

Vatican Invites Big Oil Back for Climate Change Talks



The Vatican has invited Big Oil bosses for the second time in a year as part of Pope Francis's campaign to counter climate change, according to people familiar with the plan.

Top executives from BP Plc and Eni SpA are among those invited to attend a two-day meeting from June 13, the people said, asking not to be identified before a formal announcement. The officials could meet the Pope on the second day, they said.

Chief executive officers of Exxon Mobil Corp., Eni and BP, along with asset manager BlackRock Inc.'s Larry Fink, attended a similar meeting last year, in which they agreed the world needed to transition to lower-carbon fuels while ensuring adequate supply. Since then, little progress has been made on some of the key points agreed at that meeting, such as carbon

pricing.

The Pope's spokesman declined to comment when asked about this year's meeting.

The interest of Pope Francis, who has made climate change a cornerstone of his papacy, adds to the pressure companies are already facing on emissions. Royal Dutch Shell Plc gave in to demands from investors last year to set short-term climate targets, while BP has said it will disclose more information about the alignment of its business model with the Paris accord. Exxon Mobil has successfully blocked a measure from investors on climate change.

In its strategy update last month, Eni said it will plant 20 million acres of forest in Africa to help offset all carbon dioxide emissions from its oil and gas exploration and production operations by the end of the next decade.

The Pope said in an encyclical letter in 2015 that the science around the topic is clear and that the Catholic Church should view it as a moral issue. The Vatican, which has diplomatic relations with over 180 countries and has permanent observer status at the United Nations, has also fervently backed the Paris climate agreement.