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Department of Environment, Climate and Communications  
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## **RE Ireland's participation in the Beyond Oil and Gas Alliance initiative**

Dear Minister Ryan,

I write to you on behalf of Friends of the Earth concerning the newly formed Beyond Oil and Gas Alliance of states. We have also written to Minister Coveney on this issue. We are of the view that it is strategic, appropriate and opportune for Ireland to join the Beyond Oil and Gas Alliance in the run up to COP26. We outline our reasons below and welcome the opportunity to discuss this with you in more detail.

As you may be aware, the Beyond Oil and Gas Alliance (BOGA) has been established by the Governments of Denmark and Costa Rica in recent weeks and will be officially launched at COP26. BOGA is a diplomatic initiative to bring together states that have ended licensing for new oil and gas exploration and production. It is the first such initiative to recognise the need for governments to manage the phase out of fossil fuel production in order to respond to the climate emergency and align with Paris Agreement commitments. It is understood that BOGA will seek to address a clear process to phase out oil and gas production for both developed and developing countries. It will provide a forum for shared dialogue in order to support countries in their energy transition, particularly those most reliant on fossil fuels.

Ireland has a clear opportunity to demonstrate international climate leadership through membership of the Beyond Oil and Gas Alliance. It should also be noted that COP26 will see an increasing focus on Governments claiming climate ambition while remaining silent on fossil fuel production in their territory. We ask that the Government builds on previous successes and takes this opportunity to now join the alliance.

There have been several positive policy developments at national and international level in recent times. While your Department will be more than familiar with several of these developments, we have listed and summarised them below in order to demonstrate why joining the BOGA would be a rational and strategic step, both in terms of Ireland's climate and foreign policy interests.

### 1) Legislative Developments

- The Government has committed to increasing the current objective of 70% renewable electricity on the Irish system by 2030 to 'up to 80%' under the new National Development Plan that has just been released.
- The Government amended the Petroleum Act (1960) to prevent new licences for oil and gas exploration in Irish waters as part of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act passed in July. This made Ireland one of only 6 countries to have a clear legislative ban on fossil fuel exploration.
- The Climate Action Act also introduces a climate neutrality target for 2050, as well a 51% emissions reduction target by 2030 to be achieved through carbon budgeting and sectoral emissions ceilings. While not aligned with our fair share under the Paris Agreement, this places Ireland among the vanguard of states in terms of climate governance. Further fossil fuel exploration and infrastructure is not compatible with this leadership position or these targets.
- A legislative ban on fracked gas was introduced in Ireland since 2017. In 2018 legislation was also introduced to divest Ireland's Strategic Investment Fund from fossil fuels.

## 2) Government policy and commitments

- In May this year, the Government produced a policy statement which introduces a moratorium on fracked gas imports and the development of polluting Liquefied Natural Gas terminals pending the completion of an energy security review (to be completed over the coming months). The statement notes that the *'Government will work with international partners to promote the phasing out of fracking at an international level within the wider context of the phasing out of fossil fuel extraction.'*
- The Programme for Government highlights that *'the reliable supply of safe, secure and clean energy is essential in order to deliver a phase-out of fossil fuels'* and that electrification of heat and transport, combined with greater energy efficiency and renewables, are essential elements of this transition. It notes *'we are also conscious of the importance of Just Transition, as we end fossil-fuel dependence...'* It also includes relevant commitments including -
  - *'withdraw the Shannon LNG terminal from the EU Projects of Common Interest list in 2021.'*
  - *'Support the tightening of the sustainability assessment rules prior to the approval of any projects on the EU PCI list'*
  - *'...a clear pathway towards better practices and less reliance on fossil fuels across every sector.'*
  - *'New stress tests for financial institutions to look at the impact of tangible risks of higher temperature scenarios and involvement with the fossil-fuel economy on their portfolios, as recommended by the Taskforce on Climate Financial Disclosures.'*
- In June 2020, the Leo Varadkar, TD and Micheál Martin, TD produced a letter to their Green Party counterparts which noted *'Both of our parties accept that as we move towards carbon neutrality, it does not make sense to build new large scale fossil fuel infrastructure such as liquefied natural gas import terminals'*.

## 3) Foreign Policy Developments

- Ireland's support for the BOGA is a natural progression from the conclusions made as part of the Dublin Climate Dialogues. As you are aware, there are several positive and relevant commitments in these conclusions. To highlight the most significant:
  - *A commitment by the participants at COP26 to the rapid electrification of the global economy including the quadrupling every year of installed renewable energy generation.*
  - *A commitment to a just transition from fossil fuels, with a plan for every country in place by 2025 and execution through 2030.*
  - *A commitment to eliminating fossil-fuel subsidies in every country no later than 2025.*
  - *A commitment to phasing out coal power generation in every country by 2030 and natural gas power generation in that decade.*
  - *A commitment to ending export finance for fossil fuel projects, particularly coal extraction and the building of new coal and gas fired generation.*
- In relation to Ireland's international development objectives, it is noteworthy that many of the states and regions prioritised for Overseas Development Assistance require the most support both in terms of fossil fuel phase out, clean energy investment, as well as adaptation finance.
- In terms of UN Security Council membership, membership of the BOGA fully aligns with Ireland's championing of the issue of climate and security. In relation to Ireland's support for Small Island Developing States, it is worth noting that SIDs are almost entirely dependent on fossil fuel imports for electricity generation and transport. They were the first to [champion innovative partnerships](#) to elevate climate risks at UN level and are continuing to do so in relation to [renewables development](#).
- In 2020 Ireland's Security Council competitors Norway and Canada received significant criticism from climate activists and experts in light of their continued support for fossil fuel extraction. The [joint letter to Ambassadors of Small Island Developing States](#) highlighted the contradiction between those countries domestic policies and their stated claims at UN level to support the Paris Agreement and climate security
- The Sustainable Development Goals, which has been a core pillar of Ireland international development policy, includes commitments not only related to climate action but also on energy access and renewables development, investment in energy efficiency and reduction of fossil fuel subsidies (SDGs 7 and 12).

#### 4) International developments

- Taking into account both climate obligations and in order to reduce dependence on fossil gas in response to extreme gas market volatility, it has been reported that the UK Government [will make a commitment](#) of 100% electricity from renewables by 2035. This commitment also aligns with the Irish context as [recent research](#) from Wind Energy Ireland has shown that Ireland can reach 85% renewable electricity on the system by 2030 and a 100% zero carbon system by the 2030s.
- The European Union and the United States announced in September the [Global Methane Pledge](#) to reduce global methane emissions by around a third by the end of the decade and will launch the initiative. This pledge is extremely relevant to the BOGA and has already been signed by the UK and Italy.
- The International Energy Agency in their 2021 [analysis of a pathway to net zero emissions](#) has concluded that *'beyond projects already committed as of 2021, there are no new oil and gas fields approved for development...Net zero means a huge decline in the use of fossil fuel'*.
- In 2019 the [European Investment Bank committed](#) to ending funding for fossil fuel infrastructure and to align all activity with the Paris Agreement.

#### 5) The Research

At its simplest, the research shows that every single new extraction site fundamentally undermines the achievement of the Paris Agreement. Wealthier countries like Ireland must phase out oil and gas production more rapidly than others, including not only a ban on licences but a commitment to end oil/gas extraction projects. Some of the most pertinent research is summarised below:

- The [2018 IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C](#) finds that in order to have limiting global warming to 1.5°C would mean net CO<sub>2</sub> emissions would need to fall by about 45 percent from 2010 levels by 2030, reaching 'net zero' by at least 2050. Mitigation consistent with 1.5°C of warming creates high risks for sustainable development in countries with a higher dependency on fossil fuels for revenue and employment.
- In September this year [University College London](#) research concluded that nearly 60 per cent of oil and fossil methane gas, and 90 per cent of coal must remain unextracted by 2050 to keep within a 1.5 °C carbon budget.
- The [UN Environment Programme estimates](#) that governments are planning for new production at levels that would result in 120 percent more emissions than the 1.5C warming limit.
- Carbon Tracker [have concluded that production](#) from the largest fossil fuel companies must be cut by at least 50% over the next decade if the 1.5 temperature objective is to be achieved
- The Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research and Teeside University [highlighted](#) the consequences of continued European investment in fossil gas infrastructure, the risk it poses to the EU's carbon budget, locking-in a fossil fuel future for Europe. Their 2017 research shows that the substantial use of fossil fuels within the EU's energy system would be incompatible with the temperature commitments enshrined in the Paris Agreement.

We would be grateful for your immediate consideration of this proposal and would be happy to engage on any of the points above.

Is mise le mórmheas

Jerry Mac Evilly,  
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