

EAST END LIVING

Climate Change Conversations: COP28 and ICEMAN



NOT UNTIL COP28 HAD A U.N. CLIMATE AGREEMENT EXPLICITLY AND SPECIFICALLY CALLED FOR CUTTING BACK ON THE USE OF ALL FOSSIL FUELS.

BY FRANK DALENE

At the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) in early December 2023, nearly 200 countries did something unprecedented in years of climate-related summits, agreements and conferences: They approved a global pact that officially calls for the world to transition away from fossil fuels.

Never before has a U.N. climate agreement explicitly and specifically called for cutting back on the use of all fossil fuels; this agreement calls for “accelerating efforts towards the phase-down of unabated coal power, phasing out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies, and other measures that drive the transition away from fossil fuels in energy systems, in a just, orderly and equitable manner, with developed countries continuing to take the lead.”

This is rightfully a cause for celebration. For years upon years, scientists and climate activists have pushed for climate agreements to explicitly address fossil fuels, but fossil-fuel producing countries have always pushed back. Finally, after a year of record-high temperatures and unprecedented climate-fueled disasters

around the globe, the language of this agreement is a welcome step forward.

However, the battle is far from over. Global emissions must be cut by 43% by 2030 in order to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius — but currently, global emissions are still rising and on track to warm the planet by 2.5 degrees. This agreement, as positive as it is, does not provide any real guarantee.

The pact is not in any way legally binding and has no official power to force countries to fulfill their agreement. While each country is supposed to submit a detailed plan for cutting greenhouse gas emissions, as the New York Times points out, past climate agreements have often failed to encourage meaningful action. In 2021, nations struck a deal in Glasgow to “phase down” coal-fired power plants. Yet Britain approved a new coal mine just one year later, and global coal use has since soared to record highs.

Even as negotiators from the United States and Europe pressed forcefully for a deal to reduce fossil fuel use, environmentalists pointed out that oil

production in the United States was surging, while European countries were spending billions on new terminals to import liquefied natural gas amid the war in Ukraine.

Moreover, the loose language of the agreement leaves a great deal of wiggle room for fossil fuel producers. As Manuel Pulgar-Vidal, global climate and energy lead for the World Wildlife Fund, said, “The outcome suggests there is a considerable role for dangerous distractions such as large-scale carbon capture and storage and transitional fuels.”

The fact is, governments alone cannot achieve the changes required to address the climate crisis. An agreement like this can only be fulfilled if it also harnesses the power of the consumer and market forces.

ICEMAN offers the United States the opportunity to become a leader in establishing a new global protocol for climate agreements by combating climate change in a free market economy. If implemented in the United States, the impact of ICEMAN will extend far beyond this country. What the U.S. does, Europe will follow, and

the rest of the world will, too.

Through ICEMAN, the governments that signed on to the COP28 pact can harness the power of market forces and actually succeed in fulfilling their agreements, putting that 43% reduction in emissions well within reach.

Frank Dalene, the bestselling author of Decarbonize the World: A Market-Based Solution to the Climate Crisis, is president and CEO of Telemark Inc., a construction services business he cofounded with his father in 1978. Over the past four decades, Telemark has become known for being a national leader, embracing the latest in energy efficiencies. Dalene is innovating the manner in which companies can assess their carbon footprint. Through his ICEMAN (International Carbon Equivalent Mechanism Attributed to Neutrality) methodology, companies can get an accurate snapshot of their product's carbon emissions on a standardized scale. Dalene has presented keynotes across the world on sustainable construction, carbon neutrality and ICEMAN. Learn more at frankdalene.com.

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