

December 9, 2019

Re: Norway's International Treaty Violations on Climate Change; On behalf of Greta Thunberg, Chiara Sacchi, Catarina Lorenzo, Iris Duquesne, Raina Ivanova, Ridhima Pandey, David Ackley, III, Ranton Anjain, Litokne Kabua, Deborah Adegbile, Carlos Manuel, Ayakha Melithafa, Raslen Jbeili, Carl Smith, and Alexandria Villaseñor.

Dear Prime Minister Erna Solberg:

I write on behalf of the 16 youth Petitioners who have brought a complaint concerning the human rights impacts of climate change before the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child against Argentina, Brazil, France, Germany, and Turkey.¹ The Petitioners wish to inform you that by increasing oil and gas production in the face of the climate emergency, Norway is violating the rights bestowed on every child in the world under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

To uphold Norway's human rights obligations, as well as its own constitutional obligations and international and domestic commitments to tackle climate change, the Petitioners urge you to cease new fossil fuel production and to manage the decline of existing production. Keep your oil and gas in the ground. Expanding your North Sea production will lock in decades of greenhouse gas emissions, jeopardizing the universal rights of all children to life, health, and culture. As children, the Petitioners are the ones who will inherit the worst impacts of the climate crisis and bear the future costs of the decisions you make today.

Norway prides itself for being an international climate leader. Its decisions to divest from coal, oil and gas since 2015 have set an example for governments and investors worldwide. Norway's electricity system is almost entirely renewable, and it boasts the highest share of electric vehicles in the world.

Yet your government continues to support new fossil fuel production, despite projections that Norway will miss its emissions reduction targets for 2020 and 2030 under current policies.² Oil and gas extraction accounted for more than a quarter of Norway's greenhouse gas emissions in 2018, up by 73 percent since 1990.³ Production from the new Johan Sverdrup deepwater field alone is expected to increase Norway's daily oil output from 1.3 million barrels now to 1.6 million in 2020 and 1.8 million in 2021.⁴ Instead, Norway has

¹ The Petitioners' complaint is available at <https://childrenvsclimatecrisis.org/>.

² Climate Action Tracker (Sept. 19, 2019), <https://climateactiontracker.org/countries/norway/current-policy-projections/>.

³ Statistics Norway (Nov. 1, 2019), <https://www.ssb.no/en/klimagassn>.

⁴ Clifford Krauss, *Flood of Oil is Coming, Complicating Efforts to Fight Global Warming*, The New York Times (Nov. 3, 2019),

the opportunity to halve the cost of achieving its 2020 emissions target by reducing investment and production in its oil fields.⁵

The science is clear: Any new fossil fuel production will contribute to further catastrophic and avoidable climate change. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's 2018 Special Report stated that global emissions must peak by 2020 and decline by at least 50 percent by 2030 in order to stay within a 1.5°C temperature rise. Any additional warming, it said, would lead to millions more deaths and trillions of US dollars' worth of additional damage.

The Petitioners hail from the Marshall Islands, Palau, the United States, Brazil, Argentina, France, Germany, Tunisia, Nigeria, India, Sweden, and South Africa. They are experiencing firsthand the threats that come with every fraction of a degree of global warming. Forest fires have burned their homes and poisoned their air; their exposure to infectious diseases is rising; their water supplies are threatened and limited by drought; storms have flooded their homes and schools; rising sea levels are drowning their homelands; and changing temperatures are destroying their food sources and threatening indigenous traditions and livelihoods.

On September 23, 2019, the Petitioners submitted a legal complaint to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child against five G20 countries – Argentina, Brazil, France, Germany, and Turkey – for perpetuating the climate crisis by failing to curb emissions and by promoting fossil fuels. The rights underlying these claims apply to all nations, including Norway, which ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child nearly three decades ago.

Norway's actions promoting fossil fuels, like the actions of these five respondent states, are in violation of human rights law. The Committee on the Rights of the Child put your government on notice in 2018 for climate policies that endanger children's rights. It highlighted Norway's "exploitation of fossil fuels" and recommended that Norway "increase its focus on alternative energy and establish safeguards to protect children," domestically and internationally, from "the negative impacts of fossil fuels."

Five human rights treaty bodies, including the Committee on the Rights of the Child, jointly recognized in September that "climate change poses significant risks to the enjoyment of the human rights" protected under international treaties to which Norway is a party. "Failure to take measures to prevent foreseeable human rights harm caused by climate change, or to regulate activities contributing to such harm," may constitute a violation of a state's human rights obligations, the committees stated. To comply with these treaties, nations must "adopt and implement policies aimed at reducing emissions, which reflect the highest possible ambition" and "ensure that public *and private investments are consistent*

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/03/business/energy-environment/oil-supply.html>.

⁵ 2019 Production Gap Report (Nov. 20, 2019),

<http://productiongap.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Production-Gap-Report-2019.pdf>.

with a pathway towards low carbon emissions and climate resilient development.”

That means all countries — including Norway — must “effectively contribute to phasing out fossil fuels.”

Norway’s international and domestic commitments to limit climate change further preclude fossil fuel expansion. The Paris Agreement, which Norway ratified in 2016, set a global goal for net-zero emissions by mid-century. Domestic legislation aims to make Norway a “low-carbon society” by 2050, with emissions 80-95 percent below 1990 levels. Still, Norway continues to produce and sell fossil fuels, helping prevent the world from reaching net-zero emissions by mid-century.

Finally, the Norwegian constitution guarantees the right to a healthy environment for all. It says natural resources are to be managed with a longer term and comprehensive view of securing this right for future generations.

The climate emergency is here. Our house is burning, now. The world is headed towards 3.2°C of warming.⁶ The 2019 Lancet Countdown report concluded that “the life of every child born today will be profoundly affected by climate change . . . in a fundamentally altered world.” Additional global warming will affect “human health from infancy and adolescence to adulthood and old age.” Rising air pollution will cause more deaths and damage to hearts, lungs, and other vital organs. Infectious diseases will spread. More frequent droughts and floods will threaten water supplies, undermine food production and safety and increase malnutrition.

Norway must honor its responsibilities to children everywhere. It must apply its international climate leadership to all domestic action. It must demonstrate how a major fossil fuels producer and exporter can transition away from these pollutants, blazing a trail for other fossil fuel-reliant economies to follow. It must end the search for and exploitation of new oil and gas reserves, and set a plan to quickly phase out existing production fields. It must stop prioritizing short-term economic gains over the future of its children and all children around the world.

We would appreciate a response to this letter within 14 days.

Very sincerely yours,

Michael D. Hausfeld
Counsel

⁶ UN Environment Programme Emissions Gap Report 2019 (Nov. 26, 2019), <https://www.unenvironment.org/resources/emissions-gap-report-2019>.

On behalf of signatories:

Greta Thunberg (Sweden)
Chiara Sacchi (Argentina)
Catarina Lorenzo (Brazil)
Iris Duquesne (France)
Raina Ivanova (Germany)
Ridhima Pandey (India)
David Ackley, III (Marshall Islands)
Ranton Anjain (Marshall Islands)
Litokne Kabua (Marshall Islands)
Deborah Adegbile (Nigeria)
Carlos Manuel (Palau)
Ayakha Melithafa (South Africa)
Raslen Jbeili (Tunisia)
Carl Smith (USA – Alaska)
Alexandria Villaseñor (USA – New York)

This material is distributed by Hausfeld on behalf of Alexandria Villaseñor, Carl Smith, Catarina Lorenzo, Chiara Sacchi, Greta Thunberg, Iris Duquesne, Raina Ivanova, Raslene Joubali, Debby Adegbile, Ayakha Melithafa, Ridhima Pandey, Carlos Manuel, Litokne Kabua, David Ackley III, and Ranton Anjain. Additional information is available at the Department of Justice, Washington, D.C.