

To whom it may concern, within the Climate Coalition

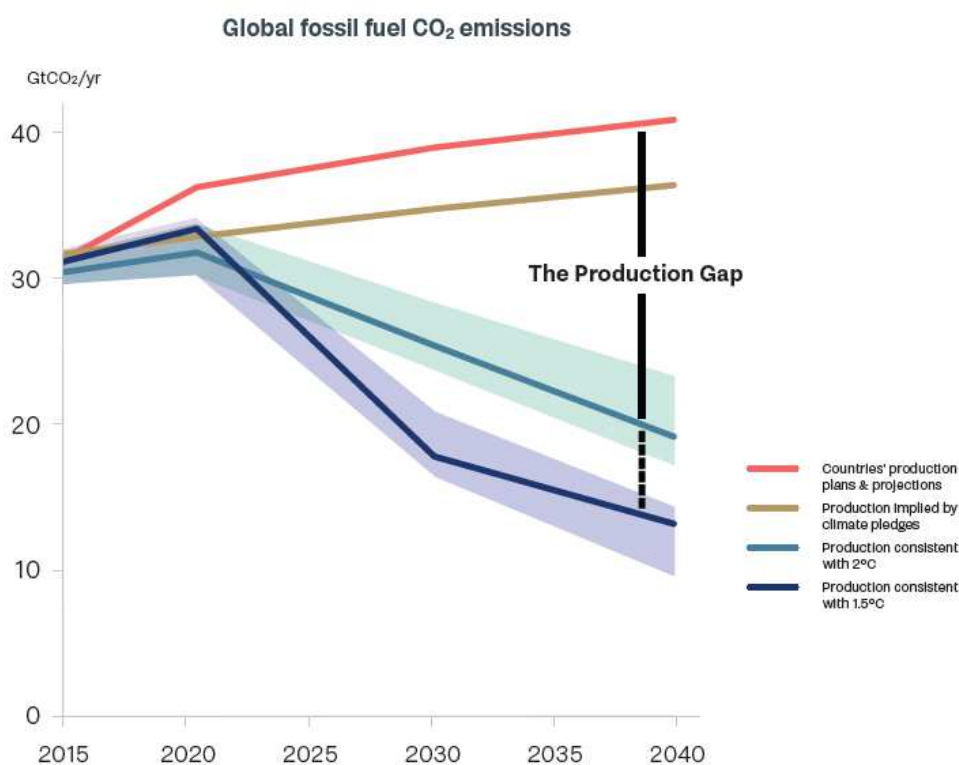
From Hugh Richards, chair of steering group, Gloucestershire Climate Action Network

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Advocacy of a treaty to control the global extraction and supply of fossil fuels

I am writing to propose that the Climate Coalition should ask Alok Sharma, as President of COP26, to initiate a fast-track process leading to the establishment of an international treaty to control the extraction of fossil fuels. This would complement and support the Paris Agreement and its fundamental goals of limiting global warming to well below 2°C and pursuing efforts to limit it to 1.5°C. It would be designed to close the fossil fuel “production gap” with respect to the Paris Agreement goals (see graphic below¹).

The fossil fuel production gap — the difference between national production plans and low-carbon pathways (1.5°C and 2°C), as expressed in fossil fuel carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions — widens between 2015 and 2040.



A good summary of the case for such a treaty was published about a year ago², which states:

“... an international treaty among fossil fuel-producing countries could

- (i) enhance the impact of the Paris Agreement in the presence of free riders;*
- (ii) stimulate investment in low-carbon technology research and development (R&D);*
- (iii) provide insurance against a failed Paris Agreement; and*
- (iv) make carbon policies more acceptable to fossil fuel producers, thus increasing their support.*

None of these effects depend on universal producer participation. Moreover, such a treaty need not be costly and could in fact help reduce the costs of the required transition to a low-carbon economy.”

¹ Source: The Production Gap 2019 Report: The discrepancy between countries’ planned fossil fuel production and global production levels consistent with limiting warming to 1.5°C or 2°C

<https://www.unenvironment.org/resources/report/production-gap-report-2019>

² The case for a supply-side climate treaty: The Paris Agreement can be strengthened by a treaty limiting global fossil fuel supply. <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/365/6451/325.summary>

The political risks for the UK in proposing such a treaty would seem to be low, while the rewards of success would be enormous. It could also move the focus of discourse ahead of COP26 away from unfruitful posturing about the ambition and deliverability of countries' Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) on emissions, including the UK's. Indeed, the prospect of an effective supply-side treaty should transform countries' attitudes to their NDCs.

Personally, I think that carbon capture and geo-sequestration (widely known as CCS) could have a key role to play in making a supply-side treaty more palatable to prospective signatories, in that extraction permits allocated under such a treaty could be for net extraction of fossil carbon; i.e. accounting for verified CCS. This could be attractive to the UK government, for which CCS remains a potentially key tool in the journey to net zero emissions, and could bring high-value jobs to the declining centres of the UK's fossil fuel industries. However, this is perhaps a supplementary point and may be too controversial for some Climate Coalition members to support at this stage.

I am aware that there is currently an active campaign advocating a specific form that such a treaty could take³. However, I suggest that the Climate Coalition should not endorse this specific proposal but encourage its proponents to engage with the process that would follow, should this proposal to Alok Sharma be taken up.

³ The Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty: An initiative to phase-out fossil fuels and fast-track solutions.
<https://www.fossilfueltreaty.org/>