

**Laureates:**

Mairead Maguire, Ireland (1976)
Rigoberta Menchu Tum, Guatemala (1992)
Jody Williams, USA (1997)
Shirin Ebadi, Iran (2003)
Leymah Gbowee, Liberia (2011)
Tawakkol Karman, Yemen (2011)

EMBARGO UNTIL OCTOBER 3 at 3:00AM EST / 9:00AM CET

Nobel peace and science laureates calling for EU action on tar sands

(Brussels)—October 3, 2013. A group of twenty-one Nobel peace and science laureates sent a letter this week to European Commission president José Manuel Barroso urging him and European Union environment ministers to immediately implement the EU Fuel Quality Directive (FQD).

The FQD is a European Union fuel law that is designed to reduce emissions from transportation fuel by six per cent by 2020. If properly implemented, the law will provide a much-needed incentive for oil companies to invest in lower-carbon sources and emission reduction technologies.

In their letter, the laureates say that now is the “time to transition swiftly away from fossil fuels, with a special focus on those that pollute the most.” They note that implementation of the new fuel law would send a “clear signal that the European Union is committed to action that supports the rights of future generations to a healthy planet.”

The letter highlights the European Commission’s own scientific research which found that one of the unconventional fuel sources identified in the proposed policy, tar sands, produces an average of 23% more greenhouse gas emissions than average conventional oil.

Amid fierce Canadian, US and oil industry lobbying, the European Commission is delaying the publication of a proposal on how to implement the FQD, which was expected in September. A vote by EU environment ministers is expected in December.

The laureates’ letter to the European Commission President comes days after the most recent report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which delivered the message that the world must act urgently to get global emissions under control to avoid calamitous climate change. The letter also follows on President Obama’s call to address climate change and comes less than a year after the International Energy Agency said two-thirds of all known fossil fuel reserves must stay in the ground in order to meet internationally agreed upon climate goals.

The laureates say that the “time for positive action is now” and call for future built on “safe, clean and renewable energy”.

The laureates who signed the letter include two Nobel peace prize winners who are members of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, nine other science laureates, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Jody Williams and Shirin Ebadi.

Please see the full letter below.

--30--

Advocating for peace, justice and equality

For more information, please contact:

Rachel Vincent,
Director of Media & Communications
Phone +1 613-569-8400 ext.113
rvincent@nobelwomensinitiative.org

The Nobel Women's Initiative was established in 2006, and is led by Nobel Peace laureates Jody Williams, Shirin Ebadi, Rigoberta Menchú Tum, Leymah Gbowee, Tawakkol Karman and Mairead Maguire. The Nobel Women's Initiative uses the prestige of the Nobel Peace Prize and of courageous women peace laureates to magnify the power and visibility of women working in countries around the world for peace, justice and equality.

###

Letter to EU Commissioners and Environment Ministers re EU climate legislation and unconventional fossil fuels

The world can no longer ignore, except at our own peril, that climate change is one of the greatest threats facing life on this planet today. The impacts of climate change and extreme resource extraction are exacerbating conflicts and environmental destruction around the world.

The extraction of unconventional fuels—such as oil sands and oil shale—is having a particularly devastating impact on climate change.

For this reason, we are writing to urge you to support the immediate implementation of the European Union's (EU) Fuel Quality Directive in order to fulfill its 6% reduction target in greenhouse gas emissions from fuels used for transportation by 2020. We have no doubt that the Directive must be applied fairly to unconventional fuels to ensure their climate impacts are fully taken into account. It follows that the fuel-producing companies should report their climate emissions and be held responsible for any emissions increase.

We welcome the EU's scientific analysis—as it is now proposed for the implementation of the EU Directive—that the extraction and production of fuels from unconventional sources including oil sands, coal-to-liquid, and oil shale leads to higher emissions and that this should be reflected in the regulations.

The International Energy Agency (IEA) is warning that unconventional fuel sources are especially damaging to the environment and climate, and is concerned that these fuel sources are now increasingly competing on a par with conventional fuel sources. In order to avoid catastrophic climate change, the IEA calculates that two thirds of known fossil fuel reserves must be left in the ground.

Now is the time to transition swiftly away from fossil fuels, with a special focus on those that pollute the most. We must all move toward a future built on safe, clean and renewable energy.

Fully implementing the EU's Fuel Quality Directive will send a clear signal that the European Union is committed to action that supports the rights of future generations to a healthy planet.

It is not too late to avert our actions that only amount to palliative care for a dying planet. The time for positive action is now. The European Union can demonstrate clear and unambiguous leadership by upholding its climate principles. We look forward to working together as we move forward to confront this frightening challenge to our global survival.

Mairead Maguire, Nobel Peace Prize, 1976, Ireland

Roger Guillemin, Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine, 1977, France

Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, Nobel Peace Prize 1980, Argentina

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Nobel Peace Prize 1984, South Africa

Rigoberta Menchú Tum, Nobel Peace Prize, 1992, Guatemala

Richard Roberts, Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine, 1993, United Kingdom

Paul Crutzen, Nobel Prize in Chemistry, 1995, Netherlands

Harold Kroto, Nobel Prize in Chemistry, 1996, United Kingdom

José Ramos-Horta, Nobel Peace Prize, 1996, East Timor

John Walker, Nobel Prize in Chemistry, 1997, UK

Jody Williams, Nobel Peace Prize, 1997, USA

John Hume, Nobel Peace Prize, 1998, Ireland

Paul Greengard, Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine, 2000, USA

Shirin Ebadi, Nobel Peace Prize, 2003, Iran

Gerhard Ertl, Nobel Prize in Chemistry, 2007, Germany

Mark Jaccard, member of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Nobel Peace Prize, 2007, Canada

John Stone, member of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Nobel Peace Prize, 2007, Canada

Martin Chalfie, Nobel Prize in Chemistry, 2008, USA

Thomas Steitz, Nobel Prize in Chemistry, 2009, USA

Leymah Gbowee, Nobel Peace Prize, 2011, Liberia

Tawakkol Karman, Nobel Peace Prize, 2011, Yemen

###

