



## PRESS RELEASE

### **APPOINTMENT OF OIL CHIEF AS UNFCCC-COP28 PRESIDENT-DESIGNATE**

*Nairobi: January 12, 2023*

We have learnt with consternation, and are profoundly appalled that a fossil fuel Executive will lead 2023 climate change negotiations.

On Tuesday, 10 Jan 2023, the United Arab Emirates (UEA) appointed Sultan Al-Jaber, Head of Oil giant Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC), the President-designate of the 28<sup>th</sup> Edition of the United Nations Framework on Climate Change (COP28), scheduled to take place in December 2023 in Dubai. As COP28 President, al-Jaber will be at the centre of crucial deal making and exert enormous influence on the COP outcome.

Ominously, never again have we ever witnessed a quasi-government Executive being appointed to lead such a crucial multilateral process, and this, infamous as it may sound, marks the lowest moment for the UNFCCC, which is exceedingly veering off from its mandate to an international Expo where Corporates with dubious environmental-climate integrity greenwash their fossil-fuel credentials.

Though in past the civil society have expressed deep worries about the capture of the international dialogue on climate change by vicious fossil companies whose ill-intentions are to derail the transition to low-carbon, climate-resilient development pathways, it has never been so blatantly open that they would one day occupy the steering wheel.

Al-Jabar's appointment comes at a time the state-owned Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) for which he is a CEO, seeks to develop oil resources by increasing the upstream crude production through the concession Agreements for new exploration and production.

Curiously in 2020, the country has discovered over 80 trillion cubic feet of gas resources at Jebel Ali. Without understating the fact that a 5-year business plan and capital expenditure of 550 billion dirhams (\$150 billion) for the period 2023-2027 was also approved last year by the board to enable his company's growth strategy in order to bring forward oil production capacity expansion to 2027. We see this as a threat to the global commitment of divesting dirty energy for the sake of limitation of global temperature to 1.5 degrees of global warming.

Mithika Mwenda, the Executive Direct of the Pan African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA), said:

*“This is the textbook definition of impunity and conflict of interest. Addressing the climate crisis requires deep cuts in the production and use of fossil fuels. That course of action is squarely at variance with Al-Jaber’s business interests. It is hard to see al-Jaber leading objective, science-backed negotiations in the interest of the most vulnerable. We call on him to step aside and allow someone else with little vested interest to lead this important work on which the lives of all inhabitants of this planet, and more so millions of those at the frontline of climate change impacts depend.”*

This view is strongly collaborated by Nicholas Abuya, Global Programme Advisor, Christian Aid, who asserts:

*“CEO of an oil company cannot preside over a process that is tasked to address the climate crisis with such a scale of conflict of interest, heading an industry that is responsible for the crisis itself”*

COP28 takes place in a global energy crisis orchestrated by the Russia-Ukraine crisis and with already industrialized and high-energy consuming countries reopening coal plants and driving new oil and gas developments, especially in Africa. With the world off-track to limit global warming at 2 degrees Celsius, COP28 requires a demonstrably conflict-free strong leadership to withstand the current thrust of interest in fossil fuels that will certainly slow the transition to less polluting alternatives. For better or for worse, COP28 will be the COP of the Energy Transition.

Memory Kachambwa, the Executive Director, African Women Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), said:

*“The appointment of an oil executive to lead climate negotiations at this time will prop oil lobbies that have tried to derail global climate action for decades. It is an insult to the collective wisdom of everyone committed to addressing the climate crisis and a disturbing show of bad judgement by the Emirates authorities. We doubt that the UAE authorities will be able to deliver a COP that can move the world closer to addressing the current climate catastrophe. Everyone who cares for the health of the planet and survival of the most vulnerable people at the frontline of climate crisis, particularly women and children, must rise and resist this appointment.”*

Despite decades of intense and often passionate annual meetings, the world continues to emit more greenhouse gases annually than at any other time in human history. Global warming has continued to rise, and extreme weather events have become more frequent and ferocious. The bulk of earth-warming emissions, about two-thirds, comes from the energy sector. At COP27 in Egypt in 2022, world leaders failed to commit to phasing out all fossil fuels, which was considered the best course of action to reduce emissions significantly.

Reacting to appointment of the COP28 Presidency, Mercy Gichengi, Programme Coordinator Youth and Governance ActionAid Kenya emphasis:

*“It is not possible for a CEO of a fossil corporation to deliver on his company’s financial interests while acting for the benefit of the entire planet. This appointment can be equated to putting the fox in charge of the henhouse”*

Augustine Njamnshi, Coordinator of the pro-renewable energy African Coalition for Sustainable Energy and Access (ACSEA) and Big Shift Campaign Africa, said:

*“To keep alive hopes of a rapid transition from dirty energy, COP28 must decide to phase out at least coal and oil. This transition is at the heart of the accountability expectations that the world holds for COP28. The momentum that has been developed on the Global Goal on Adaptation and the financing mechanisms for Loss and damage must be sustained. With a leadership whose priorities is facing in the wrong direction, sadly, this now looks very unlikely. We urge the African Group of negotiators, the Vulnerable Countries Forum, our allies in both Global South and North to stand up against this bad news in the year, and say NO to the Emirates”*

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