

# Written submission by Reclame Fossielvrij for the Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuels Conference

## Q1. Barriers and Instruments

Advertising for fossil fuel products and industries actively drives demand for fossil fuels, such as air travel, cruises, and gas-powered vehicles. These ads are pervasive, creating a false sense of familiarity and normalcy around fossil fuel use. This has 2 major effects: it increases demand for fossil fuels and weakens public support for climate policies, and discourages innovation in sustainable alternatives.

Scientists find that fossil fuel advertising undermines the energy transition, arguing that eliminating such advertising should be an essential part of broader efforts to change lifestyles. The IPCC 6th assessment report from 2022 states that 40–70% of required emission reductions must come from large-scale behavioural change. It highlights luxury items such as SUVs and air travel holidays as particularly problematic, while noting the normalising and misleading role of advertising.

While fossil fuels are deeply embedded in the fabric of our societies, luxury products and services such as air travel, cruise holidays, and energy-intensive cars have a disproportionate climate impact, can't be decarbonised in time, compete with sustainable options and are not essential for daily life. They are also unjust, as only an extremely small global minority uses airplanes, cruise ships, or buys new cars and almost all of them live in middle- and high-income countries in the Global North. Meanwhile, the consequences of climate change, which these products exacerbate, are borne disproportionately by low-income countries in the Global South.

### Name of the solution:

A fossil fuel advertising ban or fossil ad ban

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- Pillar 2: Transforming fossil fuel supply and demand
  - Closure of new demand drivers (Pillar 2)

### Description of the solution

A growing number of municipalities is banning fossil ads. According to scientists, a fossil ad ban is the “low hanging fruit” of climate policy.

A fossil ad ban prohibits advertising for fossil fuel products (i.e. air travel, cruises, ICE vehicles, and fossil-based home energy) and industries (incl fossil fuel companies, airlines, and airports) lowers emissions and prevents extra emissions from luxury products and services.

It curbs a key driver of fossil fuel demand:

- Reducing demand: Banning fossil ads removes a constant, involuntary prompt to consume fossil fuel products.
- Denormalizing harmful products: The ban signals societal disapproval, shifting public perception of fossil fuels and fossil fuel industry as unacceptable. This paves the way for further climate measures.
- Preventing passivity: Fossil ads create a false sense of normalcy, making people less likely to demand sustainable alternatives.

It's a high-impact, low-cost policy with broad societal support, according to scientist.

**Which actors are responsible for the effective implementation of the proposed solution? Please identify the actors responsible for implementing the solution and clearly list their respective roles.**

WHO or the UN could draft a Framework Convention for Fossil Fuel Control, modelled to the FCTC for tobacco control.

Regions and national governments can implement a total fossil ad ban in public space, online and in the media.

Local governments can ban fossil advertising in their public space.

**What instruments are required to ensure the effective implementation of the solution?**

A fossil ad ban can be implemented:

- Nationally and regionally through laws
- Globally through guidelines or agreements, like the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control
- Locally (over 50 jurisdictions already have implemented a fossil ad ban), however to scale up climate change we need to look at a bigger scale.

**Key milestones and timeline**

A fossil ad ban can be implemented in the very near term, before 2028. It is fast, cost-effective, and adaptable to the specific needs of different jurisdictions. Unlike more complex interventions, they can usually be rolled out within ½ - 1 year, creating early momentum for broader solutions.

**How does the proposed solution incorporate a gender-responsive and human-rights based approach?**

Air travel and cruise holidays exacerbate climate injustice, as they are only accessible to a wealthy minority, making air travel the most unequally distributed form of consumption globally.

A ban on fossil fuel advertising aligns with human rights protection, as was confirmed by a Dutch court and multiple UN bodies. The policy is promoted by UN bodies like the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Human Rights Council and the Secretary-General. The International Court of Justice's advisory opinion further underscores that countries must phase out fossil fuel demand to uphold human rights and international law.

A ban on advertising does not interfere with freedom of choice of consumers. It just takes away the aura of normalcy around very harmful products.

In 2025, UN Special Rapporteurs argued that such bans are essential to safeguard rights to life, health, and a healthy environment, drawing parallels to the delayed regulation of tobacco advertising.