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Who are the members of the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative? Which countries and institutions have backed their cause so far? We explain.

Written by [Dipanita Nath](#)

Pune | Updated: November 18, 2024 15:49 IST



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A view of placards as activists, mostly from the Middle East and Africa, demonstrate in favour of renewable energy during the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP29), in Baku, Azerbaijan November 18, 2024. (Photo: Reuters)

Should fossil fuels be regulated the way nuclear weapons are? A group of governments and civil society organisations believe so, and are pushing the idea of a fossil fuel non-proliferation treaty (FF-NPT).

“Just like 50 years ago, when the world used international treaties to defuse the threats posed by nuclear weapons, today, the world needs a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty to phase out fossil fuels, support dependent economies, workers and communities to diversify away from fossil fuels, ensure 100% access to renewable energy globally and promote a just transition that leaves no-one behind,” the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative says on its website. The global organisation is made up of civil society members, indigenous peoples, activists, academics, and experts

The organisation also points out that “The Paris Agreement, important as it is, does not reference fossil fuels once and has failed to constrain their production.”

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The idea for an FF-NPT was launched around the time the Paris Agreement was finalised. Over the years, it has received the backing of a wide range of stakeholders, from former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon to the indigenous people of Amazon to several small island states most threatened by climate change.

At COP29 in Baku last week, it was announced that 10 more countries had joined discussions on the FF-NPT this year, though their names were not announced publicly.

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FF-NPT has been endorsed by 13 Small Island Developing States of the Pacific, such as Vanuatu, Tuvalu, Tonga, Fiji, and the Solomon Islands, who were least responsible for global warming but are most vulnerable to its impact. Colombia, one of the largest coal producers and exporters globally, endorsed FF-NPT in December 2023, at COP28.

Three days after COP29 began, a network of 70 sustainable banks, the Global Alliance for Banking on Values, said that 25 of its members were endorsing the FF-NPT. This is the first collective endorsement of the initiative by financial institutions.

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The background for fossil fuel non-proliferation treaty

At the press conference in Baku last week, Tzaporah Berman, Chair and Founder of the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative, spelt out the latest threats to the planet.

“To add to the evidence of our own eyes, scientific reports released here at COP29 show that fossil fuel emissions are projected to be about 8 per cent higher this year than in 2015, when the Paris Agreement was signed. The year 2024 is set to be the hottest year on record. This means that the world is still not on track to confront this crisis, with major fossil fuel-producing countries planning on producing more than 110 per cent more fossil fuels by 2030 than would be compatible with limiting global warming to 1.5 degree Celsius,” she said.

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A number of studies have established the link between fossil fuel consumption and global warming, with scientists saying that governments must dial down on coal, oil, and gas production to avoid climate catastrophe. Yet, as COP29 President Mukhtar Babayev said during his inaugural address, current policies are leading us to 3°C of warming and a future of “ruin” for humanity.

What is FF-NPT?

The FF-NPT proposes to make it legally binding on nations to end fossil fuel extraction, wind down existing production, and manage a just transition to renewable energy.

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It operates on three pillars — non-proliferation, which is a global cooperation model to end the expansion of coal, oil and gas production; a fair phase-out, which comprises an equitable plan to shut down existing fossil fuel production in a way that nations with the capacity and historical responsibility for emissions transition fastest and empowers others; and ‘just transition’, which calls for fast-tracking the adoption of renewable energy and economic diversification away from fossil fuels such that no worker, community or country is left behind.

Since it was conceptualised in 2016 and officially launched in 2019, the FF-NPT has hit the wall of finance.

Harjeet Singh, Global Engagement Director for the Fossil Fuel Treaty Initiative, is engaging in climate finance negotiations. “Without financial support, poorer, climate-vulnerable nations will not be able to transition away from fossil fuels, nor will they be able to protect themselves from the impacts of climate change,” Singh told [The Indian Express](#) over the phone from Baku.

“We are deeply concerned about what’s happening here in the conference rooms at COP29 regarding finance,” said Singh. “The proposed Fossil Fuel Treaty will support the work of the Paris Agreement, whether through the implementation of the New Collective Quantified Goal—which

aims to establish a new financial target to assist developing countries in their climate actions post-2025—or through Nationally Determined Contributions (the climate action plans submitted by countries) and Just Transition Work Programmes,” he added.

Where is India placed?

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Singh said they have not engaged extensively with India yet, as the initial focus has been on smaller countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. “As we move forward, we aim to bring large, fossil fuel-dependent countries like India and Indonesia on board. From a justice and equity perspective, India stands to benefit from the Treaty and should consider joining,” he said.

Global Carbon Project’s report estimates that India’s fossil fuel emissions are set to rise by 4.6 per cent in 2024.

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Dipanita Nath

Dipanita Nath is interested in the climate crisis and sustainability. She has written extensively on social trends, heritage, theatre and startups. She has worked with ma [... Read More](#)

First uploaded on: 18-11-2024 at 15:45 IST

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