in order to significantly reduce oil consumption, no new cars with internal combustion engines may be sold as of 2030 the latest.** Such a commitment would be a strong signal for a crisis-proof future – and a clear call to the rest of the world to also become independent of fossil fuels more quickly. For climate protection and for a more peaceful world: If you want peace, you need to get out of fossil fuels.

Moreover, the G7 must make binding commitments – financial commitments in particular – to supporting countries in the Global South in their efforts towards climate protection and energy transition; their adaptation to the consequences of the climate crisis; and their measures to mitigate climate-induced loss and damage. The G7 bear the historic responsibility for the climate crisis. For this reason, they must make their fair contribution to achieving climate justice.

What role does fossil gas play at the summit?

Fossil gas as an energy source is currently at the center of political and public debate and will also play an important role at the G7 summit. In response to increased gas prices and the war in Ukraine, massive new investments are made worldwide in the extraction of fossil gas and the construction of new gas infrastructure, particularly LNG infrastructure. All this is to the detriment of the climate – and the G7 countries are heavily involved. Presently, the G7 are responsible for 34.4 percent of the global fossil gas consumption in primary energy. Any further increase in their consumption will have fatal consequences for the climate.

For a long time, fossil gas was considered the most “climate-friendly” of the fossil fuels. We now know that this is not true. While the combustion of fossil gas only generates about half the amount of carbon dioxide as coal combustion, it still contributes to the overheating of our planet. What's more, large quantities of methane, a gas that is extremely harmful to the climate, are emitted during fossil gas extraction, transport and storage. Methane is an even bigger climate killer than CO₂, contributing 84 times as much to global warming as carbon dioxide during the first 20 years after its release. Depending on the amount of methane that is released unintentionally or intentionally, fossil gas is even more harmful to the climate than coal.¹

There are fundamental differences between the individual G7 countries with regard to fossil gas. The U.S. and Canada are net exporters – the U.S. is the world's largest gas producer, with

¹ <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/ese3.35>
<https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.1202407109>

Canada ranking sixth. The UK, too, still has a significant domestic production, though its volume is lower than the country's imports. France, Italy, Germany and Japan cover their gas requirements almost exclusively with imports and are thus also dependent on Russia.

To avert a global gas boom and show the world that the G7 stand by the targets of the Paris Agreement and the goal of reducing global greenhouse gas emissions to zero, despite the changed geopolitical situation, Chancellor Scholz must act now. He must push for an agreement of the G7 to reducing their gas consumption drastically and with immediate effect; stopping all new concession, licensing or leasing rounds for fossil gas production and exploration; and phasing out fossil gas completely by 2035.

There is still no G7 agreement on ending the use and extraction of fossil gas. On the contrary: only last year, the G7 emphasized the role of fossil gas in the energy transition.

What is the G7's stand on the climate crisis?

None of the G7 countries are currently in line with the goals of the Paris Agreement. To set course for those goals, the major industrialized nations need to accelerate their greenhouse gas reduction plans significantly. Meanwhile, the climate crisis continues to worsen, increasingly threatening numerous countries' safety from excessive heat, droughts and storms. The World Meteorological Organization now warns that as early as 2026, average annual global temperatures could exceed 1.5 degrees of pre-industrial levels for the first time.² As a result, risks such as increasing water and food shortages will multiply, threatening international security and the rights and safety of people. At the same time, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has shown once again, in part 3 of its sixth assessment report, that it is still possible to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees. To achieve this goal, far-reaching measures must be implemented immediately and greenhouse gas emissions must be halved by 2030.³ Chancellor Scholz must face up to this task as part of his G7 presidency.

What does Greenpeace demand from the G7?

At the G7 summit in Elmau, the heads of state of the seven major industrialized nations must commit to the following common goals:

- ▶ **Phase out fossil gas by 2035 and immediately halt new concession, licensing, or leasing rounds for fossil gas production and exploration.**
- ▶ **Ending sales of cars with internal combustion engines by 2030 at the latest**
- ▶ **Phase out of coal by 2030**
- ▶ **100% renewable energies in the power sector by 2035**
- ▶ **Concrete and sufficient financial commitments for climate mitigation, adaptation, and climate-induced loss and damage for countries in the Global South.**

2 <https://public.wmo.int/en/media/press-release/wmo-update-5050-chance-of-global-temperature-temporarily-reaching-15%C2%B0c-threshold>
3 https://www.de-ipcc.de/media/content/Hauptaussagen_AR6-WGIII.pdf

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