

INTRODUCTION MARTINE DOPPEN

The climate crisis is the biggest threat to human health in this century. It is fueled by the fossil fuel industry, which is responsible for 89% of the annual CO2 emissions. They are also responsible for extreme air pollution. Almost the entire global population, namely 99%, breathes in air that exceeds quality limits. Every year, 13 million people die due to preventable environmental causes, including 7 million deaths related to air pollution. Indigenous peoples, black people and people of color, women, and people living in island states and other people made marginalized, and hardest by these crises. They are the ones fighting against the climate crisis in the frontlines. Yet, they are the ones leading the global climate justice movement to wake up UN member states to act now and make sure to keep global warming well below 1,5 degrees C.

But the fossil fuel industry wants to grow, in order to keep their stakeholders happy. And these stakeholders are governments from all over the world, too. Which makes our global economy extremely dependent on oil and gas. But there is no money on a broken planet.

At the COP26, again the biggest delegation came from the fossil fuel industry, while many young people and those fighting in the front lines against the climate crisis, were, again, not invited for the negotiations. Fossil fuel industries keep on receiving public money to search for new oil and gas. But we know that if we use the oil and gas that have been found already, we will exceed the CO2 levels for the 1,5 degrees scenario.

How is it possible that fossil fuel companies keep on extracting more and more oil and gas while people are dying and the earth is on fire?

One important reason: fossil fuel industries are still allowed to advertise. They spend billions of dollars on ads that clean up their image. To make us believe they are green and good for people and the planet. They make us believe that we need them for the energy transition. They make us believe that they are leaders in creating a sustainable future. Take Shell for example. Shell, formerly known as Royal Dutch Shell, is still committed to exploring for new sources of oil and gas and does not have any plans to reduce the overall amount of oil and gas it produces by 2030. They want to grow their fossil gas business by 20% in the coming years until half of Shell's energy business by 2030. Advertising has been framing fossil gas as a 'clean transition fuel' and 'solution' to the climate crisis. Yet research has proved that gas is often [more harmful than coal](#) because of methane leakages. So they keep on going with their fossil business as usual. But their ads tell a different story...

In 2018 alone, Shell spent 55 million dollars on climate related ads. Between 2010 and 2018 Shell dedicated just 1% of its long-term investments to renewable energy. Yet, their ads look like this:

That's one of the many stories about greenwashing ads. We don't call it greenwashing anymore, because greenwashing sounds too sweet. As something funny instead of something harmful, doesn't it? We call it for what it is: greenwashing propaganda. You also see another type of ads. Ads for flying and cars. Worldwide they together add up to an extra 606 million tons of CO2. About the same as 75 big coal powered plants. This is a staggering amount of emissions that can easily be avoided if these ads are banned.

Besides, fossil advertising is used to spread harmful disinformation about 'solutions' for the climate problem. For example by promising car drivers and air travelers that they can offset their fossil fuel emissions by paying only a little bit of extra money for their flight or fuel. Companies say they spend this money on buying trees to compensate for the emission. But this is not a real solution. Because most of these trees already exist, so no extra CO2 is taken from the air. These trees are often part of a rainforest protected by indigenous peoples, who are massively displaced since companies started offsetting their CO2 emissions. We will hear more about this in the interview with Ken Hanshaw from Nigeria. And lastly, fossil ads are part of the lobby strategie from the fossil fuel industry. They lobby for policy that is favorable to their business model. Ads by the fossil fuel industry typically flourish around important political decision moments.

Today we talk about the possible role the WHO to ban fossil ads. Like the WHO did for ads from tobacco.

My name is Martine Doppen, I have a background in Global health sciences and I'm a campaigner for Reclame Fossilvrij, or in English, Fossil Free Advertising. In a few minutes i'm going to introduce you to our honorable speakers for today.

But first a little bit more background about our campaign. We campaign for a ban on ads from the fossil fuel industry, fossil cars and airlines. We launched early 2020 with a campaign for a law to ban fossil ads in the Netherlands and our first major breakthrough was when we convinced Amsterdam to ban fossil advertising in the public space. Greenpeace enlarged our campaign to the European Union and started an European citizens initiative.

An average person sees 5000 ads per day, of which many are fossil ads. As long as these ads are invading our public environment and thereby our brains, we will never massively change human behavior towards a real sustainable future.

Governments need to act, so people are able to change. Also, after more than 30 years of climate policy based on free market principles, I think we all agree that kindly asking the fossil fuel industry to change is not working. Nudging and the free market principle weren't enough to stop the tobacco industry, and it will not work to stop the fossil fuel industry.

So we believe we need to follow the path of the fight against tobacco. We want an international tobacco law for the fossil fuel industry.

Both industries are known by their huge, and unfortunately very effective campaigns to deny the damage of their products. When people started to realize this, they switched toward misleading commercials. And both industries lead to enormous damage to global health. Every year, 13 million people die because of air pollution and the effects of the climate crisis. And this number is increasing. The healthcare costs are 8 billion dollars per day. Per day!

So why is advertising for tobacco forbidden, and do we see fossil ads at every corner and in every newspaper? Shouldn't an ad by Shell picturing kids and windmills be as bizarre as a huge billboard of the Marlboro Man looking out on a school yard?

How can the WHO help to stop fossil fuel industries from polluting our air and causing the climate crisis. Maria Neira, director of the Public Health, Environment and Social Determinants of Health Department of the WHO is here with us. She compared the fossil fuel industry with the tobacco industry in terms of air pollution. Isn't it time to tackle the fossil fuel industry, like we did with the tobacco industry?

With our amazing speakers, Jesscia Beagly, Ken Henshaw, Mark Eccleston-Turner, Omnia El Omrani and Maria Neira, we will explore how the WHO can accomplish a ban on fossil ads. Is there a possibility for another convention? And will the WHO raise awareness towards its states about the dangerous impact of fossil ads?