Regional Energy Expert Roudi Baroudi Earns Award from Washington Think Tank



Transatlantic Leadership Network Recognizes Author for Contributions to Peaceful Development in Eastern Mediterranean

WASHINGTON, DC November 9, 2023: Doha-based Lebanese author Roudi Baroudi was one of two people presented with the 2023 Transatlantic Leadership Award at a ceremony in Washington this week.

Although circumstances relating to the conflict in the Gaza Strip prevented Baroudi from attending the event, both he and Joshua Volz – the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Europe, Eurasia, Africa, and the Middle East and the Office of International Affairs at the US Department of Energy – were recognized by the Transatlantic Leadership Network (TLN). Each was cited at a gala dinner on Monday for his "valuable contribution in building a peaceful and prosperous Eastern Mediterranean" as part of the TLN's 2nd Annual Conference on Freedom of the Media.

"I was deeply honored to be named a recipient of this prestigious award, and I will always be grateful for the many ways in which the TLN has supported my work for several years now," Baroudi said. "I also look forward to working together in the future so that one day, our descendants can know the benefits of peace and coexistence. It is precisely in difficult and trying times that cooler heads must be able and willing to look at the reasons for current bloodshed and recrimination, then envision pathways to a better future."

Baroudi, who serves as CEO of independent consultancy Energy and Environment Holding in Doha, is a long-time champion of dialogue, cooperation, and practical solutions to both the global climate crisis and recurrent tensions in the East Med. A regular speaker at regional energy and policy conferences, Baroudi's insights are also avidly sought by local and international media, as well as governments, major energy companies, and investors.

Having advised both public and private sector actors on a wide variety of energy issues, Baroudi is widely credited with bringing unique perspective to all manner of policy discussions. He is the author of several books, including "Maritime Disputes in the Eastern Mediterranean: The Way Forward" (2021), and "Climate and Energy in the Mediterranean: What the Blue Economy Means for a Greener Future" (2022). Together with Notre-Dame University – Louaize, Baroudi has also published a study of the US-brokered October 2022 Maritime Boundary Agreement between Lebanon and Israel, and is currently preparing another volume on Lebanon's prospects for similar deals with Cyprus and Syria. The TLN describes itself as "a nonpartisan, independent, international network of practitioners, private sector leaders and policy analysts dedicated to strengthening and reorienting transatlantic relations to the rapidly changing dynamics of a globalizing world."

Monday's ceremony was attended by a broad cross-section of high-profile figures, including senior officials from the Departments of Energy and State, numerous members of Washington's extensive diplomatic corps, and representatives of both international organizations and various media outlets.

Climate's 'Catch-22': Cutting pollution heats up planet



Air pollution, a global scourge that kills millions of people a year, is shielding us from the full force of the sun. Getting rid of it will accelerate climate change.

That's the unpalatable conclusion reached by scientists poring over the results of China's decade-long and highly effective "war on pollution", according to six leading climate experts.

The drive to banish pollution, caused mainly by sulphur dioxide (SO2) spewed from coal plants, has cut SO2 emissions by close to 90% and saved hundreds of thousands of lives, Chinese official data and health studies show.

Yet stripped of its toxic shield, which scatters and reflects solar radiation, China's average temperatures have gone up by 0.7 degrees Celsius since 2014, triggering fiercer heatwaves, according to a Reuters review of meteorological data and the scientists interviewed.

"It's this Catch-22," said Patricia Quinn, an atmospheric chemist at the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), speaking about cleaning up sulphur pollution globally. "We want to clean up our air for air quality purposes but, by doing that, we're increasing warming."

The removal of the air pollution – a term scientists call "unmasking" – may have had a greater effect on temperatures in some industrial Chinese cities over the last decade than the warming from greenhouse gases themselves, the scientists said. Other highly polluted parts of the world, such as India and the Middle East, would see similar jumps in warming if they follow China's lead in cleaning the skies of sulphur dioxide and the polluting aerosols it forms, the experts warned.

They said efforts to improve air quality could actually push the world into catastrophic warming scenarios and irreversible impacts.

"Aerosols are masking one-third of the heating of the planet," said Paulo Artaxo, an environmental physicist and lead author of the chapter on short-lived climate pollutants in the most recent round of reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), completed this year. "If you implement technologies to reduce air pollution, this will accelerate – very significantly – global warming in the short term."

The Chinese and Indian environment ministries didn't immediately respond to requests for comment on the effects of pollution unmasking.

The link between reducing sulphur dioxide and warming was flagged by the IPCC in a 2021 report which concluded that, without the solar shield of S02 pollution, the global average temperature would already have risen by 1.6 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels.

That misses the world's goal of limiting warming to 1.5C, beyond which scientists predict irreversible and catastrophic changes to the climate, according to the IPCC, which pegs the current level at 1.1C.

The Reuters review of the Chinese data provides the most detailed picture yet of how this phenomenon is playing out in the real world, drawing on previously unreported numbers on changes in temperatures and SO2 emissions over the past decade and corroborated by environmental scientists.

Reuters interviewed 12 scientists in total on the phenomenon of unmasking globally, including four who have acted as authors or reviewers of sections on air pollution in IPCC reports.

They said there was no suggestion among climate experts that the world should let-up on fighting air pollution, a clear and present danger that the World Health Organisation says causes about 7mn premature deaths a year, mostly in poorer countries.

Instead they stressed the need for more aggressive action to cut emissions of climate-warming greenhouse gases, with reducing methane seen as one of the most promising paths to offset pollution unmasking in the short term.

President Xi Jinping pledged to tackle pollution when he took power in 2012 following decades of coal-burning that had helped turn China into "the factory of the world". The following year, as record smog in Beijing inspired "Airpocalypse" newspaper headlines, the government unveiled what scientists called China's version of the US Clean Air Act.

On March 5, 2014, a week after Xi went on a walkabout during another extreme bout of smog in the capital, the government officially declared a war on pollution at the National People's Congress.

Under the new rules, power plants and steel mills were forced to switch to lower-sulphur coal. Hundreds of inefficient factories were shuttered, and vehicle fuel standards toughened up. While coal continues to be China's largest power source, smokestack scrubbers now strip out most SO2 emissions.

China's SO2 emissions had decreased from a 2006 peak of at nearly 26mn metric tons to 20.4mn tons in 2013 thanks to more gradual emissions restrictions. But with the war on pollution, those emissions had plummeted by about 87% to 2.7mn metric tons by 2021.

The drop in pollution was accompanied by a leap in warming – the nine years since 2014 have seen national average annual temperatures in China of 10.34C, up more than 0.7C compared with the 2001-2010 period, according to Reuters calculations based on yearly weather reports published by the China Meteorological Administration.

Scientific estimates vary as to how much of that rise comes from unmasking versus greenhouse gas emissions or natural climate variations like El Nino.

The impacts are more acute at a local level near the pollution source. Almost immediately, China saw big warming jumps from its unmasking of pollution near heavy industrial regions, according to climate scientist Yangyang Xu at Texas A&M University, who models the impact of aerosols on the climate.

Xu told Reuters he estimated that unmasking had caused temperatures near the cities of Chongqing and Wuhan, long known as China's "furnaces", to rise by almost 1C since sulphur emissions peaked in the mid-2000s.

During heatwaves, the unmasking effect can be even more pronounced. Laura Wilcox, a climate scientist who studies the effects of aerosols at Britain's University of Reading, said a computer simulation showed that the rapid decline in SO2 in China could raise temperatures on extreme-heat days by as much as 2C.

"Those are big differences, especially for somewhere like China, where heat is already pretty dangerous," she said.

Indeed, heatwaves in China have been particularly ferocious this year. A town in the northwestern region of Xinjiang saw temperatures of 52.2C (126F) in July, shattering the national temperature record of 50.3C set in 2015.

Beijing also experienced a record heatwave, with temperatures topping 35C (95F) for more than four weeks.

The effects of sulphur unmasking are most pronounced in developing countries, as the US and most of Europe cleaned up their skies decades ago. While the heat rise from sulphur cleanup is strongest locally, the effects can be felt in fardistant regions. One 2021 study co-authored by Xu found that a decrease in European aerosol emissions since the 1980s may have shifted weather patterns in Northern China.

In India, sulphur pollution is still rising, roughly doubling in the last two decades, according to calculations by NOAA researchers based on figures from the US-funded Community Emissions Data System.

In 2020, when that pollution plummeted due to Covid lockdowns, ground temperatures in India were the eighth warmest on record, 0.29 C higher than the 1981-2010 average, despite the cooling effects of the La Nina climate pattern, according to the India Meteorological Department.

India aims for an air cleanup like China's, and in 2019 launched its National Clean Air Programme to reduce pollution by 40% in more than 100 cities by 2026.

Once polluted regions in India or the Middle East improve their air quality by abandoning fossil fuels and transitioning to green energy sources, they too will lose their shield of sulphates, scientists said.

"You stop your anthropogenic activities for a brief moment of time and the atmosphere cleans up very, very quickly and the temperatures jump instantaneously," added Sergey Osipov, a climate modeller at the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology in Saudi Arabia.

As the implications of the pollution unmasking become more apparent, experts are casting around for methods to counter the associated warming.

One proposal called "solar radiation management" envisions deliberately injecting sulphur aerosols into the atmosphere to cool temperatures. But many scientists worry that the approach could unleash unintended consequences.

A more mainstream plan is to curb methane emissions. This is seen as the quickest way to tame global temperatures because the effects of the gas in the atmosphere last only a decade or so, so cutting emissions now would deliver results within a decade. Carbon dioxide, by comparison, persists for centuries.

As of 2019, methane had caused about 0.5C in warming compared with preindustrial levels, according to IPCC figures.

While more than 100 countries have pledged to reduce methane emissions by 30% by the end of the decade, few have gone further than drawing up "action plans" and "pathways" to cuts. China — the world's biggest emitter — has yet to publish its plan.

By targeting methane, the world could mitigate the warming effect of the reduction in pollution and potentially avert catastrophic consequences, said Michael Diamond, an atmospheric scientist at Florida State University.

"This doesn't doom us to going above 1.5 degrees Celsius if we clean up the air."

What can COP28 achieve?



COP season is almost here. For the climate-conscious, the annual Conference of the Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is a fixture of the late-year calendar and an opportunity to take stock of our goals, needs, and achievements. We spend two weeks preoccupied with a distant event hoping that negotiators will make meaningful progress toward mitigating the climate threat. But to keep our expectations for COP28 realistic, we must understand what a COP can and cannot do.

We are steadily decarbonising our economies. Within a decade, wind and solar power will be the major sources of electricity, and sales of electric vehicles (EVs) are likely to overtake those with internal combustion engines. According to the International Energy Agency, the world's fossil-fuel consumption will start falling by 2030. Though this is probably too late to limit the global temperature increase to 2C, let alone 1.5C, above pre-industrial levels, it is sooner than one would have expected only a short time ago.

But little of this progress is directly attributable to COPs, including COP21 in 2015, from which the Paris climate agreement emerged. In fact, the Paris agreement specifies nothing about EVs or wind or solar power. Instead, it is Tesla that is responsible for the growth of EV sales: the commercial success of the company's Model S drove other high-end automakers to develop the competitive products which are now debuting.

Is there any connection between COPs and Tesla's success? If there is, it is not direct. During its early growth stages, Tesla benefited greatly from the United States' Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) regulations, which enabled it to sell zero-emissions credits to other manufacturers. The revenues from ZEC sales sometimes surpassed those of car sales.

The CAFE regulations date back to 1975, two decades before the first COP was held. They have, however, been tightened over time, a process that might partly reflect increased awareness, fostered by the COPs, of the climate challenge. Similarly, the COPs might have encouraged the subsidies, in both the US and the European Union, from which Tesla has benefited more recently, after it had already become a major force in the auto industry.

As for solar and wind, the sharp decline in costs has driven their dramatic growth. From 2009 to 2019, the cost of solar power fell from \$0.36 per kilowatt-hour to \$0.03. This decline is attributable to two main factors: economies of scale, which lowered the costs of producing each silicon wafer, and learning by doing, which led to more efficient – and thus cheaper – manufacturing processes. Both factors sustain a virtuous cycle: as the use of solar power increases, costs come down, further accelerating the adoption of solar power.

This process was kicked off by Germany's adoption of generous feed-in tariffs for solar power in 2000. The Chinese government subsequently began investing heavily in solar, which it identified as a strategically important industry. Again, these important policy moves could have been encouraged by the increased awareness of climate change that they generate at COP meetings.

For offshore wind, the decline in costs has been driven

largely by Orsted and Equinor, two Scandinavian companies that leveraged their offshore oil and gas expertise to develop offshore wind farms, which use many of the same technologies. Government subsidies helped the nascent technology to become commercially viable.

In short, progress on decarbonisation has primarily reflected technological breakthroughs brought about by for-profit ventures with the help and guidance of supportive government policies. Those policies might have been crystallised by the discussions at, and publicity surrounding, the COPs, though they were not the result of specific directives from those meetings or contained in the Paris agreement.

So, what should we hope emerges from COP28? COPs can produce two types of positive outcomes. The first are "big picture" outcomes, such as maintaining pressure on governments and corporations to reduce emissions. Here, it is important not only to reiterate the importance of reaching zero emissions and highlight how far we have yet to go, but also to recognise the progress that has already been made.

The second type of outcome is more granular. This year's COP must mark the beginning of a process that will clarify what constitutes a valid carbon offset. Many corporations are currently expecting to reduce, but not eliminate, their emissions, on the assumption that they can buy carbon offsets to take them to net-zero. But the world obviously cannot get to zero emissions – the ultimate goal – if anyone is still emitting.

Equally important, it has lately become clear that many voluntary carbon offsets are worthless, as they do not meet the standard of additionality (the guarantee that the relevant emissions reductions would not have occurred without support from carbon credit sales) or avoid leakage (the shifting of emissions elsewhere). An international body must set clear standards for the validity of offsets and impose limits on their use, and the UNFCCC is the obvious candidate.

COP28 has the potential to encourage further climate action, including the introduction or strengthening of policies that

can lead to emissions-reducing technological breakthroughs, as well as to deliver a much-needed rulebook on important technical issues, such as the use of offsets. Whether it succeeds depends entirely on execution. – Project Syndicate

 Geoffrey Heal is Professor of Social Enterprise at Columbia Business School and a professor at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs.

Human-centric globalization: Taking G20 to the Last Mile, leaving none behind



Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam — these two words capture a deep philosophy. It means 'the world is one family.' This is an all-embracing outlook that encourages us to progress as one universal family, transcending borders, languages and ideologies. During India's G20 presidency, this has translated into a call for human-centric progress. As One Earth, we are coming together to nurture our planet. As One Family, we support each other in the pursuit of growth. And we move together towards a shared future – One Future – which is an undeniable truth in these interconnected times.

The post-pandemic world order is very different from the world before it. There are three important changes, among others.

First, there is a growing realization that a shift away from a GDP-centric view of the world to a human-centric view is needed.

Second, the world is recognizing the importance of resilience and reliability in global supply chains.

Third, there is a collective call for boosting multilateralism through the reform of global institutions.

Our G20 presidency has played the role of a catalyst in these shifts.

In December 2022, when we took over the presidency from Indonesia, I had written that a mindset shift must be catalyzed by the G20. This was especially needed in the context of mainstreaming the marginalized aspirations of developing countries, the Global South and Africa.

The Voice of Global South Summit in January 2023, which witnessed participation from 125 countries, was one of the foremost initiatives under our presidency. It was an important exercise to gather inputs and ideas from the Global South. Further, our presidency has not only seen the largest-ever participation from African countries but has also pushed for the inclusion of the African Union as a permanent member of the G20. An interconnected world means our challenges across domains are interlinked. This is the midway year of the 2030 Agenda and many are noting with great concern that the progress on SDGs is off-track. The G20 2023 Action Plan on Accelerating Progress on SDGs will spearhead the future direction of the G20 towards implementing the SDGs.

In India, living in harmony with nature has been a norm since ancient times and we have been contributing our share towards climate action even in modern times.

Many countries of the Global South are at various stages of development and climate action must be a complementary pursuit. Ambitions for climate action must be matched with actions on climate finance and transfer of technology.

We believe there is a need to move away from a purely restrictive attitude of what should not be done, to a more constructive attitude focusing on what can be done to fight climate change.

The Chennai High-Level Principles for a Sustainable and Resilient Blue Economy focus on keeping our oceans healthy.

A global ecosystem for clean and green hydrogen will emerge from our presidency, along with a Green Hydrogen Innovation Center.

In 2015, we launched the International Solar Alliance. Now, through the Global Biofuels Alliance, we will support the world to enable energy transitions in tune with the benefits of a circular economy.

Democratizing climate action is the best way to impart momentum to the movement. Just as individuals make daily decisions based on their long-term health, they can make lifestyle decisions based on the impact on the planet's longterm health. Just like yoga became a global mass movement for wellness, we have also nudged the world with Lifestyles for Sustainable Environment (LiFE).

Due to the impact of climate change, ensuring food and nutritional security will be crucial. Millets, or Shree Anna, can help with this while also boosting climate-smart agriculture. In the International Year of Millets, we have taken millets to global palates. The Deccan High Level Principles on Food Security and Nutrition is also helpful in this direction.

Technology is transformative but it also needs to be made inclusive. In the past, the benefits of technological advancements have not benefited all sections of society equally. India, over the last few years, has shown how technology can be leveraged to narrow inequalities, rather than widen them.

For instance, the billions across the world that remain unbanked, or lack digital identities, can be financially included through digital public infrastructure (DPI). The solutions we have built using our DPI have now been recognized globally. Now, through the G20, we will help developing countries adapt, build and scale DPI to unlock the power of inclusive growth.

That India is the fastest-growing large economy is no accident. Our simple, scalable and sustainable solutions have empowered the vulnerable and the marginalized to lead our development story. From space to sports, economy to entrepreneurship, Indian women have taken the lead in various sectors. They have shifted the narrative from the development of women to women-led development. Our G20 presidency is working on bridging the gender digital divide, reducing labor force participation gaps and enabling a larger role for women in leadership and decision-making.

For India, the G20 presidency is not merely a high-level diplomatic endeavor. As the Mother of Democracy and a model of

diversity, we opened the doors of this experience to the world.

Today, accomplishing things at scale is a quality that is associated with India. The G20 presidency is no exception. It has become a people-driven movement. Over 200 meetings will have been organized in 60 Indian cities across the length and breadth of our nation, hosting nearly 100,000 delegates from 125 countries by the end of our term. No presidency has ever encompassed such a vast and diverse geographical expanse.

It is one thing to hear about India's demography, democracy, diversity and development from someone else. It is totally different to experience them first-hand. I am sure our G20 delegates would vouch for this.

Our G20 presidency strives to bridge divides, dismantle barriers and sow seeds of collaboration that nourish a world where unity prevails over discord, where shared destiny eclipses isolation. As the G20 president, we had pledged to make the global table larger, ensuring that every voice is heard and every country contributes. I am positive that we have matched our pledge with actions and outcomes.

TotalEnergies takes control of renewables firm for \$1.66bn



Chief executive offi cer Patrick Pouyanne has pledged to spend \$5bn this year on low-carbon energies - almost a third of total capital expenditure - as the company reduces its exposure to petroleum with ongoing sales of Canadian oilsands assets and some of its European service stations. By buying the 71% in Total Eren it doesn't already own, out TotalEnergies gains full control of a fi rm that has 3.5 gigawatts of operating solar, wind and hydropower assets, with a project pipeline of more than 10 gigawatts, it said Tuesday. The purchase should increase the net operating income of its power division by around €160mn next year, and operating cash fl ow by about €400mn. The renewable energy company, founded in 2012 by Paris Mouratoglou and David Corchia, operates in more than 20 countries, including Brazil, India and Greece. It recently teamed up with Kazakh partners to invest \$1.4bn in a giant wind and battery-storage project in the Central Asian nation, and is also developing green hydrogen in North Africa, Latin America and Australia. Eren Groupe SA, which is led by Mouratoglou and Corchia, said it will use the proceeds of the Total Eren sale to further invest in the energy management in

buildings, energy recovery from organic sludge and wastewater, biomass farming as well as renewable gas and green hydrogen production. The company will also keep investing in new nuclear technologies after buying stakes in reactor startups Jimmy Energy and Naarea last year. Bpifrance, Tikehau Capital SCA, Peugeot Invest and Next World Capital LLC, which have been investing in Total Eren in several steps since 2015, sold their minority stake to TotalEnergies, according to a joint statement yesterday. They earned more than twice the amount they invested. TotalEnergies bought an initial stake of 23% in Eren for €237.5mn in 2017, and subsequently increased its interest to near 30%. In the past year or so, the French major also snapped up 50% of US renewable developer Clearway Energy Group for \$2.4bn and 34% of Brazil's Casa dos Ventos for as much as \$580mn.

Carbon Capture and Delay



As long as coal plants are still operating, it is a good idea to require them capture their carbon dioxide emissions. But those designing policies to hasten such practices must tread carefully, lest they unwittingly extend the life of dirtier energy sources.

NEW YORK — In May, the US Environmental Protection Agency proposed new power-plant rules that would effectively require every existing coal- or gas-fired plant in the United States either to capture and store most its carbon dioxide emissions, or to switch to burning low-emissions "green hydrogen." Yet it would be cheaper to replace America's more than 200 coal-fired plants with new solar or wind facilities, and then to do the same with its gas plants soon thereafter.

This claim will surely be met with cries of: "It's not that simple! You also have to account for the Earth's rotation, cloud cover, and a lack of wind." Indeed, one also must acknowledge ever-present NIMBYism, long-term energy contracts, and other complexities that stand in the way of immediately swapping coal for solar. But nobody is seriously suggesting shutting down every fossil-fueled power plant everywhere all at once. The transition will take time.

Time, of course, is relative. Even the new EPA rules would be phased in gradually, with the real bite coming only in the next decade. But we can't wait for the EPA's rules to bite and force the changes, nor should we. And the "we," in this case, includes everyone from consumers to local energy regulators to utility executives and banks planning their investment decisions.

Carbon capture and storage (CCS) is a godsend, and green hydrogen has the potential to be one, too. But, looking to the next decade and beyond, we also will be deploying many other advanced climate-tech solutions, from better batteries to smarter grids. Given the urgency of the climate crisis and all the new technologies coming down the pike, it makes little sense to wait for the EPA's new rules to force changes years from now. Power-plant economics are changing fast. In 2019, the think tank Energy Innovation published its first "coal cost crossover" report, which found that 62% of US coal plants were more expensive to run than to replace with local solar or wind generation. By 2021, that figure had risen to 72%; and as of earlier this year, it was 99%. With the exception of one coal plant in Wyoming, it would be cheaper to produce electricity with solar or wind, plus battery storage, than to keep the existing coal fleet up and running.

While the 2023 figure accounts for the expanded solar and wind tax credits under the Inflation Reduction Act, it does not include additional incentives like those provided by the IRA's loan program, which utilities can tap to help finance renewables. More to the point, it came before the new EPA proposals, raising the question of what effects these rules might have.

For the most part, the EPA's rule changes are standard regulatory fare, reflecting the need to pass muster with a Supreme Court that is intent on curtailing federal regulators' powers. Instead of allowing for flexibility in achieving carbon-reduction goals, the EPA is taking a more direct approach, essentially mandating that existing coal plants capture and store their released carbon. But especially in connection with generous IRA subsidies for CCS technology, US policymakers may be unwittingly throwing a lifeline to coal plants that would otherwise be economically unviable.

When considered in isolation, the EPA rule is clearly good for the environment and for public health, since it would significantly decrease particulate matter and ozone pollution. But assessments of CCS tend to get murky fast. Lest we forget, Donald Trump and his advisers were big fans of the technology, which they saw as a way "to help coal and still help the climate."

Since combining CCS with coal will always be more expensive

than burning coal outright, mandating CCS, in theory, should indeed make coal even less competitive than it already is. But CCS mandates do not operate in a vacuum.

In practice, operating licenses for coal plants are not issued by the same people writing federal rules. These decisions are made at the state and local level, primarily through statelevel public utility commissions that have many competing priorities. Even if they are committed to decarbonizing, one important goal is to keep the lights on. That goal, in turn, has all too often been interpreted as keeping current generation capacities profitable. When faced with new CCS mandates and accompanying subsidies, they may simply see an opportunity to maintain coal-plant profitability for longer.

How can federal policymakers get around this problem? Broadly speaking, the focus should be on pushing cheaper solar and wind power into the system, as that will force coal- and gasplant operators' hands. We also need better, nimbler planning and investment processes, to allow for grid-connection rights to be reassigned from coal plants to renewables that would be built in their stead. As matters stand, most US states do not give consumers a choice about how their electricity is generated. That needs to change.

As long as coal plants are still operating, it is a good idea to make them capture their CO_2 emissions. But that does not mean it is a good idea to be helping them continue to operate. The sooner that coal is replaced by renewables, the better it will be for the planet, consumers, and even utility companies.

Qatar's LNG projects will achieve significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions: Al-Kaabi



Qatar's LNG projects will achieve significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions through carbon capture and sequestration as well as the use of solar energy, noted HE the Minister of State for Energy Affairs Saad Sherida al-Kaabi.

"In all, we aim to reduce the overall carbon intensity by about 30% compared to previous generation designs," al-Kaabi said delivering the keynote address on the virtual mode at the 12th LNG Producer-Consumer Conference being held in Tokyo, Japan.

Al-Kaabi, who is also the President and CEO of QatarEnergy stressed the need for a clear roadmap with specific targets to achieve a fair and effective energy transition with a realistic and stable path towards the reduction of the global carbon footprint.

The minister said, "I would like everyone around the world

calling for a speedy energy transition to consider that the world needs a fair and effective transition with a realistic and stable path, which wisely balances humans flourishing with environmental protection, it should not continue to only focus on the needs of the rich and well-developed countries but must prioritise the needs of developing countries.

"This highlights the need for a realistic and resolute energy transition, starting with a solid integration of natural gas in the energy mix of today and tomorrow. We strongly believe that Gas will be needed as a safer reliable base load in the energy mix for most nations for decades well beyond 2050."

Highlighting the challenges facing the energy industry, Minister al-Kaabi said, "Lack of investments in the oil and gas upstream sector remain as an unresolved and unchallenged chronic problem, contributing to greater lack of clarity, volatility, and supply uncertainty. This lack of investment will likely cause increased instability for every region around the world."

In this context, al-Kaabi said, "Qatar is providing the world with the cleanest available hydrocarbon source of energy, which has met both the economic and environmental aspirations for a better future. By 2029, about 40% of all new global LNG supplies will be provided by QatarEnergy projects.

Minister al-Kaabi concluded his remarks by stressing the State of Qatar's determination to work with its clients and partners to realise the full potential of LNG as a vital contributor to a realistic and responsible energy transition, and to continue to take concrete action across the entire spectrum of the energy industry to address the challenges of climate change.

The LNG Producer-Consumer Conference is a global annual dialogue, launched in 2012, organised by Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, and the Asia Pacific Energy Research Centre.

It provides ministers, heads of international organizations, corporate executives, and other stakeholders with a venue to share the latest trends in the global LNG market and discussing opportunities and challenges with a view to its

Climate crisis won't solve on its own: need to walk the talk



We need all governments to step up and agree to phase out unabated fossil-fuel use. We need reforms to make our financial institutions and systems fit for purpose. And we need to take climate action seriously

Last year in Berlin, the great Kenyan long-distance runner Eliud Kipchoge broke the world marathon record, clocking 02:01:09 and beating his previous time by 30 seconds. His success has made him a legend not only in Kenya but globally. It offers a useful lesson for everyone involved in the fight against climate change. Kipchoge's winning strategy is rooted in the science of running (as well as 120 miles of hard work every week), and our own approach to the climate crisis must involve the same level of commitment and focus.

As temperatures keep rising and emissions soar, the planet, too, continues to break (dangerous) new records. But with determination and follow-through, we — together with institutional partners and other governments — can start to run faster to get ahead of the climate crisis. Success will depend on following the latest science and mobilising a joint, broad-based effort of governments and citizens.

In March, the world's top climate experts and governments signed off on the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change synthesis report. Once again, the IPCC's message was stark: Humans have permanently changed the planet, and global warming is already killing people, destroying nature, and making the world poorer. Though African countries have contributed the least to the problem, they are bearing the brunt of the damage.

According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), Africa accounts for less than 3% of the world's energy-related carbon dioxide emissions, and 600mn Africans – an outrageous figure – still do not have access to electricity.

Climate change is a shared problem that the global community must solve by working together, especially given the disproportionate burden being placed on those who are least responsible. During his recent visit to Kenya, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and I held talks on ways to address the climate crisis. Through the Germany-Kenya Climate and Development Partnership, our two countries have committed to deepen our collaboration on climate-resilient development and renewable energy, including by supporting green-hydrogen production and sustainable agriculture.

We are currently a long way from limiting global warming to 1.5C or even 2C, as envisaged by the Paris climate agreement. The climate crisis will not solve itself. On the contrary, we must ensure that global greenhouse-gas (GHG) emissions peak before 2025 at the latest, and then fall by at least 43% by 2030.

This is the year to drive that transformation. The United Nations Climate Change Conference this November-December (COP28) offers an opportunity to accelerate the energy transition, supercharge the growth of renewables, and commit to phase out all fossil fuels – starting with coal.

Kenya is on track to meet these goals. We already generate 92% of our power from clean sources and we have committed to achieving a 100% clean electricity network by 2030. Similarly, renewables generated 46% of Germany's electricity in 2022 and the government has committed to increase that to 80% by 2030. Critically, these commitments will not only ensure clean power and a safer environment; they will also create jobs, attract investment, and make our economies more secure and resilient in the face of volatile oil and gas prices.

But it is important that we run this race as a team. According to the IEA, the global ratio of clean-energy investments to dirty-energy investments must increase sixfold by 2030 (from 1.5:1 to 9:1).

With a strong partnership between Africa, Europe, and the rest of the international community, Kenya, with its abundant resources, can make significant contributions to decarbonisation and the global transition to a net-zero economy. We must unlock climate finance and investment, so that we can harness our potential for green economic growth. But to do that, we will need to fix the current international financial system, which has proven inadequate for dealing fairly with multifaceted global crises, from the Covid-19 pandemic and the climate emergency to debt distress across the Global South.

Next month's Summit for a New Global Financial Pact, in Paris, provides an opportunity for Europe to galvanise support for reforming the international financial system. The international community must recognise our potential to help solve global problems and take steps to ensure win-win outcomes. That means providing access to affordable, adequate, and sustainable financing that is delivered in a timely manner.

As we reduce emissions, we also need to prepare our people and our housing, agriculture, and food systems for rising temperatures and extreme weather events. Meeting the 2021 COP26 commitment to double global climate-adaptation financing by 2025 remains crucial for protecting people and nature. The latest IPCC report is clear: climate change and insufficient adaptation and mitigation efforts are reversing development gains and undermining economic stability.

But we also must remember that adaptation has limits, and that climate change is already threatening millions of peoples' lives today. As the IPCC shows, reducing GHG emissions by 43% this decade and stabilising global warming at or below 1.5C is still our best chance to keep the problem at a manageable scale. Kenya's climate summit in September will provide a key opportunity to showcase the continent's commitment, potential, and opportunities to deal with the climate crisis. We need all governments to step up and agree to phase out unabated fossilfuel use. We need reforms to make our financial institutions and systems fit for purpose. And we need to take climate action seriously. In the words of Eliud Kipchoge, the key to success is to "walk your talk." – Project Syndicate

• William Ruto is President of Kenya.

The Climate Elephants in the Room



May 19, 2023PINELOPI KOUJIANOU GOLDBERG As tempting as it is to rely on multilateralism to solve a shared global problem like climate change, the world simply does not have the time for such an approach. A far more pragmatic and effective strategy is to focus on the biggest polluters that contribute disproportionately to total greenhouse-gas emissions.

NEW HAVEN – Now that the falsehoods and obfuscation of climate denialism have finally been silenced, addressing climate change has become the world's top priority. But time is running out, and the International Monetary Fund warns that any further delays on implementing policies to mitigate global warming will only add to the economic cost of the transition to a low-emissions economy. Worse, we still lack a concrete, pragmatic strategy for tackling the problem. Although economists have made a robust case for why carbon taxes are the best solution, this option has proven politically infeasible, at least in those countries that account for some of the highest emissions (namely, the United States).

Commentators have also stressed that climate change is a shared problem involving important cross-border externalities that must be addressed through a multilateral approach to global coordination. But, as with carbon taxes, this argument has fallen on deaf ears. And, given the current geopolitical climate and the increasing fragmentation of the global economy, there is little hope that the message will get through anytime soon.

Having committed to assisting developing economies as they confront climate change, the World Bank finds itself limited by the country-based model underlying its financing operations. It is earnestly weighing its options and considering how it could coordinate climate-related financing across borders. But while such efforts are well meaning and consistent with the spirit of multilateralism, they inevitably will delay concrete action. World Bank financing would have to be completely restructured, and coordinating action across multiple countries that have limited financial resources and often conflicting interests seems an impossible task. For example, while some developing economies are rich in fossil fuels, others are starved for energy sources.

Given these limitations, pragmatism dictates focusing on the biggest polluters. Global carbon dioxide emissions are concentrated among only a handful of countries and regions. the US, the European Union, China. Japan, and Russia collectively account for 63% of the total, and none of these top polluters is a low-income country anymore. China, the poorest of the group, represents around 30% of all emissions, making it by far the world's largest current polluter in absolute terms. But its government is taking steps to accelerate the transition to green energy -a winning strategy, given the country's abundance of rare earth metals.

India, the third-largest emitter, currently accounts for approximately 7% of global CO_2 emissions, and its size and growth trajectory imply that it could easily surpass China as the leading polluter, barring stronger climate policies. In fact, when it comes to helping developing countries decarbonize, considerable progress could be made simply by

targeting India alone. The big advantage of this strategy is that it would avoid the paralysis associated with attempts to adopt a multilateral approach in an increasingly fragmented world.

This does not mean that we should eschew projects aimed at climate mitigation or adaptation in other countries. But we would not need to wait until everyone is on board before doing anything. Those insisting on a multilateral approach should learn from the experience of the ultimate multilateral institution: the World Trade Organization. Its requirement that every single provision in every multilateral agreement gain unanimous support has left it increasingly paralyzed, prompting demands for institutional reform.

Of course, India is not low-hanging fruit. It is rich in coal and has little incentive (beyond the health of its citizens) to hasten the transition to green energy. In focusing on India, we would need to employ the carrot, not the stick.

Since the stick generally takes the form of pressure to implement carbon taxation, it is a non-starter. A tax would be ineffective, because it would incite massive domestic opposition (as has been the case in the US). It would also be morally objectionable, because it is unfair to ask a lower-middle-income country to bear the burden of reducing CO_2 emissions when rich countries (like the US) have failed to do the same. Moreover, even if China and India are now two of the world's biggest polluters, they bear little responsibility for the past, cumulative emissions that led to the current climate crisis.

That leaves the carrot, which would come in the form of tax incentives or subsidies to support green energy. When paired with other policies, these can ease firms into adapting to higher environmental standards (such as those associated with a cap-and-trade program). But such policies are expensive, which means that tackling climate change will require richer countries to help finance them. Whether or not India becomes the new China, it is still in our power to ensure that it does not become the new outsize polluter.

https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/climate-change-pr ioritize-top-emitters-over-multilateralism-by-pinelopikoujianou-goldberg-2023-05

Sustainable food – not more of it – needed as global hunger soars



LONDON – As global hunger swiftly rises – by more than a third last year – curbing it will require not growing more food but rethinking broader systems of trade and aid, farming's heavy reliance on fossil fuels, food waste and meat eating, experts said.

Farmers today grow sufficient crops to feed twice the current population — but but nearly a third of food produced globally is spoiled or thrown away, said Philip Lymbery, the chief executive of Compassion in World Farming International.

At the same time, grain that could feed billions of people is instead fed to factory-raised food animals — suggesting a reduction in meat consumption is one clear way to cut hunger, he said at a conference on global food systems in London last week.

In Europe alone, 60% of grain is now grown for animal food, said Tim Benton, a food systems expert at the London-based think tank Chatham House, which raises questions about whether scarce land could be better used.

As global leaders look for ways to keep food available and affordable, and prevent rising hunger, "it's not about food scarcity because there's no food scarcity," Lymbery noted.

Surging hunger

Globally, hunger is surging, with 258 million people in nearly 60 countries facing acute food insecurity last year, a 33% jump from 2021, according to the Global Report on Food Crises 2023, released in March.

Problems are growing not just in traditional aid recipient countries such as Yemen, Somalia and Afghanistan but also in nations from Nigeria to the Democratic Republic of Congo, it showed.

The report, backed by agencies from the U.N. World Food Program to the World Bank, found that climate change impacts – from floods in Pakistan to drought in the Horn of Africa – were key contributors to the surge. But conflicts — including Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which slashed wheat exports from Ukraine and drove up the prices of energy and fossil fuel-based fertilizers — also played a major role, particularly in contributing to rising food prices.

"We depend more and more on a small number of countries for production of the major crops we depend on," said Olivier De Schutter, co-chair of IPES-Food, an international expert panel on sustainable food systems.

That means when climate change slashes production in one or more key producers, or a conflict breaks out in one, "global supply chains are disrupted … (and) the whole global food system is impacted."

In the wake of the Ukraine invasion, food costs also rose as speculators, hedge funds and a handful of big agribusiness companies that control most global food trade made profits, said De Schutter, who is also a U.N. special rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights.

He suggested that finding ways to wean global agricultural production off its heavy reliance on fossil fuel-based fertilizers could be a key way to protect access to food from volatile oil and gas prices.

Helping poorer countries escape their often heavy debt burdens could also help them shore up their food security, allowing them to focus more on growing food for their own people rather than raising export crops to bring in the cash needed to service debt, De Schutter said.

Competing answers

Benton, of Chatham House, said two very different views of how to achieve future security are now competing.

In the first, the assumption that the world will need 50% more food by 2050 - in part to meet growing demand for meat and

dairy as poor countries grow richer — demands much more intensive production from limited agricultural land.

That view assumes agriculture in the future will become much more technological and centralized, with heavy use of drones, satellites and the "internet of things" driving smarter production — and likely resulting in fewer farm jobs.

The second view, however, envisions farmers shifting to more ecologically friendly, smaller-scale and less fossil fuelintensive agriculture, with food demand not growing significantly because food waste is cut and meat-intensive diets decline.

"Everybody agrees food system transformation is needed" — just not what kind, said Molly Anderson, a food studies professor at Middlebury College in the United States.

Seth Watkins, a farmer in the U.S. state of Iowa, said at last week's food conference that he had seen first-hand how intensive farming systems were damaging soil health, raising questions about the long-term viability of farming, especially as climate change impacts worsen.

"Often (a focus on) technology holds us back from the sustainable solutions we need to fix our food system," he said, calling for a switch to more environmentally friendly and low-carbon ways of producing food.

Decisions made now are crucial because "it's our own regeneration or extinction we're talking about," Watkins said.

Susan Chomba, director of the Vital Landscapes in Africa program for the World Resources Institute, said efforts to cut food waste were particularly crucial as key farm resources from available land to water grow scarcer.

"No matter how much we try to produce, if we can't address what is lost and wasted it's a counterproductive process," she said in an interview.

A range of powerful vested interests stand in the way of shifting food systems to effectively manage growing hunger, climate threats and ecological decline, the analysts said.

Worsening disinformation and a rise in authoritarian governments around the world also are acting as a brake on change, they said.

But with hunger growing fast and new challenges appearing – from an expected drought-spawning El Nino weather pattern emerging this June to new conflict in Sudan, adding to humanitarian burdens – public discontent and pressures on politicians for change are also likely to increase.

"Because we're not tackling the environmental crisis, the disruptions we see are going to get bigger and bigger," warned Benton of Chatham House.