

# “The Godfathers of climate chaos”



Firefighters work to extinguish a wildfire in Evros, Greece. Photo: Ayhan Mehmet/Anadolu via Getty Images.

June media coverage of climate change or global warming in newspapers around the globe increased 8% from May 2024. Meanwhile, coverage in June 2024 dropped 13% from June 2023 levels. In June, international wire services dipped 9% from

the previous month. Figure 1 shows trends in newspaper media coverage at the global scale - organized into seven geographical regions around the world - from January 2004 through June 2024.

2004–2024 World Newspaper Coverage of Climate Change or Global Warming

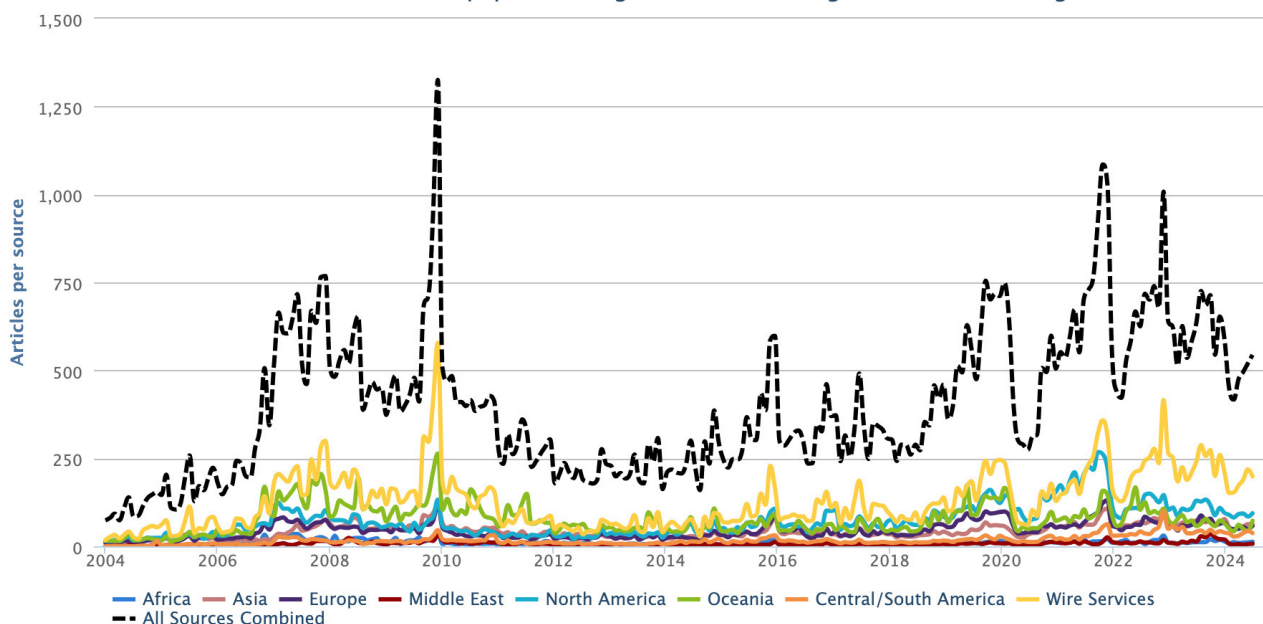


Figure 1. Newspaper media coverage of climate change or global warming in print sources in seven different regions around the world, from January 2004 through June 2024.

2000–2024 Canadian Newspaper Coverage of Climate Change or Global Warming

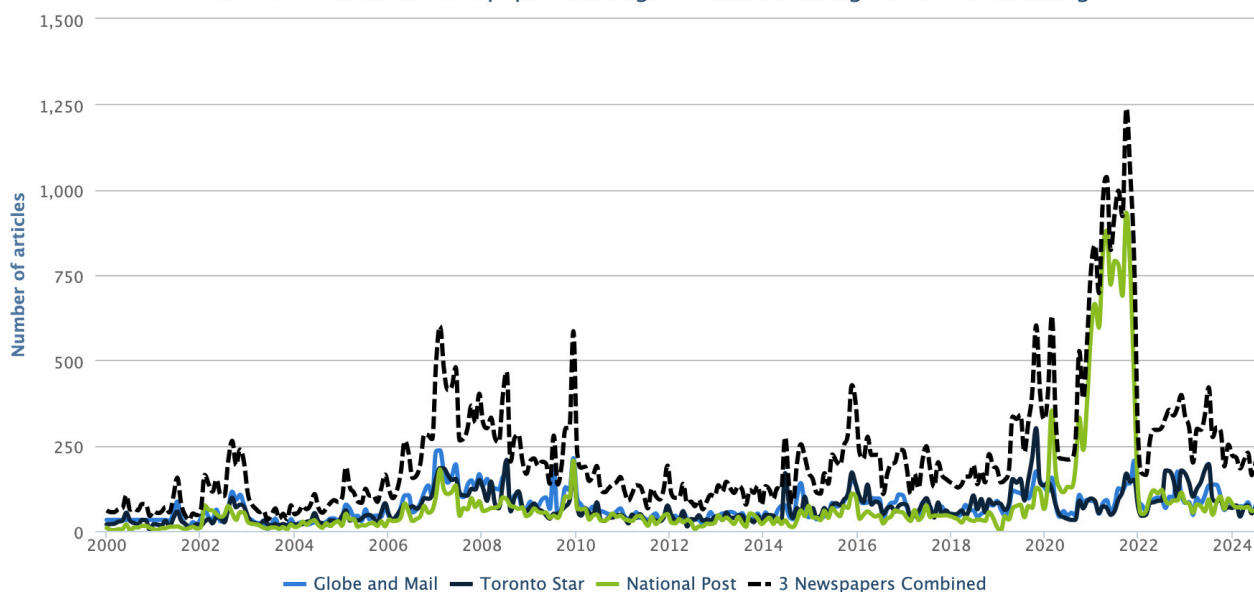


Figure 2. Canadian newspaper coverage of climate change or global warming from January 2000 through June 2024.

At the regional level, levels of June 2024 coverage went up in Asia (+1%), the Middle East (+9%), Africa (+11%), North America (+11%), the European Union (EU) (+18%), and Oceania (+68%) compared to the previous month of May. Meanwhile, coverage decreased in Latin America (-13%). At the country level, coverage for example in Canadian print newspapers - *Globe & Mail*, *Toronto Star* and *National Post* - increased 10% from the previous month [Figure 2].

Our Media and Climate Change Observatory (MeCCO) team continues to provide three international and seven ongoing regional assessments of trends in coverage, along with 16 country-level appraisals each month. Visit our website for [open-source datasets](#) and [downloadable visuals](#).

In terms of the content of coverage, there were several ongoing media stories relating to [ecological](#) and [meteorological](#) dimensions of climate change or global warming. To begin, drought conditions in North Africa - with links to climate change - sparked media coverage. For example, [The Associated Press reported](#), "Violent riots erupted in a drought-stricken Algerian desert city last weekend after months of water shortages left taps running dry and forced residents to queue to access water for their households. In Tiaret – a central Algerian

city of less than 200,000 located 155 miles (250 kilometers) southwest of Algiers – protestors wearing balaclavas set tires aflame and set up make-shift barricades blocking roads to protest their water being rationed, according to pictures and videos circulating on social media. The unrest followed demands from President Abdelmajid Tebboune to rectify the suffering. At a council of ministers meeting last week, he implored his cabinet to implement "emergency measures" in Tiaret. Several government ministers were later sent to "ask for an apology from the population" and to promise that access to drinking water would be restored. The rioting comes as Tebboune is expected to vie for a second term as president of the oil-rich nation – Africa's largest by area. Northern Africa has been among the world's worst-hit regions by climate change. A multi-year drought has drained critical reservoirs and reduced the amount of rainfall that has historically replenished them".

Elsewhere, ecological health effects associated with climate change made news. For example, in Brazil [El País journalist Joan Royo noted](#), "Fire explosion in the largest wetland in the world: Brazil's Pantanal burns. The intensity of the dry season, which begins earlier every year due to climate change, increases fires by 3000%... the Paraguay is the main river of the Pantanal, but in its Brazilian stretch it is three meters

below its usual level for June. In May, the National Water Agency declared a “critical” situation in this hydrographic basin for the first time in history. With the lack of rain in recent months, the bushes and grasses are transformed into straw, the perfect fuel. The Pantanal, like the Amazon, usually suffers from the dry season in the second half of the year, but climate change, now aggravated by the effects of El Niño, is increasingly advancing the risk calendar.”

Similarly, heat waves across the globe made news in June. In North America, [Washington Post correspondent Dan Stillman reported](#), “Numerous cities in the Midwest, the Northeast and the Mid-Atlantic are expecting multiple days of extreme heat and high humidity this week into the weekend, raising concerns regarding heat illness, especially for outdoor workers and vulnerable populations. While such temperatures aren’t unprecedented, their duration in many locations will be unusually long for this early in the summer. More than 80 million people are under heat alerts, many living in locations predicted to reach the highest levels of the National Weather Service’s HeatRisk forecast, which rates the danger to human health. Officials are urging residents to stay hydrated, wear light clothing and take breaks in the shade or indoors if they must be out in the heat for an extended period... The high-pressure heat dome responsible for the dangerous heat could reach a record level of intensity. Research shows that human-caused climate change is enhancing the strength, size and frequency of such events”.

Later in June, [Washington Post correspondents Sarah Kaplan and Scott Dance reported](#), “Dozens of bodies were discovered in Delhi during a two-day stretch this week when even sundown brought no relief from sweltering heat and humidity. Tourists died or went missing as the mercury surged in Greece. Hundreds of pilgrims perished before they could reach Islam’s holiest site, struck down

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A man observes the smoke coming from the fire in the Pantanal, in Matto Grosso do Sul, Brazil on June 12. Photo: Ueslei Marcelino/Reuters.

by temperatures as high as 125 degrees. The scorching heat across five continents in recent days, scientists say, provided yet more proof that human-caused global warming has so raised the baseline of normal temperatures that once-unthinkable catastrophes have become commonplace. The suffering came despite predictions that a year-long surge of global heat might soon begin to wane. Instead, in the past seven days alone, billions felt heat with climate change-fueled intensity that broke more than 1,000 temperature records around the globe. Hundreds fell in the United States, where tens of millions of people across the Midwest and Eastern Seaboard have been sweltering amid one of the worst early-season heat waves in memory. “It should be obvious that dangerous climate change is already upon us,” said Michael Wehner, a climate scientist at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory. “People will die because of global warming on this very day.” That much of this week’s heat unfolded after the dissipation of the El Niño weather pattern – which typically boosts global temperatures – shows how

greenhouse gas pollution has pushed the planet into frightening new territory, researchers say. Scientists had expected this summer might be somewhat cooler than 2023, which was the hottest in the Northern Hemisphere in at least 2,000 years. But with summer 2024 just getting started, there are ominous signs that even more scorching conditions may still be on the horizon”.

Yet, the heat wave leading to pilgrims on the Hajj in Saudi Arabia prompted news stories in many outlets as tragedies unfolded. For example, [Washington Post correspondent Niha Masih wrote](#), “At least six Jordanian pilgrims have died of heatstroke while on the Hajj pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia, Jordan’s Foreign Ministry said over the weekend, amid growing concern over the risks that rising temperatures pose to one of the largest gatherings in the world. Temperatures in Mecca, home to Islam’s holiest site, reached 120 degrees Fahrenheit (49 degrees Celsius) on Sunday, according to the National Center for Meteorology. Jordan’s Foreign Ministry later updated the toll to 14, though it was not immediately clear whether the additional deaths were also heat-related. More than 2,700 cases of heat stress and sunstroke among pilgrims were reported, Mohammed al-Abdulaali, a spokesman for the Saudi Health Ministry, said Monday, according to the Saudi Press Agency... This year’s Hajj is being attended by 1.8 million people from around the world, local authorities have said. The pilgrimage began on Friday and is set to culminate Wednesday. Islam follows the lunar calendar, with 354 days, so the Hajj shifts about 10 or 11 days earlier each year on the Gregorian calendar. Increasing heat and humidity due to climate change in parts of Saudi Arabia where the Hajj takes place could make the pilgrimage dangerous for some, a

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A protester stands next to a digital display of an unofficial heat reading during a heat wave in Death Valley National Park in Death Valley, California. Photo: Ronda Churchill/AFP/Getty Images.

study published in 2019 said. Researchers from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles said the risks could be serious when the Hajj occurs during the hottest summer months – from 2047 to 2052 and from 2079 to 2086”. Meanwhile, [Le Monde reported](#), “at least 550 pilgrims died during the hajj, underscoring the grueling nature of the pilgrimage which again unfolded in scorching temperatures this year. At least 323 of those who died were Egyptians, most of them succumbing to heat-related illnesses, two Arab diplomats coordinating their countries’ responses told Agence France-Press

(AFP). “All of them (the Egyptians) died because of heat” except for one who sustained fatal injuries during a minor crowd crush, one of the diplomats said, adding the total figure came from the hospital morgue in the Al-Muaisem neighbourhood of Mecca. At least 60 Jordanians also died, the diplomats said, up from an official tally of 41 given earlier on Tuesday by Amman. The new deaths bring the total reported so far by multiple countries to 577, according to an AFP tally. The diplomats said the total at the morgue in Al-Muaisem, one of the biggest in Mecca, was 550. The hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam and all Muslims with the means must complete it at least once. The pilgrimage is increasingly affected by climate change, according to a Saudi study published last month that said temperatures in the area where rituals are performed were rising 0.4°C each decade. Temperatures hit 51.8°C at the Grand Mosque in Mecca on Monday, the Saudi national meteorology centre said”.

In later June, [BBC journalist Thomas Spender reported](#), “At least 1,301 people died during Hajj, Saudi Arabia says, mostly unauthorised pilgrims who walked long distances in intense heat. This year’s pilgrimage took place during a heatwave, with temperatures at times exceeding 50C (122F). More than three-quarters of those who died did not have official permits to be there and walked under direct sunlight without adequate shelter, the official Saudi news agency SPA said. Some of those who died were elderly or chronically ill, the agency added. Hajj is the annual pilgrimage made by Muslims to the holy city of Mecca. All Muslims who are financially and physically able must complete the pilgrimage at least once in their lifetime. About 1.8 million people took part this year, Saudi Arabia said. Health Minister Fahd Al-Jalajel said efforts had been made to

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Rescuers carry away a man affected by the scorching heat as Muslim pilgrims participate in the Hajj pilgrimage in Mina, near Saudi Arabia's holy city of Mecca. Photo: Fadel Senna/AFP/Getty Images.

raise awareness about the dangers of heat stress and how pilgrims could mitigate this. Health facilities treated nearly half a million pilgrims, including more than 140,000 who did not have a permit, he said, and some were still in hospital for heat exhaustion”. Meanwhile, [El Mundo journalist Lara Villalón wrote](#), “The pilgrimage to Mecca, known as Hajj, is an obligatory rite for all Muslims at least once in their lives and brings together millions of worshipers annually to the sacred sites of Saudi Arabia. The event changes its date every year because it follows the Islamic lunar calendar and on this occasion it was held from June 14 to 19, coinciding with an unprecedented heat wave. The ceremony began with temperatures of 48 degrees and reached a record ever recorded in Mecca of 51.8 degrees on Tuesday. In the nearby town

of Mina, where other outdoor rituals are held, the weather station recorded 46 degrees. The traditional pilgrimage to Mecca is increasingly affected by climate change, with an average temperature increase of 0.4 degrees in the last decade, according to a recent study.”

Also, several June 2024 media stories featured several *scientific* themes in news accounts. For example, *Guardian* correspondent [Jillian Ambrose reported](#), “The world’s consumption of fossil fuels climbed to a record high last year, driving emissions to more than 40 gigatonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> for the first time, according to a global energy report. Despite a record rise in the use of renewable energy in 2023, consumption of fossil fuels continued to increase too, an annual review of world energy by the Energy Institute found. Juliet Davenport, the president of the Energy Institute, said the report had revealed “another year of highs in our energy-hungry world” including a record high consumption of fossil fuels, which rose by 1.5% to 505 exajoules. The findings threaten to dash hopes held by climate scientists that 2023 would be recorded as the year in which annual emissions peaked before the global fossil fuel economy begins a terminal decline. The Energy Institute, the global professional body for the energy sector, found that while energy industry emissions may have reached a peak in advanced economies, developing economies are continuing to increase their reliance on coal, gas and oil. Overall, fossil fuels made up 81.5% of the world’s primary energy last year, down only marginally from 82% the year before, according to the report, even as wind and solar farms generated record amounts of clean electricity. The report, authored by consultants at KPMG and Kearney, found that wind and solar power climbed by 13% last year to reach a new record of 4,748 terawatt hours in 2023. But that was not enough to match the world’s growing consumption of primary energy, which rose 2% last year to a record high of 620 exajoules and led to more fossil fuel use. The review found that the world’s appetite for gas remained steady in 2024 while consumption of coal climbed by 1.6% and oil demand rose by 2% to reach 100m barrels a day for the first time”.

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For the first time, India’s coal-powered stations, such as the Ennore plant near Chennai, used more coal than Europe and North America combined last year. Photo: Idrees Mohammed/EPA.

Also in June, a [World Weather Attribution report](#) generated media attention. For example, *Guardian* journalist [Nina Lakhani wrote](#), “The deadly heatwave that scorched large swaths of Mexico, Central America and the southern US in recent weeks was made 35 times more likely due to human-induced global heating, according to research by leading climate scientists from World Weather Attribution (WWA). Tens of millions of people have endured dangerous daytime and nighttime temperatures as a heat dome engulfed Mexico, and the large, lingering zone of high pressure stretched north to Texas, Arizona and Nevada and south over Belize, Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador. A heatwave can be caused by several factors including a heat dome, which traps hot air close to the ground,

blocking cool air from entering and causing temperatures to rise and stay high for days or weeks. In May and early June, the heat dome hovered over the region, breaking multiple daily and national records, and causing widespread misery and disruption, especially among the poorest and most marginalized communities. Such extreme heat spells are four times more likely today than they were at the turn of the millennium, when the planet was 0.5C cooler, the WWA analysis found”.

Media portrayals in June 2024 also featured related and ongoing [cultural](#)-themed stories relating to climate change or global warming. To illustrate, covering protests and climate change [Guardian correspondent Kelsey Ables wrote](#), “Protesters sprayed part of Stonehenge with orange paint Wednesday, calling on the British government to take action on climate change a day before thousands are expected to flock to the 5,000-year-old site in southern England to celebrate the summer solstice. A video shared Wednesday by Just Stop Oil, the environmental activist group responsible, shows two people running toward the monument and unleashing the orange paint. People nearby shout “No” and “Stop him,” as others try to pull the protesters away. The group said in a statement that it is “demanding that our next government sign up to a legally binding treaty to phase out fossil fuels by 2030.” It added that the paint was made of corn flour that will wash off with the rain...There have been a spate of protests involving historic objects and art in recent years, with activists splattering paint, soup and other substances on artworks such as the Mona Lisa and Van Gogh’s “Sunflowers” to call attention to issues including the climate crisis – and prompting an international plea from museums for them to stop. This week’s incident, however, seems like “a bit of an escalation,” said Shannon Gibson, a professor at the University of Southern California who researches global environmental politics and social movements. While previous incidents in museums typically left only surface-level damage to the protective cover of an artwork or historic

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Climate protesters connected to Just Stop Oil were arrested on June 19 after spraying orange paint on the ancient Stonehenge monument in southern England. Credit: [The Washington Post](#).

object, the protesters at Stonehenge placed paint directly on a renowned UNESCO World Heritage site. In a separate incident on Thursday, Just Stop Oil said two supporters broke into an airfield “where [Taylor] Swift’s jet is currently stationed” and painted two private jets with orange paint. Stansted Airport, in response to a question about whether Swift’s private jet was affected, said the artist “doesn’t have a jet at the airport,” but it would not confirm whether the artist had landed on another plane, citing privacy reasons. It referred to a statement from Essex police that said two were detained following reports of people gaining access to a private area of an airfield and damaging two aircraft while the airport and flights operated as normal. “We are not anti-protest but we will always take action where criminal acts take place,” Chief Superintendent Simon Anslow said. “... I would like to reassure passengers and the wider public that we are well prepared and resourced to deal with incidents of this nature.” Critics say such protests can alienate potential supporters of climate justice movements and



Figure 3. Examples of newspaper front pages with climate change stories in June 2024.

create spectacle rather than effect change. But Gibson said protest is meant to be a spectacle – and that protests at sites like museums and historic monuments reach individuals who may be sheltered from the impacts of climate change”.

In other stories, migration and the relocation of Latin American climate refugees made news. For example, *El País* journalist Noor Mahtani reported, “According to studies by the Ministry of the Environment of Panama, by 2050 none of the 365 Caribbean islands will be habitable due to the rapid rise in sea level due to global warming. For this reason, the Government has displaced some 300 coastal families of the Guna ethnic group this first week of June to Isber Yala, a neighborhood of 300 identical 40-square-meter houses”.

In entertainment culture news intersecting with climate change, a new Coldplay album earned media attention in June. For example, *Guardian* correspondent Ben Beaumont-Thomas reported, “Coldplay are aiming to make the most ecologically sustainable vinyl record yet, for their newly announced album Moon Music. Each 140g vinyl copy of Moon Music, released 4 October, will be manufactured from nine plastic bottles recovered from consumer waste. For a special “notebook edition”, 70% of the plastic has been intercepted by the environmental nonprofit The Ocean Cleanup from Rio Las Vacas, Guatemala, preventing it from entering the Gulf of Honduras and the Atlantic Ocean. The band say they will reduce carbon emissions compared with regular 140g vinyl production by 85%, and prevent the



manufacture of 25 tonnes of virgin plastic. CD copies will be made from 90% recycled plastic, with a 78% reduction in emissions compared with traditional CD manufacture. The initiative comes alongside Coldplay's attempt to reduce the environmental impact of touring, as the band continue their epic Music of the Spheres world tour which is now the third-highest grossing tour of all time. Earlier this month the band said they had reduced their carbon footprint by 59% compared with their previous world tour. As well as trying to avoid plane travel where possible, creative technological solutions were deployed, such as "kinetic dancefloors" that harnessed energy from the movement of the crowd".

This will hopefully be a more successful effort than their 2006 endeavor to 'offset' the production of their 2006 album *A Rush of Blood to the Head* by financing reforestation projects in India. It was later learned that only a fraction of the planted trees had survived to effectively remove CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere.

Last, many *political* and *economic*-themed media stories about climate change or global warming were evident in June 2024 coverage. For instance, as climate negotiations in the German city of Bonn drew to a close, UN climate chief Simon Stiell said that nations had "a very steep mountain to climb" ahead of the COP29 summit in Baku, Azerbaijan, in November. *Hindustan Times* journalist Jayashree Nandi reported, "observers said there has been no progress on talks to define a new collective quantified goal (NCQG), which is expected to define the contours of discussion at the next UN climate conference, COP29, at Baku, Azerbaijan. The US has repeated its stance on how contributing to the new fund, meant to replace the existing goal of \$100 billion per year, should be voluntary. The Arab group, Cuba and African nations have called for determining the quantum of the new goal. The agenda of COP29 this November is to negotiate a new financial goal to be set from the floor of \$100 billion for the post-2025 period. This is expected to help developing countries transition to a low-carbon future...According to Loss and Damage Collaboration, a climate policy group that is tracking the negotiations, the US

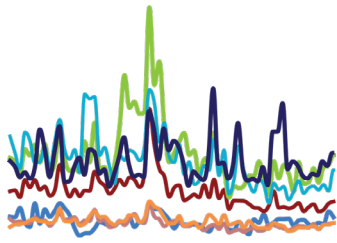
has argued that NCQG is separate from the provisions under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. This weakens the provision in the convention and the Paris Agreement that developed nations ought to deliver climate finance to developing countries, experts said. They also said developed countries are urging to expand the number of donors by including emerging economies and limiting beneficiaries to least developed countries".

As a final example from the month, United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres' comments about fossil fuel company advertising and climate change earned news attention in several outlets. For example, *Guardian* journalist Oliver Milman reported, "Fossil-fuel companies are the "godfathers of climate chaos" and should be banned in every country from advertising akin to restrictions on big tobacco, the secretary general of the United Nations has said while delivering dire new scientific warnings of global heating. In a major speech in New York on Wednesday, António Guterres called on news and tech media to stop enabling "planetary destruction" by taking fossil-fuel advertising money while warning the world faces "climate crunch time" in its faltering attempts to stem the crisis. "Many governments restrict or prohibit advertising for products that harm human health, like tobacco," he said. "I urge every country to ban advertising from fossil-fuel companies. And I urge news media and tech companies to stop taking fossil-fuel advertising".

~ report prepared by Max Boykoff, Rogelio Fernández-Reyes, Ami Nacu-Schmidt, Jeremiah Osborne-Gowey and Olivia Pearman



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# MONTHLY SUMMARIES

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MeCCO monitors 131 sources (across newspapers, radio and TV) in 59 countries in seven different regions around the world. MeCCO assembles the data by accessing archives through through Factiva, Infomedia, ProQuest, Nifty and NexisUni databases for our work across our various institutions. These sources are selected through a decision processes involving weighting of three main factors:



**Geographical Diversity**

**favoring a greater geographical range**



**Circulation**

**favoring higher circulating publications**



**Reliable Access to Archives Over Time**

**favoring those accessible consistently for longer periods of time**