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Twitter's #ClimateScam and Fossil-Fueled Facebook Ads Documented In New COP27 Report

COP Disinformation Intelligence Unit uncovers reused and surprising new tactics aimed to stall talks at global climate summit

LONDON - Today, the Climate Action Against Disinformation ([CAAD](#)) coalition released its roundup report on climate disinformation detected around the United Nations' climate conference (COP27) in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt. The report reflects the efforts of the coalition's COP27 Intelligence Unit, with analysts from 18 organizations and led by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD). The unit tracked the most prominent false and misleading narratives, and released [bulletins](#) that provided daily analysis of data.

Summary findings include:

- **A sample of fossil fuel sector-linked entities spent approximately 4 million USD on Meta for paid advertisements to spread false, misleading claims on climate crisis, net-zero targets and necessity of fossil fuels prior to and during COP27.** The analysis identified 3,781 ads and the majority of these were from Energy Citizens ([a PR group of the American Petroleum Institute](#)) while America's Plastic Makers alone spent over \$1 million and the Saudi Green Initiative ran 13 ads.
- **Analysts detected a surprising increase in content related to outright climate denial**, including a spike on Twitter for the hashtag #ClimateScam since July 2022.
- The **“narrative playbook” of disinformation** claims are represented as:
 - Exploiting the cost of living crisis and sidestepping concerns regarding the climate crisis or greenhouse gas emissions
 - False doubt about the reliability of green technology and false promotion of fossil fuels as necessary and reliable
 - A misleading framing of loss and damage discussions as “climate reparations,”
 - A broader connection between climate skepticism or denialism and the current culture wars, tying climate change concerns to “wokeness” (and, sometimes, using wokeness as a means to argue for fossil fuel development via “wokewashing”).

“The events of 2022 turbocharged a global ecosystem for disinformation,” said **Jennie King, Head of Climate Research and Response at ISD**, *“Russia’s war in Ukraine and its impact on*

energy supply chains have renewed anti-climate attacks globally. Our report shows Big Oil continues to invest millions in digital advertising to launder their image as ‘climate champions’, while also promoting the necessity of fossil fuels and building business plans. State actors and lobbyists are attempting to “wokewash” their opposition to climate action, and attacks on climate movements are becoming increasingly extreme. The situation is hugely concerning and needs a coordinated response everywhere, from Big Tech to its regulators. At this pivotal juncture, tackling climate disinformation is an essential part of climate action.”

The report comes soon after Sultan Ahmed Jaber was [announced](#) to become the new President for COP28, making the next UN Climate Summit *the first to be led by an active oil executive*. Furthermore, COP27 saw [record-breaking attendance](#) for fossil lobbyists. These developments set the stage for a greater spread in disinformation at next year’s climate conference and around other climate policy moments.

*“This research shows that climate disinformation isn’t going away and, in fact, it’s getting worse. During COP, Twitter’s search engine pushed #ClimateScam as a top result without any justification for the data behind it,” said **Erika Seiber, climate disinformation spokesperson at Friends of the Earth U.S.**, “Until governments hold social media and ad companies accountable, and companies hold professional disinformers accountable, crucial conversations around the climate crisis are going to be put in jeopardy. To start, Twitter should offer an explanation of how this inexcusable climate denial trend came to be. ”*

Members of the CAAD coalition were also on-the-ground in Sharm el-Sheikh during the conference, elevating the urgency of addressing climate disinformation with leaders in climate and tech policy. *“COP27 became the first COP where climate misinformation became part of the conversation among country delegations and leaders,” says **Jake Dubbins, co-chair of Conscious Advertising Network**, “Leaders we spoke to from countries Germany to Saint Lucia were all deeply concerned about the disinformation war. If the urgency of the climate crisis continues to be undermined by mis- and disinformation, then the climate action we all so desperately need will continue to be delayed to the point of no return.”*

CAAD calls on the US government, EU, UN, IPCC and Big Tech companies to acknowledge the climate disinformation threat and take immediate steps to improve transparency and data access to quantify disinformation trends, to stop misleading fossil fuel advocacy in paid ad content, enforce policies against repeat offenders spreading disinformation on platforms, and to adopt a standardized and comprehensive definition of climate disinformation.

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