

To: Theo Francken,
State Secretary for Asylum Policy and Migration
2, rue Lambermont
1000 Brussels

Open Letter to the state secretary for Asylum Policy and Migration: Lifting obstacles to international solidarity and successful international conferences

Dear Secretary of State,

For the third time in a row, an international conference¹ about alternatives to gas will be organized in Brussels. This conference aims at connecting grassroots groups, academics and organizations across the globe to better work together towards a world without fossil fuels.

Sadly, both during the preparation of the first and the second conference, participants from the Global South, particularly from Africa, faced inappropriate, incomprehensible barriers connected to their visas. As a result, many of them could not attend.

We see it as a serious issue that increasingly strict European migration policies prevent a balanced participation in international conferences. These international meetings play an important role in shaping the pathway Europe needs to take, within a global context, to lead us into a carbon-free future.

It is clear that an inclusive, broad dialogue between representatives of the Global North and Global South is absolutely central in taking meaningful steps towards sustainability and climate justice. Preventing, in an unforeseeable and unfair way, the access to these debating spaces directly undermines the global work that is being done to create a clean, fair and just future.

Our series of alternative gas conferences aims at tackling a global problem – the role that fossil gas plays in creating climate change. The Global North contributes to a disproportionately large extent to a changing global climate, while on the other hand communities in the Global South suffer most from its effects. **It is therefore imperative to involve particularly those most affected by decisions taken in Europe in a process to find solutions to the issues around gas, respecting human rights, the Paris Climate Agreement and strengthening democracies.**

Already the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU states that the contribution of “*promoting measures at international level to deal with regional or worldwide environmental problems, and in particular combating climate change*” shall be objective of Union policy.

Creating, and not blocking spaces like international alternative gas conferences to work towards this aim has to be a priority for EU Member States.

We cannot work on global issues unilaterally; these discussions have to happen with representatives from non-EU countries and we therefore urgently ask you to take measures to avoid unfair practices leading to de facto travel bans from certain countries.

¹ <https://www.rosalux.eu/eventdetail/event/global-gas-lock-in-linking-north-south-resistance/>

Blatant inequalities concerning freedom of movement and a resulting privilege to travel for citizens of certain countries block attempts to work together in a balanced way and contributes to silencing the voices of those most affected by climate change.

The travel/visa issues that participants of our conferences faced are clearly not an isolated issue, and action needs to be taken on a broad level to end this injustice.

Sincerely,

Africa Institute for Energy Governance (Uganda) Dickens Kamugisha

Agro-Ecologie et Environnement Vert (Tunisia), Mohsen Kalboussi

Amigos de la Tierra (Spain), Héctor de Prado

Attac France, Maxime Combes

Attac Maroc (Morocco), Lucile Daumas

BankTrack (Netherlands), Claire Hamlett

Biofuelwatch (UK), Frances Howe

Citizens' Concern Africa (Uganda) Sam Mucunguzi

Corporate Europe Observatory (Belgium), Pascoe Sabido

Counter Balance (Czech Republic), Xavier Sol

Ecologistas en Acción (Spain), Samuel Martín-Sosa

En Commun (France), Philippe Assens

Food and Water Europe (Belgium), Frida Kieninger

Frack Free United (UK), Leigh Coghill

Friends of the Earth Europe (International), Antoine Simon

Gastivists Berlin (Berlin), Lea Dehning

Gastivists Collective (International), Noëlie Audi-Dor

Integrating capacity and community advancement organisation (Tanzania), Zahra Salehe

Justiça Ambiental (Friends of the Earth Mozambique), Anabela Lemos

KlimaKollektivet (Denmark), Tannie Nyboe

Les Amis de la Terre France, Lorette Philippot

Les Amis de la Terre Togo, ASSEM Ekue

Love Leitrim (Ireland)

Milieudefensie (Friends of the Earth Nederland)

NOAH Friends of the Earth Denmark, Nanna Clifforth

Observatori del Deute en la Globalització (Spain), Josep Nualart Corpas

Oil Change International (United States), Collin Rees

Platform (UK), Anna Markova

PowerShift e.V. (Germany), Michael Reckordt

Re:Common (Italy), Elena Gerebizza

Social Action (Nigeria), Vivian Bellonwu

UK Youth Climate Coalition (UK), Mark Robinson

Young Friends of the Earth Europe, (Belgium), Živilė Mantrimaitė