

To Mukhtar Babayev
COP29 President-Designate
Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources, Azerbaijan

Dear COP29 President-Designate,

Hosting the UN climate talks is a profound responsibility to the global community. Trust in the presidency is essential for a successful COP. We, along with parties and global civil society, expect every COP presidency to embody the highest standards of integrity, uphold human rights and civic space, and serve as the custodian of a process that transcends the interests of the host country, any one country bloc or any one industry.

It is in this context, that we, over 150 organizations from around the world, express serious concerns about the [recent announcement](#) of February 22, 2024, by the COP29 presidency to extend the COP29 organizing committee: namely on the participation of Rovshan Najaf, president of the State Oil Company of the Republic of Azerbaijan (SOCAR) and Ilgar Musayev, Head of the country's Service of Special Communication and Information Security in the core team of this year's climate summit, the COP29 organizing committee.

This announcement takes place in the context of existing concerns about gender parity in the COP29 organizing committee, following the complete absence of any women in the initial committee.

We write now to express our serious concerns over conflicts of interest and the undue influence of the oil industry on the global climate talks. Despite Azerbaijan being a party to the Paris Agreement, having endorsed the UAE consensus and accepted the findings of the IPCC, SOCAR plans to expand its fossil fuel production, which is incompatible with the objective of limiting warming to 1.5°C, and lacks a clear and credible strategy to transition away from fossil fuels.

We are keenly aware that Azerbaijan is not alone in expanding fossil fuel production at a time of runaway climate impacts; other members of this club include such Global North governments as the USA, UK, Australia, or Norway. We are further aware that Azerbaijan is not the first fossil fuel producing country to host a COP. At COP28, global civil society criticized the nomination of Sultan Al Jaber as COP president in order to protect the global climate talks from the influence of the fossil fuel industry. The inclusion of the president of the state oil company in the COP29 organizing committee presents a significant conflict of interest. The credibility of the COP29

presidency, already weakened by your historic ties to the oil and gas industry, risks being further jeopardized by this decision.

In order to shelter the climate talks from the influence of the industry that has a material interest in seeing them fail, we have been calling for the UN Climate Change Secretariat to establish a clear conflict of interest framework for UNFCCC delegates and COP presidencies. But we also call on you COP29 President-Designate, to address this conflict of interest: As the third COP president in a row from a country whose economy relies heavily on fossil fuel exports, your presidency will be under much scrutiny.

Furthermore, we are deeply concerned and affected by the rollback and restriction of civic space around the world, including in Azerbaijan, where freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and association are severely restricted, civil society activists are subjected to arbitrary arrests and politically motivated prosecutions. We are concerned that in Azerbaijan, peaceful protests are repressed and independent organizations and media outlets face excessive restrictions in law and practice. Just last week, Azerbaijani authorities conducted raids on local media offices and detained a dozen journalists and other civil society members. Such tactics are routinely used by the government of Azerbaijan to silence civil society, especially those who speak out about corruption and environmental harms in the oil industry – like Gubad Ibadoghlu, who has been imprisoned for over six months. As a Party to the Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters, Azerbaijan has a legally binding obligation to promote access to information, public participation, and access to justice in the context of international environmental fora and processes such as the upcoming COP.

It is in this context that we view the decision to include both Ali Naghiyev, Chief of the State Security Service of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and the head of Azerbaijan's Service of Special Communication and Information Security in the core COP29 organizing team as highly problematic. We understand the Service of Special Communication and Information Security is responsible for security of members of the government but simultaneously authorizes and oversees the collection of telecommunication data and surveillance. Hence, as members of civil society organizations, we are concerned about the chilling effect such appointments will have and their implications for the protection of open civic space and human rights, including the rights to free speech, peaceful assembly, security of the person, freedom from arbitrary detention, and privacy.

We, as civil society, along with Parties, will continue to work to strengthen protection of human rights and environmental accountability within the UNFCCC process,

including by ensuring transparency of all Host Country Agreements, which should reflect the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter as well as obligations under international human rights law.

For the sake of the integrity and the success of this process, we urge you to step up transparency and accountability by:

- Removing Rovshan Najaf, president of the State Oil Company of the Republic of Azerbaijan (SOCAR), from the COP29 organizing committee, to address the conflict of interest his membership presents
- Clarifying the role and tasks of the State Security Service and the Special Communication and Information Security Service as part of the COP29 organizing committee and ensuring that they do not undertake activities that unduly restrict the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and privacy of anyone in Azerbaijan;
- Ceasing harassment and detention of journalists and civil society activists and enshrining existing legal obligations regarding the protection of civic space and human rights, including the rights to free speech, peaceful assembly, and privacy in the COP29 Host Agreement and, in the interests of full transparency and in accordance with the conclusion of the Arrangement of Intergovernmental Meetings meeting at SB58, publishing the COP29 Host Country Agreement between the UNFCCC and the government of Azerbaijan;

We look forward to hearing from you and stand ready to engage and support COP29 in delivering a just, ambitious, and comprehensive outcome,

Sincerely,

May Boeve,
Executive Director, 350.org

Elizabeth Bast,
Executive Director, Oil Change
International

Carroll Muffett,
President and CEO of the Center for
International Environmental Law (CIEL)

Arthur Larok,
Secretary General of ActionAid
International

Signatories

AbibiNsroma Foundation

Action Jeunesse pour le Développement
Africa Network for Environment and Economic Justice
Alternative
Alternative des Jeunes pour la préservation et la conservation des Ecosystèmes, de la Biodiversité et de l'Environnement pour le Développement Durable
Amal organization for relief and development
Amolese Media Solutions
Asia Pacific Network of Environmental Defenders (APNED)
Asociación Ambiente y Sociedad
Asociación Interamericana para la Defensa del Ambiente
Austrian Alliance for Climate Justice
Bagmati UNESCO Club
Borno Youth Environmentalists
BRAC
Bread for the World
Burundian Association for the Promotion of the Rights of Disabled Women - URUMURI
CAN Latin America (CANLA)
Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment
Care About Climate
Cartoonist4climate
Center for Biological Diversity
Center for Environmental Concerns - Philippines Inc.
Center for Oil and Gas Organizing
Center for People, Environment and Biodiversity Conservation.
Center for Renewable Energy and Sustainable Technology - Philippines
Centre for Citizens Conserving Environment & Management (CECIC)
Child Rights International Network (CRIN)
Christian Aid
CIDSE
Clima de Eleição
Climate Action for Lifelong Learners (CALL)
Climate Action Merribek
Climate Action Network Australia
Climate Action Network Canada
Climate Action Network Southeast Asia

Climate Action Network Tanzania
Climate Generation
CliMates
CNCD-11.11.11
Coordination Office of the Austrian Bishops' Conference for International
Development and Mission (KOO)
Coal Action Network Aotearoa
Community Action Against Plastic Waste (CAPWs)
Community Action Platform on Environment and Development
Corporate Europe Observatory
Crude Accountability
Early Bird's Club Private Limited
EarthRights International
East African SusWatch Network
Eco-citizenship instigation Brigade (EIB)
Ecoclimate vision côte d'Ivoire
Ecohermanxs
Ecologistas en Acción
EcoRebuild
EKOenergy ecolabel
Enlázate por la Justicia
Environmental Management and Sustainable Farming Service for Africa
Environmental Management Trust (EMT)
Fastenaktion
FIMCAP Europe
Fossil Free South Africa
Fridays for Future India
Friends of the Earth US
Fundação SOS Mata Atlântica
Fundación Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (FARN)
Fundación Proclade
Funga Pengo Dev't Initiative Africa
Future for Future NGO
Generation Climate Europe
Germanwatch e.V.
GLOBAL 2000

Global Shapers Mumbai Hub
Global Youth Coalition
Global Youth Counterpart for Sustainable Development (GYC)
Grandmothers Advocacy Network
Green voices medie
Greenfaith
Greenpeace
HopeInclusion
Iceland Nature Conservation Association
Indigenous Environmental Network
Innovation pour le Développement et la Protection de l'environnement
Insha nemvelo
International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA)
Jeunes Ambassadeurs pour le Climat
Karakoram International University
Klima-Allianz Deutschland
Klimadelegation
La Coordinadora de Organizaciones para el Desarrollo-España
LIFE Education Sustainability Equality
MAI FOUNDATION
Maicon Jael Florián Ramírez
Manos Unidas
MISEREOR, German Catholic Bishops' Organisation for Development Cooperation
MOUVEMENT JEUNESSE ET CITOYENNETE
Movimiento Ciudadano frente al Cambio Climático - Perú
MUSUNGIDI DRC
Nataala Care Foundation
National organization for renewable energy and sustainable development
Natural Resource Governance Institute (NRGI)
NCSC
NGO Forum on ADB
Nigeria youth climate preservation network
Nuclear Information and Resource Service
ObbyPress Foundation
Observatório do Clima
Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum

Peace Movement Aotearoa
Peace One Day Mali
Physicians for Social Responsibility Pennsylvania
Protect Our Winters Aotearoa
Publish What You Pay
re-generation
Seniors for Climate Action Now!
Siva foundation
Stamp Out Poverty
Student Energy at the University of Buea
Students for Climate Solutions (SFCSNZ)
SUUDU ANDAL Association
Swiss Youth for Climate (SYFC)
Taproot Earth
The Development Fund of Norway
The Foundation for Agriculture & Environmental Conservation (Faec)
The Indigenous
There Is No Earth B
TogetherforFuture e.V.
Trócaire
Udaan Youth Club (UYC)
Uganda Christian University
Uganda Coalition for Sustainable Development
Union of Concerned Scientists
Urgewald
US Climate Action Network
Vlaamse Jeugdraad (Flemish Youth Council)
Wardil
World Animal Protection
You-lean Chad Ambassador Network
Young Achievers
Young Climate Activism in Zimbabwe
Youth Advocates for Climate Action Philippines
Youth and Environment Europe
Youth for Sustainable Agriculture
Youth Initiative Cen Sad Sénégal

Youth Talks

Youths United For Earth Malaysia (YUFE MY)

YPEER Pakistan

مجلس شباب الدولي