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8 November 2013

## Open Letter to Christiana Figueres

Your Excellency,

The undersigned organizations write to raise very serious concerns regarding the upcoming UN Climate Conference in Warsaw, Poland. In our view two developments – the greatly expanded role of polluting business in the negotiations and the Coal and Climate summit that the Polish government is supporting – will have real impacts on the ambition and legitimacy of the Warsaw discussions. We note and appreciate the time you've already taken to discuss these issues with some of us. However, we believe there is a need for broader and public discussion, and that is why we are writing to you collectively and in the form of an open letter.

The Warsaw negotiations take place against a wave of scientific evidence for the central role that fossil fuels now have as the main source of climate pollution. This is in particular true for coal. Last month the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released a new report on climate change presenting the findings of the science community that warns of the urgent need to take action to avoid the catastrophic consequences of climate change. The IPCC report warns of an alarming escalation of climate impacts, but also shows that preventing climate chaos is still possible. Scientists are clear that we will need to keep at least two-thirds, and more likely over 80%, of known fossil fuels in the ground if we are to keep global warming rise below the agreed goal of 2°C. Even 2°C is not deemed safe by many of the world's scientists, global civil society and over 100 countries in the negotiations, who instead call for a temperature limit of 1.5°C, and therefore even further restrictions on the fossil fuel industry.

Against this backdrop, it is deeply problematic that the pre-COP process and the upcoming negotiations have given prominence and privilege to large corporations which have been investing huge resources in fossil fuel projects: drilling for oil in the Arctic, exploiting tar sands or expanding the use of coal, rather than companies who are transitioning to cleaner energy sources. Of particular concern is the way the Polish government is allowing commercial sponsorship for COP19 and increased access for large fossil fuel and industrial interests to wide aspects of the COP. This is an unprecedented and highly worrying change to the mode of operation for the UNFCCC climate process.

It is abundantly clear that to prevent the breaching of critical climate tipping points and potential catastrophic climate change, we must stop the extraction and use of all new fossil fuels sources, particularly coal, the most abundant and dirtiest fossil fuel in use today. Therefore it is outrageous that the World Coal Summit on invitation of the deputy Prime Minister of Poland will take place at the beginning of the second week of the climate negotiations. We have always seen the UNFCCC negotiations as the moment for showing that cleaner, more sustainable alternatives to coal and oil are available. We would not like events promoting the most polluting of industries to become associated with solving climate change in the minds of the general public. While we recognize that the focus of the Coal and Climate Summit is so-called "clean coal", in our view this ranks among the most desperate of myths spun by the coal industry in a frantic bid to survive. There is now very strong scientific and commercial evidence that CCS is not only untested but also eye-wateringly



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expensive, energy-hungry and extremely difficult to deploy at scale. It also poses new risks from the huge amounts of carbon that would have been sequestered underground, in geological storage sites that may or may not leak.

In light of the above, we were very troubled to learn that you as the 'voice' of the climate change convention (UNFCCC) have agreed to address this Coal Summit. By doing so we believe you would give it much more public attention and add your own (considerable) credibility to an event that should not be legitimized. This could contribute to undermining civil societies' campaigns to keep fossil fuels in the ground rather than to burn them on the backs of future generations, and to promote a just transition to renewable energy.

With respect, we ask that you withdraw from speaking at the Coal and Climate Summit. We need all of our leaders to promote green jobs and a just transition towards sustainability. This requires providing a clear commitment to work closely with those governments and sustainable businesses who want to lead the world towards a zero emissions and sustainable future in the interests of all global citizens, not the polluting industries which are undermining the intergovernmental process and the ultimate objective of the Convention.

We recognize that this is a difficult request and we do not make it lightly. However, we would appreciate a public response and would in any event welcome the chance to speak with you further next week.

Yours sincerely,

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