



**For Immediate Release**

October 26, 2021

**For Press Inquiries**

Please Contact Adrian Plaisance at [aplaisance@fenton.com](mailto:aplaisance@fenton.com) or 845-507-3359

**NEW REPORT: \$39.2 TRILLION IN CAPITAL BLOCKED FROM FOSSIL FUELS AS  
DIVEST-INVEST MOVEMENT AMASSES POWER TO SHIFT POLITICS AND  
FINANCE ON CLIMATE CRISIS**

*Organizers announce new commitments from Rio de Janeiro, Glasgow, and more than 70 faith institutions to divest from fossil fuels and invest in climate solutions*

**Washington, D.C.** - Today, on the eve of the UN Climate Change Conference, COP26, the fossil fuel divest-invest movement released a [new report](#) that details how institutions representing an unprecedented total of [\\$39.2 trillion](#) worth of assets have now committed to some form of fossil fuel divestment, a figure that's higher than the annual GDP of the United States and China combined.

At a briefing today, the movement also announced new commitments to divest from fossil fuels from the cities of Rio de Janeiro, Glasgow (site of COP26), Paris, Seattle, Auckland and Copenhagen through C40 Cities' Divest/Invest Forum, led by London and New York City, as well as more than 70 faith institutions, including the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Scotland. There are now [1,485 institutions](#) from 71 countries that have committed to fossil fuel divestment. Student activists also announced new legal developments in their long running campaigns against universities.

The movement, a coalition of several different grassroots organizations, philanthropies, and advocacy groups, also provided proof that divest-invest is a winning strategy. Through recent research and case studies, *Invest-Divest 2021: A Decade of Progress Towards a Just Climate Future* makes the case that divestment has been successful at holding fossil fuel companies accountable for the true cost of their unregulated carbon pollution and chipping away at their political power. It reviews recent market data to prove that a divest-invest strategy is the most financially responsible path for institutional investors.

"The climate crisis is here, and so are climate solutions," said **Rev. Lennox Yearwood Jr., President and CEO of Hip Hop Caucus**. "We know communities of color are disproportionately impacted by the climate crisis here in the U.S. and across the world. In order to create a just future, we must divest from fossil fuels and invest in communities on the frontlines of the climate crisis. This declaration confirms that over 10 years the divest-invest movement has become one of the most powerful global forces in a just transition to a clean energy future."

Six cities join the [C40 Divest/Invest declaration](#), a group of mayors taking action on fossil fuel divestment and sustainable investment, representing 50 million residents and over \$400 billion in assets under management; these cities come together to demonstrate city leadership on a global stage.

“In the vein of COP26, C40's divest/invest declaration aims at one of the most pressing bottlenecks for global climate action: finance. More than chasing green investments, Rio is committed to pushing financial markets in the right direction: climate justice powered by green finance,” said **Mayor Eduardo Paes, Rio de Janeiro**.

Today's announcements from faith-based institutions follow recent calls from Pope Francis and other faith leaders for global governments to address the 'unprecedented ecological crisis' ahead of COP26. A total of 72 [faith institutions](#) from 11 countries with more than \$4.2 billion of combined assets under management joined today in the largest-ever joint divestment announcement by religious organizations. The global divestment announcement comes from faith institutions in countries ranging from Nepal to Ireland to Zambia.

“The fossil fuel divestment announcement of the Scottish Church, in line with the Vatican's divestment recommendation, is a major reason for celebration ahead of the G20 here in Rome and COP26 in Glasgow. It's a clear demand for governments and investors to end the fossil fuel era through a just transition to renewable energy for all, particularly the poorest who still lack access to energy,” said **Rev. Dr. Joshtrom Isaac Kureethadam, coordinator of Ecology and Creation at the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development**.

Student activists have led the movement since its beginnings 10 years ago. Today, new legal documents were filed by Climate Defense Project on behalf of student campaigns at Johns Hopkins University, the University of New Mexico, and Marquette University. The complaints call for intervention by the state attorneys general for legal violations caused by university investment in fossil fuel companies. The strategy, employed successfully at Harvard University earlier this year, represents a new approach for divestment campaigners. Additionally, October 29 marks a [global day of action](#) with young people across the world demanding an immediate end to the funding of fossil fuel expansion.

“Universities have historically claimed to take actions based on the wants and needs of their students and communities. We are disappointed in the negligence of higher educational institutions to protect those they claim to be creating a future for. The failure to defend from life-threatening conditions is a failure to protect their students. As students we have been taught to use our voice and create change through direct action. This is an international movement with the potential of changing the world and saving our precious home,” said **Emily Phan, cofounder of the University of New Mexico's Leaders for Environmental Actions and Foresight**.

Indigenous and frontline communities also spoke at today's event about how their leadership in the divest-invest movement and related campaigns has been successful at slowing and even halting financial support for pipelines and other infrastructure. The oil companies themselves, as well as Wall Street analysts, say these campaigns have made such projects increasingly difficult for the industry.

“Divestment is simple, if it's wrong to wreck the planet then it's wrong to profit from it. 39.2 trillion dollars divested shows the power of grassroots organizing and the divestment movement,” said **Thomás Lopez, Partnerships Coordinator, Future Coalition**. “It's time for mass divestments to push back on financing the climate crisis and the destruction of the next seven generations.”

“Not divesting is like a bookie purchasing the track, only the track is a dying industry killing our chance at a future. Clearly all these climate commitments aren't worth the recycled paper they were written on,” said **Tara Houska, founder of Giniw Collective**. “It's our money in their vaults, hitting withdraw is long overdue.”

Today's 39-page report marks the tenth anniversary of the movement, which began on U.S. college campuses. Among its findings:

- **Divestment is winning.** With iconic, sector-leading institutions like Harvard University, Dutch and Canadian pension fund giants PME and CDPQ, French public bank La Banque Postale, and the Ford Foundation and John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation committing to divest in just the past few months, the movement has reached a threshold moment. It is increasingly difficult for major institutions to make the argument that ongoing fossil fuel investment is wise.
- **The movement is growing fast.** Public divestment commitments have grown by 49 percent in just the last three years. There are now 1,485 different institutions committed to some form of fossil fuel divestment in 71 countries around the world, representing a total of \$39.2 billion in assets under management. The assets under management metric is standard within the financial sector, is useful for comparing the size of the movement to other components of the economy, and is easily verifiable. Not all companies included in this list have fully divested all assets from fossil fuels, which remains a movement demand (see below). This number only tracks public commitments to divest, the true amount of fossil fuel divestment is almost certainly significantly larger.
- **With 10 years of data there is now hard evidence that divestment is a winning financial strategy.** Early adopters of divestment strategies are reporting neutral or positive financial results. Surveys and analyses by Wall Street firms support it.
- **Despite recent short-term surges, the outlook for fossil fuels is grim.** Long-term trends unmistakably point to a decline in value for fossil fuel investments, and major financial analysts agree that it's only going to get worse.
- **The movement is now a market factor.** Oil companies and market analysts both say the movement has gotten so big it is affecting fossil fuel company profits.
- **Engagement is not enough.** Shareholder engagement with fossil fuel companies, which some investors have tried to suggest as an alternative to divestment, has proven ineffective and too slow.
- **More investment in climate solutions is badly needed.** While divestment has been winning, there is much more that needs to be done investing in climate solutions. We need to triple the amount of money flowing into renewable energy and sustainable infrastructure.
- **A just transition makes sense for everyone.** We need a “just transition” to a clean energy economy, one that supports communities and workers that have depended on the fossil fuel economy and centers economic, gender, and racial justice. The transition also must include the nearly one billion people who don't have access to energy today. Investing in such a transition supports the values of mission-based investors, and the economic goals of all investors.

“Investment funds large and small are attracted to divestment because the fossil fuel sector has lost value and offered no plan to solve the climate problem. This is a rare moment when doing the right thing, for the right reason, moves in lockstep with the security of workers pensions and the need to fund our health, educational and social needs through our philanthropic institutions,” said **Tom Sanzillo, Director, Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis**.

“It is not possible for investors to be ‘net zero’ and continue to finance the expansion of fossil fuels. The risks of staying invested in fossil fuels doesn't stop here. The world has built up an enormous fossil fuel system over the last 200 years. The three main assets are the 900 billion tonnes of coal, oil, and gas, valued by the World Bank at \$39 trillion; supply infrastructure of \$10 trillion and demand infrastructure (electricity, transport, and heavy industry) of \$22 trillion; and financial markets with \$18 trillion of equity (a

quarter of the total), \$8 trillion of traded bonds (half the total) and up to four times as much in unlisted debt. Pension funds exposed to the fossil fuel system in the coming decade will face a roller coaster ride of disruption, write-downs, financial instability and share price de-ratings as markets adjust. Investors concerned about risk will continue to flee the sector, as led by those institutions which had divested from fossil fuels nearly a decade ago,” said **Mark Campanale, Founder & Executive Chair, Carbon Tracker.**

**Philippe Heim, Chairman of La Banque Postale's Executive Board**, said: “La Banque Postale welcomes the SBTi’s validation of our pathway to achieve carbon neutrality by 2040. Today, we are the first European bank and one of the first financial institutions worldwide to have a decarbonisation strategy that is in line with the Paris Agreement and that has been validated according to a scientific approach. The climate emergency requires us to accelerate, which leads us to a complete withdrawal from fossil fuels by 2030 at the latest. Bolstered by our “civic DNA”, our ambition is to strengthen our international leadership, recognised by extra-financial agencies. We also want to be a “spearhead” laboratory for the banking sector and to drive an in-depth transformation of our business models towards a just transition, of which respect for the planet’s limits is a key component. In the coming period, we are determined to support the fossil fuel industry in its own transition.”

“We believe that philanthropy should use all the tools it has available to combat the climate emergency, and divesting from approaches that are harming the environment are as important as investing in climate-friendly solutions,” said **John Palfrey, President, MacArthur Foundation**. “As we begin to divest our investment assets from the fossil fuel industry, we are ramping up investments that seek to address climate change in addition to our regular climate grantmaking.”

“As leaders, we must take a hard look at how we’re either contributing to the acceleration or deceleration of climate change, and align our financial goals with our moral obligations. These are simple decisions which are long overdue,” said **Ford Foundation President Darren Walker**. “The Ford Foundation is proud to follow in the steps of other global foundations and world leaders who have made it clear that investing in sustainability is investing in our future.”

The movement called today for continued pressure and made three demands of institutional investors and other financial actors across the world:

1. **All institutional investors must make an immediate public commitment to fully divest from and stop all financing of coal, oil, and gas companies and assets.** Institutions that have partially divested must now divest all of their assets from all fossil fuels. As linked to this commitment, all institutions must align their policy, regulatory positions, and political expenditures with this commitment.
2. **All institutional investors must immediately move to invest a minimum of 5 percent of their assets in climate solutions, doubling to 10 percent by 2030**, including investments in renewable energy systems, universal energy access, and a just transition for communities and workers. Further, investors must hold these companies accountable to respecting Indigenous and other human rights and environmental standards.
3. **To achieve Net Zero emissions by 2050, all institutional investors should adopt Net Zero plans** that both immediately cut investments in fossil fuels and ensure that all other assets in their portfolio develop transition plans that halve absolute emissions by 2030, consistent with science's demands to limit global warming to 1.5°C.

“The activist-driven divestment movement has yielded unprecedented and historic results in moving tens of trillions of dollars out of the industry driving the climate crises and exposing its failing business model.

But investors need to do more. It is not enough to divest from only some fossil fuels or with only some of your portfolio- **all** investors must immediately divest **all** fossil fuels from **all** of their portfolio, while investing in climate solution with at least 5% of their portfolios, scaling to 10% rapidly. Mission investors have a unique role to play to ensure the energy transition is a just one and that all people have access to safe, clean and affordable energy by 2030. To do anything less does not address the scale or pace of this climate crisis,” said **Ellen Dorsey, Executive Director, Wallace Global Fund.**

“There is a growing consensus that the time for significant investment in clean tech solutions is now. Many believe we need to triple our investments in renewable energy by 2030 and that it is up to government, companies and citizens to act now using regulations, incentives and purchasing power to accelerate the sustainability revolution. The current Administration’s goal of 50% reduction in climate emissions by 2030 opens the door for this kind of investment and puts us on the path to achieve a net-zero economy by 2050. In doing so we will help save our planet, usher in a new age of ideas and innovations to create prosperity and jobs for everyone, and position our economy for long-term sustainable growth,” said **Thomas Van Dyck, CIMA, Managing Director, Financial Advisor - SRI Wealth Management Group, RBC Wealth Management.**

“The proof is in the numbers. Divestment from fossil fuels and investment in climate solutions is the both the fiscally responsible, fiduciarily sound and morally right thing to do - no matter what the size of the pension fund, bank or insurance company, faith organization or university. There are simply no valid reasons left to keep one’s money in the dinosaurs of yesteryear and to fail to scale up investments in renewables and other just and equitable solutions,” said **Richard Brooks, Climate Finance Director, Stand.earth.**

**Mayor Phil Goff says while Auckland Council** already adheres to a Responsible Investment Policy and does not have any fossil fuel investments, the declaration reiterates its commitment to a zero-carbon future and creates further impetus for action on climate change. “In responding to this declaration, Auckland Council is committing to tangible actions, including increasing our financial investments in climate solutions. Last year, for example, the vast majority of the council’s own borrowing was through green bonds, where funding raised is used for environmentally sustainable projects. These commitments will add to the \$152 million of new spending on climate initiatives in last year’s Recovery Budget, as well as the huge amount of work underway across the Council Group to decarbonise our infrastructure and make it more resilient to the impacts of climate change.”

**Glasgow City Treasurer, Cllr Ricky Bell,** said, “Fossil fuels are already plummeting in popularity as investment propositions, Increasing sustainable investments is an effective way of not only protecting our assets from climate related risks but also about creating jobs and opportunities in the green economy. We’re helping build that road to decarbonisation, forcing the big oil and gas firms to reform.”

“Across the world, we are all feeling the impacts of climate change. We must work together to accelerate divestment from polluting fossil fuels and transition to a clean and just energy future. Seattle is taking all possible steps, including beginning the process to divest the City’s retirement funds from fossil fuels and increase investments in climate solutions that promote well-paying jobs and a just and green economy. It is clear that fossil fuels are a risky and shortsighted investment. Seattle is proud to join Auckland, Copenhagen, Glasgow, Paris, Rio de Janeiro as one of six new signatories to the C40 Divesting From Fossil Fuels, Investing in a Sustainable Future declaration. Together, Cities across the world can divest from fossil fuels as a key strategy to equitably rebuild our economy and increase resilience against future climate crises,” said **Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan.**

“More and more mayors are joining our efforts in New York City to combat climate change on the local level and fight back,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. “We’re seeing cities around the world committing to a green economy under New York City’s and London’s ‘Divesting From Fossil Fuels, Investing in a Sustainable Future’ declaration. When we first announced our goals to divest in 2018, we were among few public pensions in this movement. Today, 18 mayors have joined us to turn the tide for our planet and transition to a green economy. I urge other mayors to join us in holding fossil fuel companies accountable, transitioning to a green future for our world and winning the war against the climate crisis.”

**Mark Watts, Executive Director of C40 Cities said:** “Leaders of C40 cities know that divesting away from fossil fuels and making green, sustainable investments is no longer a choice if the world is to avoid climate breakdown. These six new cities committing to divest from the industries responsible for the climate emergency, and invest in climate solutions to support decent jobs and a green and just economy, are sending an important market signal ahead of COP26. World leaders, city and local governments, businesses and organisations everywhere need to follow suit and put their money where their mouth is. We must divest from fossil fuels, and invest in the future we want for humanity and the planet.”

“It’s possible that this is the largest anti-corporate campaign of its kind in history--watching it grow from nothing to \$39 trillion in a decade reflects the work of millions of people the world around. We began with the premise that though most people didn’t live near a coal mine, everyone was adjacent to some pot of money--and people have understood the power that that gave them. This movement will keep growing, and keep depriving Big Oil of both its social license and its access to easy capital,” said **Bill McKibben, co-founder and Senior Advisor at 350.org**.

A full copy of the report can be found [here](#) and interviews with authors, institutions who have committed to divest can be made available upon request. The Global Divestment Commitments Database can be found [here](#). The report was a joint effort between the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis, Stand.earth, C40, and the Wallace Global Fund.

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