To: European Commission, DG Energy, Climate Action & Energy Commissioner Miguel Arias Cañete (cab-arias-canete-archives@ec.europa.eu)  
US Department of Energy, Secretary of Energy Rick Perry (The.Secretary@hq.doe.gov)

OPEN LETTER

30 April 2019


Dear Commissioner Cañete and Secretary Perry,

The undersigned organizations submit this letter in opposition to the growing liquified natural gas (LNG) import/export relationship between the United States and the European Union. According to the EU-U.S. joint statement from March 8, 2019, EU imports of LNG from the U.S. have increased by 181% since July 2018. The continued use and import/export of fracked LNG torpedoes critical climate targets and violates basic human rights. In 2012, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) issued a “Global Alert” on fracking, concluding that fracking may have environmental impacts even if done properly. People in the EU do not want inherently harmful LNG being shipped into their communities, nor do people in the U.S. want to suffer the negative impacts of LNG infrastructure buildout that accompanies this massive push in increased exports.

Rather than working towards increased development of LNG on both sides of the Atlantic during your first EU-US Energy Council High-Level Forum taking place in Brussels on May 2, 2019, you should be focused on ways to eliminate our continuing reliance on fossil fuels, including LNG, as quickly as possible. To do otherwise ignores the existing crucial scientific evidence that proves the significant negative climate role of gas, in particular fracked gas, and the dire economic consequences related to ongoing fossil fuel consumption.

1. Negative climate impacts of fossil gas

Gas is just another fossil fuel that we need to phase out within the next 10 to 30 years if we want to avoid overshooting significant climate tipping-points. The scientific evidence shows that methane emissions from gas extraction in general and from shale gas in particular are a significant driver of global warming and climate change.

In a recent talk titled, “The Role of Shale Gas Development in the Methane Cycle: New Insights from 13C and 14C Data,” Dr. Robert Howarth, a researcher from Cornell University, concluded that the global increase in methane over the last 10 years is largely driven by the oil and gas industry. His updated estimate for average, full-cycle methane leakage rate from natural gas operations (fracked and non-fracked) is 4.1%. These kinds of leakage rates render natural gas just as, if not more, climate harmful than coal. Trade in LNG will increase global emissions and its overall full lifecycle greenhouse gas balance is comparable to or even worse than that of coal.

But even if we leave the existing significant methane emissions aside, we know that global - economically recoverable - fossil fuels extraction projects (currently producing and under-construction), would take the world far beyond safe climate limits. Further development and trade of gas reserves is inconsistent with the implementation of the vital climate targets.
2. Environmental and public health implications of fracking

More than a decade of large-scale use of fracking (mainly in the U.S. and Canada) to extract natural gas from the ground has underscored how harmful and destructive this extraction process can be, as confirmed and acknowledged by countless peer-reviewed scientific studies. There are numerous proven risks and impacts related to the development of fracking projects, such as heavy freshwater consumption, water and soil contamination, public health impacts and the significant contribution to global warming.\textsuperscript{vi}

In 2012, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) issued a “Global Alert” on fracking, concluding that fracking may have environmental impacts no matter how it is conducted.\textsuperscript{viii} Building out more infrastructure to support increasing import/export activity will further exacerbate the climate, environmental and public health impacts of fracked gas.

3. Fossil lock-in and stranded assets

New gas infrastructure has a significant economic lifespan (usually between 30 and 50 years) that goes beyond the point when we’d need to fully decarbonize. The construction of any new fossil fuel infrastructure, therefore, contributes to increasing the risk of missing the EU 2050 climate objective and Paris Agreement targets by creating a “lock in” effect to high levels of gas consumption.

Ongoing use of fossil fuels like gas beyond necessary climate goals will have devastating economic impacts on both side of the Atlantic. For example, the 2018 COACCH (Co-Designing the Assessment of Climate Change Costs) study outlines the hundreds of billions of Euros per year that represent the economic costs of climate change in Europe in different scenarios for different sectors. Their review indicates that the costs of inaction will be potentially large in Europe.\textsuperscript{ix}

Economic impacts will also arise because of stranded fossil fuel assets. A 2018 study, commissioned by the EU COM, on “The role of Trans-European gas infrastructure in the light of the 2050 decarbonisation targets”\textsuperscript{x} concludes that “the utilisation level of LNG terminals and import pipelines would significantly decrease, and some assets might need to be decommissioned or used for other purposes”.

There is substantial risk to the economies of the United States and other fossil fuel exporting nations from continued investment in fossil fuel infrastructure. A study published in Nature Climate Change found that between one and four trillion dollars in fossil fuel assets globally are at risk from "an already ongoing technological trajectory, irrespective of whether or not new climate policies are adopted".\textsuperscript{xi}

All the public financial support LNG projects receive are at the expense of sustainable and zero-carbon solutions, with dire consequences for our climate and our economies – and lenders are starting to take notice. The BNP Paribas Groups, a leading financial services provider in Europe and worldwide, announced on 11 October 2017 that the group “will no longer do business with companies whose principal business activity is the exploration, production, distribution, marketing or trading of oil and gas from shale and/or oil from tar sands.” Furthermore, it “will no longer finance ... LNG terminals that predominantly liquefy and export gas from shale.”\textsuperscript{xii}

4. Fracking supports polluting plastics industry

The plastics industry has reaped under-the-radar benefits from the environmentally destructive fracking boom and an oversupply of cheap ethane in the past few years. This surge has been a boon for the plastics industry, which relies on petrochemical manufacturing to turn ethane, a hydrocarbon...
present in natural gas, into plastics. Beginning in 2012, chemical companies started aggressively investing in petrochemical plants and export facilities focused on tapping the ethane glut, creating further negative implications for human and environmental rights – right at a moment when we try to solve the big global plastic health and climate crisis.\textsuperscript{xiii}

5. Fracking impacts human rights

In May 2018, the Permanent Peoples Tribunal (PPT) on Human Rights, Fracking and Climate Change heard testimony and received other evidence relating to fracking and its impact. Included were very substantial reports from four prior PPT Citizens’ Tribunals that had gathered scientific, technical, social, cultural and experiential testimony from many community organizations, experts and individual citizens.

According to the preliminary statement of the PPT judges, "the evidence clearly demonstrates that the processes of fracking contribute substantially to anthropogenic harm, including climate change and global warming, and involve massive violations of a range of substantive and procedural human rights and the rights of nature.... The evidence also shows that governments have, in general, failed in their responsibility to regulate the industry so as to protect people, communities and nature. In addition, they have failed to act promptly and effectively to the dangers of climate change that fracking represents."\textsuperscript{xxv} In the final Advisory Opinion, the PPT recommended – amongst other relevant points – that “fracking be banned” and that “the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment be asked to investigate the violations of the rights of humans and nature by the Unconventional Oil and Gas Extraction industry.”\textsuperscript{xxv}

This finding is echoed elsewhere: In October 2018, the UN’s CESC\textsuperscript{r} issued an official warning concerning fracking for shale gas in Argentina, saying that "The Committee is concerned that this hydraulic fracturing project contradicts the State party's commitments to the Paris Agreement, with a negative impact on global warming and the enjoyment of the economic and social rights of the world population and future generations. (Article 1 (1) and 2 ((1))\textsuperscript{xxvi} In March 2019 the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) urged the British Government to “consider introducing a comprehensive and complete ban on fracking.”\textsuperscript{xxvii}

We call on the EU and U.S. administrations to exercise their extremely important global responsibility and immediately stop the transatlantic trade in fracked hydrocarbons. Instead, we urge you to focus all efforts on working together towards the needed transition to 100% renewable energy and production systems and increased energy efficiency. This transition is not only achievable – it is underway. Increasing the trade in fracked hydrocarbons represents a huge step backwards in the needed shift to renewables and our joint efforts to save the planet from catastrophic climate change.

Sincerely,

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2. Scott Edwards, Legal Director, Food & Water Watch
3. Hilde Lindner-Hausner, Spokesperson, Abgefrackt Bündnis Weidener Becken gegen Fracking
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5. Jose Luis Gutierrez Aranda, Policy Officer, AEFJN
6. Heather Cantino, Steering Committee Chair, Athens County’s Future Action Network, aka Athens County (OH) Fracking Action Network
7. Maxime Combes, Economist, Attac France
8. Maria Luisa Hernández, Coordinator, Attac Spain
9. Wibke Langhorst, Spokesperson, Aktionsbündnis No Moor Fracking
10. Sarah Stewart, President, Animals Are Sentient Beings, Inc.
11. Hélène Cabioch, Director, Association Internationale de Techniciens, Experts et Chercheurs (Aitec)
12. Lise Masson, Spokesperson, BankTrack
13. Karen Feridun, Founder, Berks Gas Truth
14. Delphine Lévi Alvarès, European Coordinator, Break Free From Plastic
15. Matthew Mehlak, Spokesperson, Breathe Project
16. Karen Feridun, Co-Founder, Better Path Coalition
17. David Larder, Spokesperson, Bassetlaw Against Fracking
18. Pat Lupo, OSB, Environmental Education and Advocacy, Benedictine Sisters of Erie PA
19. Terrie Baumgardner, Spokesperson, Beaver County Marcellus Awareness Community
20. Ingo Junge, Spokesperson, Berliner Netzwerk TTIP | CETA | TISA stoppen!
21. Sigrun Franzen, Spokesperson, Berliner Wassertisch
22. Harald Rücker, Spokesperson, Bi lebenswertes Korbach
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24. Werner Diedrichs, Spokesperson, Bürgerinitiative Fracking Freies Hamburg
25. Chrisfried Lenz, Spokesperson, BI "Saubere Umwelt & Energie Altmark"
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28. Roxanne Groff, Chair, Buckeye Environmental Network
29. Sharon Furlong, Spokesperson, Bucks Environmental Action
30. Arianne Elinich, Founder, Bucks County Concerned Citizens Against the Pipelines
31. Bernd Ebeling, Spokesperson, BürgerInneninitiative Umweltschutz Uelzen
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34. Pascoe Sabido, Spokesperson, Corporate Europe Observatory
35. Xavier Sol, Director, Counter Balance
36. Estelle Tardy, Spokesperson, Collectif Causse Méjean - Gaz de Schiste NON!
37. Maxime Combes, Spokesperson, Collectif citoyen de Pézenas, Castelnau de Guers (34 France)
38. Claude Girod, Spokesperson, Confédération Paysanne France (ECVC)
39. Christine Varenne, Spokesperson, Collectif Arcois pour la Planète
40. Bill Lyons, Spokesperson, Columbus Community Bill of Rights
41. William Snape, Senior Counsel, Center for Biological Diversity
42. Maxime Combes, Spokesperson, Collectif du Céressou (34 France)
43. Ezra Silk, Director of Strategy & Policy, The Climate Mobilization
44. Lisa J. Riggio, Executive Director, Citizens For A Clean Pompton Lakes
45. Corey E. Olsen, Owner/Activist, CEO Pipe Organs/Golden Ponds Farm
46. Vera Scroggins, Director, Citizens for Clean Water
47. Maxime Combes, Spokesperson, Collectif de Campagnan, St. Pargoire (34 France)
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49. Elaine Cimino, Director, Common Ground Rising
50. Mary Smith, Communications Director, Church Women United in New York State
51. Pam Bishop, Principal, Concerned Citizens of Lebanon County
52. Jen Deerinwater, Founder & Executive Director, Crushing Colonialism
53. Allen Johnson, Coordinator, Christians For The Mountains
54. Sarah Martik, Campaign Manager, Center for Coalfield Justice
55. Gonzalo Fernández Corrales. Spokesperson, Círculo de Hostelería y Turismo
56. RL Miller, Political Director, Climate Hawks Vote
57. Maura Stephanes, Co-Founder, Coalition to Protect New York
58. Sonia Zilberman, Director South Caspian Energy and Environment, Crude Accountability
59. Gene Binder, Member Steering Committee, Concerned Citizens For Change
60. Robert Pilli, President, CRI-AC!
61. Sebastian Schönauer, Treasurer, Deutscher Naturschutzbund e.V. (DNR)
62. Constantin Zenger, Head of Energy and Climate Protection, Deutsche Umwelthilfe e.V.
63. Jan Juffermans, Chair, Dutch Footprint Group
64. Marie McRae, Spokesperson, DRAC (Dryden Resource Awareness Coalition)
65. B. Arrindell, Spokesperson, Damascus Citizens for Sustainability
66. Mary Gutierrez, Spokesperson, Earth Ethics, Inc.
67. Jennifer Krill, Executive Director, Earthworks
68. Jeremy Wates, Secretary General, EEB (European Environmental Bureau)
69. Samuel Martín-Sosa, International Coordinator, Ecologistas en Acción
70. Ángel Encinas, President, Ecologistas en Acción de Zamora
71. Sabria Barka, Director, Eco-Conscience
72. Maxime Combes, Spokesperson, Ecolectif de Gognac (34 France)
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75. John Barnes, Advocacy Coordinator, Earth Forum of Howard County
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77. Brook Lenker, Executive Director, FracTracker Alliance
78. Steve Mason, Campaign Director, Frack Free United
79. Antoine Simon, Fossil Free Campaigner, Friends of the Earth Europe
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81. Lorette Philippot, Private Finance Campaigner, Friends of the Earth France
82. James Leon Meyer, Coordinator, Fridays For Future Dithmarschen
83. Anne Marie Harrington, Spokesperson, Futureproof Clare
84. Suzie McCoy, Spokesperson, FUUSB (First Unitarian Universal Society of Burlington)
85. Yvonne Sibbald, Spokesperson, Frack Free Wakefield
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108. Maurice Ouma Odhiambo, Executive Director, Jamaa Resource Initiatives
109. Rabbi Katy Allen, President, Jewish Climate Action Network – MA
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111. Charlie Williams, Spokesperson, Keep Ireland Frack Free
112. Dr. Reinhard Knof, Spokesperson, Kein CO2 Endlager e.V.
113. Ulrike Siemens, Spokesperson, Kein Frack in Wf
114. Tim Spiese, Board President, Lancaster Against Pipelines
115. Earl Hatley, Spokesperson, LEAD Agency Inc.
116. Ann Pinca, Spokesperson, Lebanon Pipeline Awareness
117. Tawn Feeney, Spokesperson, Little Lakes Sustainability Network
118. Eddie Mitchell, Spokesperson, Love Leitrim
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126. Nikolaj Kornbech, Researcher and Campaigner, NOAH Friends of the Earth Denmark
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150. Andrea Miller, Executive Director, People Demanding Action
151. Alan Minsky, Executive Director, Progressive Democrats of America
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162. Mark Lichty, Executive Director, Resolution Media Fund
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164. Mark Laity-Snyder, Vice President, Reeva DIY
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199. Rebecca MacMullan, Co-Chair of the Board of Directors, 350 Spokane
200. Marcy Kass, Spokesperson, 350 Vermont
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CESCR - International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. E/C/12/ARG/CO/4