

## G20 failure to explicitly back fossil fuel transition upsets COP29 talks

Fears rise of stalemate on climate action in wake of Trump election victory



The COP29 plenary in Baku on Monday. Ahead of the G20 Rio meeting, UN climate chief Simon Stiell said 'G20 leaders must signal loud and clear that international co-operation is still the best and only chance humanity has to survive global heating' © Getty Images

Attracta Mooney in Baku 5 HOURS AGO

20

The G20 failure to make a direct mention of the need to transition away from fossil fuels in its leaders' statement in Rio has escalated fears among key negotiators at the UN COP29 summit in Baku that Donald Trump's US election victory has put the brakes on climate action.

Almost 200 countries agreed to transition away from fossil fuels in their energy systems by 2050 at last year's UN COP28 summit in Dubai, with the G7 group of major economies reiterating this pledge in their leaders' communique earlier this year.

Many climate ministers, negotiators and non-profit organisations at [COP29](#) had hoped the G20 would send a strong signal of support for the transition away from fossil fuels in their statement following Trump's election, whose campaign slogan had been "drill baby drill" in reference to scaling up oil and gas production.

The expectation that the [G20](#) leaders would include a direct reference to the transition away from fossil fuels in its leaders' statement in Rio followed its backing by finance, foreign affairs and climate ministers from the group in October.

Instead, the G20 statement said countries “welcome and fully subscribe to the ambitious and balanced outcome of the UN Climate Change Conference in Dubai (COP28), in particular the UAE Consensus”, without an explicit mention of the agreed shift from fossil fuels.

The removal of the phrase from a longer draft version of the statement caused a big upset among several lead negotiators of large countries at the COP29 climate summit in Baku, where they have battled for the first week over how to take forward last year’s fossil fuel agreement.

Several lead negotiators said the failure to include the direct reference to fossil fuels would make the talks in Baku more difficult. The two-week summit, which is due to end on Friday, had already been overshadowed by the US election and [Argentina’s decision](#) by its president and Trump ally Javier Milei to withdraw its negotiating team, as well as the aggressive pro-oil and gas stance of the host country President Ilham Aliyev.

“[COP29] is a fragile enough process as it is,” said one G7 negotiator in Baku on Tuesday, adding that the lack of an explicit statement by the G20 meant “the gradient of the climb we have this week just got steeper.”

Ahead of the Rio meeting, UN climate chief Simon Stiell had said the world was “expecting strong signals that climate action is core business for the world’s biggest economies”.

“In turbulent times and a fracturing world — G20 leaders must signal loud and clear that international co-operation is still the best and only chance humanity has to survive global heating. There is no other way,” he had said.

## Recommended



### Moral Money

The search for targeted taxes to fund climate action **Premium**

Various countries blamed each other for the absence of the mention of the shift away from fossil fuels in the G20 document. One senior climate official said the phrase was initially removed because of a mix-up, suggesting that inexperienced government aides had not understood the crucial importance of its inclusion. Two people familiar with discussions said some G7 country officials had attempted to push for the agreed G20 October text to be

reinstated on Monday, with no success.

“There is enough blame to spread around,” they said. “The Brazilian presidency did a bad job [and] the G7 did not equip themselves very well.”

The G20 statement reinforced climate finance negotiations at COP29, one of the main objectives of the Baku summit, by outlining the need for reform of global financial institutions and debt structuring to make funds available for developing nations struggling with climate change.

While this was welcomed, Luca Bergamaschi, a director of ECCO, a climate think-tank, said it was undermined by the lack of a specific statement on the shift away from fossil fuels. “Without a clear path to transition away from fossil fuels, the world remains on a dangerous path.”