

**Written submission by GCHA to the First Conference on
Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuels,
hosted by the governments of Colombia and The Netherlands**

The Conference aims to provide input on enabling pathways to:

- (Pillar I) reducing economic dependence on fossil fuels;
- (Pillar II) transforming fossil fuel supply and demand; and/or
- (Pillar III) strengthening international cooperation and climate diplomacy.

Barriers and Instruments

Which barriers are hindering the implementation of the transition away from fossil fuels across the Conference's three thematic pillars?

The transition away from fossil fuels (FFs) faces structural barriers across all thematic pillars, despite clear evidence that FFs drive air water and soil pollution, as well as being the leading driver of climate change, and related physical and mental health harms. Air pollution from fossil fuels alone causes around 5.3 million premature deaths each year and costs the global economy trillions annually through healthcare expenditures, lost labour productivity (for example due to heat), and welfare losses. In 2018, the economic costs of air pollution from fossil fuels were estimated at US\$2.9 trillion, or 3.3% of global GDP.

1. Economic dependence and development narratives - Pillars I, II

Many countries rely on FF extraction for revenues, exports, and employment. Purely economic and development focussed narratives overlook the disproportionate health burdens on vulnerable communities, such as children, older persons, rising healthcare costs, reduced labour productivity, and workers exposed to pollution. Clean energy alternatives can deliver development benefits while significantly improving public health.

2. Infrastructure and investment lock-in - Pillars I, II

Existing FF infrastructure creates long-term lock-in, as governments and investors seek to recover sunk costs, delaying the phase-out of polluting systems and prolonging harmful exposure and health damages.

3. Fossil fuel subsidies - Pillars I, II

Subsidies keep FFs artificially cheap and slow the shift to clean energy, diverting resources that could support clean and healthy energy access, health systems and pollution reduction.

4. Industry lobbying and disinformation - Pillars II, III

Industry lobbying and PR campaigns shape policy, obscure health harms, and delay regulatory action, while regulatory measures for FFs are less stringent than for other health harming products (tobacco, alcohol).

5. Limited international finance - Pillar III

A rapid and equitable transition requires major investments in renewable energy, economic diversification, and just transition policies. Yet international finance remains inadequate and difficult to access. Without stronger global cooperation, many countries struggle to move away from FFs despite

What concrete solutions can advance:

- (i) reducing economic dependence on fossil fuels;
- (ii) transforming fossil fuel supply and demand; and/or
- (iii) strengthening international cooperation and climate diplomacy.

Solution 1: Health Cost Accounting to Reduce Fiscal Dependence on Fossil Fuels

This solution is relevant to the three pillars and their subthemes as follows:

Pillar I: Reducing economic dependence on fossil fuels

- Fiscal dependence
- Shared responsibilities and commitments

Pillar II: Transforming fossil fuel supply and demand

- Source substitution (including energy matrix redesign)
- From fossil fuel subsidies to clean investment

Pillar III: Strengthening international cooperation and climate diplomacy

- Addressing implementation, cooperation, and governance gaps, including the scope and challenges of the UNFCCC

This solution is applicable to the national, regional and global level.

Description of the solution:

Governments should integrate the true health and economic costs of fossil fuels dependence into national finance and energy planning. Fossil fuels are health-harming products, driving air pollution, climate change, and toxic exposures. Air pollution from fossil fuels alone causes around 5.3 million premature deaths each year and costs the global economy trillions annually through healthcare expenditures, lost labour productivity (for example due to heat), and welfare losses. In 2018, the economic costs of air pollution from fossil fuels were estimated at US\$2.9 trillion, or 3.3% of global GDP.

In addition, the costs of healthcare, environmental clean-ups, site remediation, and long-term pollution damage from fossil fuel extraction, processing, and infrastructure are frequently externalized to governments and the public.

By systematically incorporating these hidden health and environmental costs into public budgets, subsidy accounting, and energy investment decisions, governments can more accurately assess the true economic burden of fossil fuel dependence. This approach helps reduce fiscal reliance on fossil fuels while strengthening the case for economic diversification, clean energy investment, and just transition strategies, aligning public finance with the protection of public health and the environment.

Which actors are responsible for the effective implementation of the proposed solution?

Cross-ministry coordination: integrate health costs into fiscal, energy, and development planning.
Health ministries and public health agencies: produce and communicate health evidence.
International institutions and development banks: support technical frameworks and financing.
Academia and civil society: research, monitoring, and public accountability.

What instruments are required to ensure the effective implementation of the solution?

Health-inclusive national accounting frameworks; fossil fuel subsidy reform; carbon pricing; polluter-pays principles; legal accountability for environmental and health damages; conflict of interest regulation; mandatory health impact assessments for energy policies; clean air and pollution standards; fiscal planning tools incorporating health costs; international climate finance; national development plans prioritizing clean energy, economic diversification, and site remediation of fossil fuel facilities.

Key milestones and timeline:

Introduce health cost accounting in national energy and climate planning (2026-2031); initiate subsidy reforms (2026-2031).
Embed health metrics in public budgeting and energy investment decisions (2026-2031).
Institutionalize health-centered economic planning and eliminate fiscal dependence on fossil fuels (2032-2050).
Develop conflict of interest regulation policies for energy and climate policymaking. (2026-2031).

How does the proposed solution incorporate a gender-responsive and human-rights based approach?

This solution strengthens the case for policies that reduce pollution and protect communities. Lower pollution and better health outcomes benefit everyone, while particularly improving conditions for women and girls, who face disproportionate household air pollution exposure and caregiving burdens. Integrating these costs into economic decision-making helps ensure more equitable, gender-responsive, and rights-based energy policies.

Solution 2: Redirect Fossil Fuel Subsidies to Clean Energy and Public Health

This solution is relevant to the following Pillar and subtheme and applicable to the national, regional and global level:

Pillar II: Transforming fossil fuel supply and demand

- From fossil fuel subsidies to clean investment

Description of the solution:

Governments should phase out fossil fuel subsidies and redirect public finance toward clean energy, energy efficiency and , and healthy energy systems. Fossil fuel subsidies artificially lower the cost of polluting fuels while prolonging dependence on a sector responsible for widespread environmental pollution and climate-related health harms.

Redirecting these funds toward renewable energy, clean cooking, public transport, and resilient infrastructure can accelerate the energy transition while delivering immediate public health benefits through reduced air pollution and toxic exposure. Directing a limited amount of finance to services such as health and social care, especially for low income populations, may help to build public support and reduce other areas of spending.

Recognizing fossil fuels as health-harming products strengthens the case for subsidy reform and ensures public resources are invested in energy systems that protect health, support economic resilience, and advance equitable development.

Which actors are responsible for the effective implementation of the proposed solution?

Cross-ministry coordination: phase out fossil fuel subsidies and redirect public finance.
Finance ministries and development banks: invest in clean energy systems.
International institutions: support transition finance and policy reform.
Civil society and health organizations: monitor impacts and advocate for equitable implementation.

What instruments are required to ensure the effective implementation of the solution?

Fossil fuel subsidy reform policies; renewable energy incentives; public finance reallocation mechanisms; just transition funds; clean energy investment programs; fiscal planning tools incorporating health costs; international climate finance; and national energy transition plans prioritizing health and equity.

Key milestones and timeline

Begin phased removal of fossil fuel subsidies and redirect funds to renewable energy and clean infrastructure (2026-2031).

Scale clean energy systems and energy efficiency investments (2026-2031).

Complete subsidy phase-out and achieve predominantly clean, health-protective energy systems (2032-2040).

How does the proposed solution incorporate a gender-responsive and human-rights based approach?

Redirecting subsidies toward clean energy improves energy access, clean cooking, and mobility, reducing pollution burdens that disproportionately affect women, children, and low-income communities. The approach advances the right to health, development, and a healthy environment while supporting a just and inclusive transition.

Solution 3: Banning Fossil Fuel Marketing, Sponsorships, and Advertising to Protect Public Health

This solution is relevant to the following pillar and subtheme and applicable to the local, national, regional and global level:

Pillar II: Transforming fossil fuel supply and demand

- Closure of new demand drivers

Description of the solution:

Governments should prohibit fossil fuel advertising, marketing, and sponsorships across media, cultural, educational, and sporting platforms, recognizing fossil fuels as health-harming products. These promotional activities normalize fossil fuel dependence, obscure the severe health harms associated with extraction and combustion, and delay the transition to clean energy. Evidence from tobacco control demonstrates that comprehensive marketing bans are essential to reducing demand and challenging industry influence. Fossil fuel companies currently use advertising and sponsorships to maintain their social license while continuing activities that drive pollution, climate change, and related health impacts responsible for millions of premature deaths each year. Restricting such promotional practices would reduce misinformation, prevent greenwashing, and create space for accurate public communication about health risks and clean energy solutions. Advertising bans should extend to sponsorship of public institutions, sports, cultural events, and educational programs. This approach protects public health, aligns with the right to a healthy environment, and accelerates the transition away from fossil fuels.

Which actors are responsible for the effective implementation of the proposed solution?

Sub-national and National governments enact advertising and sponsorship bans. Public health authorities provide evidence and guidance. Media regulators enforce compliance across platforms. Cities and public institutions adopt procurement and sponsorship standards. Civil society, health organizations, and journalists monitor violations and support public awareness.

What instruments are required to ensure the effective implementation of the solution?

Comprehensive advertising and sponsorship bans in national law; restrictions on fossil fuel marketing across digital and traditional media; public procurement rules excluding fossil fuel sponsorships; disclosure requirements on advertising spending; international guidelines under WHO and UN processes; monitoring and enforcement mechanisms with penalties.

Key milestones and timeline:

Short term: Adopt national legislation banning fossil fuel advertising and sponsorships; develop international guidelines; implement public procurement standards.

Medium term: Expand bans to digital platforms and cross-border advertising; strengthen enforcement and penalties; integrate bans across major international events and institutions.

Long term: Achieve global norms restricting fossil fuel promotion similar to tobacco advertising bans.

How does the proposed solution incorporate a gender-responsive and human-rights based approach?

The solution protects the rights to health, information, and a clean, healthy environment by preventing misleading messaging about fossil fuels that is aimed to delay urgent action. It prioritizes communities disproportionately harmed by pollution and climate change, including women, children, and marginalized populations, while supporting equitable access to clean energy alternatives.