

Open letter to the Government regarding fossil fuels and climate change

Tēnā koe,

This morning we woke to the news that France - one of the world's superpowers - has become the first country in the world to refuse to issue any new oil and gas permits. Earlier this week, Belize's Senate voted to ban all offshore oil exploration in its territorial waters.

We are calling on the New Zealand Government to follow suit and ban new oil, gas, and coal permits while embracing the transition to a clean-energy future.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern assumed leadership of the Government on the promise that climate change would be her "nuclear-free moment". It's time to turn that passion into action, by taking bold and decisive measures to protect our future and our children's future.

Business as usual is no answer to the climate crisis. If we are serious about tackling climate change, we must immediately stop expanding the oil, gas and coal industries that are heating up the world more than anything else. We must apply our Kiwi innovation, ingenuity, and courage to hasten the transition to a renewable, stable and resilient energy system.

The science is clear. The world cannot afford to burn most of the oil, gas and coal reserves that have already been discovered if we are to have a chance of passing a livable planet onto our children. It makes no sense to search for more.

We are calling on our leaders in Government to put an immediate end to new exploration for oil, gas and coal in New Zealand. Doing this would powerfully complement the Government's commitment to passing the Zero Carbon Act, and show its commitment to achieving its 2050 goal of net-zero emissions. An overwhelming number of New Zealanders already support this vision.

With the backing of local communities, New Zealand's biggest councils have opposed the annual Block Offer process, which sees hundreds of thousands of square kilometres of New Zealand land and sea being made available for companies to explore for oil and gas.

Auckland Council, Environment Canterbury, Christchurch City Council, Dunedin City Council, Kaikoura District Council and Gisborne District Council are among those that have publicly announced that exploring for more oil and gas is not in the interests of New Zealanders.

Iwi and hapū up and down the country have also come out in strong opposition to oil exploration in their waters. An unprecedented alliance of more than 80 hapū on the East Coast rallied against oil exploration by Statoil and Chevron, and an alliance is now forming in Taranaki against the seismic survey ship, Amazon Warrior.

More recently, a national gathering of Māori leaders came to an historic agreement to oppose all seismic testing and oil exploration in the waters of Aotearoa. The Iwi Chairs Forum passed the resolution to seek amendments to the EEZ Act to give effect to this opposition.

Hundreds of thousands of New Zealanders have marched, signed petitions, and lobbied their local representatives to try and stop fossil fuel expansion in Aotearoa. Their actions represent the more than two-thirds of New Zealanders who believe the Government should invest in building an economy that's based on clean energy industries [1].

Last year, more than 60 New Zealand businesses signed an open letter to the previous

government, urging it to take bold climate action. What's more, increasing numbers of investors in Aotearoa and all over the world are divesting from fossil fuels and investing in renewable energy solutions.

When New Zealand stopped nuclear ships in the 1980s, we stood up to the most powerful military force in the world, the United States, to defend the will of the New Zealand people. Taking action on climate change also requires us to stand up to the powerful. The reality of climate change means that if we are to have a future, fossil fuel extraction must have no future.

In the 21st century, we must all embrace our abundant clean energy resources - including the enormous economic and job opportunities that they bring. This is 100% possible. Businesses and communities across the country are already reaping the benefits of switching to renewable energy and committing to reducing their emissions.

Your government has an unprecedented opportunity to create a stable, resilient and low-carbon future for all New Zealand's people – including those whose livelihoods currently depend on fossil fuel extraction. A Just Transition means supporting the creation of jobs in sustainable industries at the same time as winding down existing fossil fuel industries, rather than expanding them.

Now is the moment to courageously defend the interests of the New Zealand people and our unique and special natural world. Together, it is possible for New Zealanders to prosper without oil, coal and gas. There is no time to lose.

Nāku noa, nā



Russel Norman, Executive Director, Greenpeace New Zealand

Adelia Hallett, Climate Advocate, Forest & Bird

Niamh O'Flynn, Executive Director, 350 Aotearoa

Livia Esterhazy, Chief Executive Officer, WWF-New Zealand