



Written by [Peter Murphy](#) on December 5, 2023

Vice President Harris Plays Santa Claus as Christmas Comes Early at COP28

DUBAI, UAE — She came bearing gifts, or at least promises, early in the Christmas season here at the UN climate summit, though not a few attendees would view her as the Grinch.

Of course, we are referring to the vice president of the United States, Kamala Harris, who flew in and out of Dubai for the opening of the conference, fully nine time zones from Washington, D.C., using many tons of carbon emissions from Air Force Two. Her mission, which she chose to accept, was to inform the delegates from dozens of participating nations something she could have Skyped. The Federal Reserve printing presses — computers, actually — will be disbursing another \$3 billion for the UN's Global Climate Fund, she [announced](#).



AP Images

The vice president made no mention of printing dollars that don't exist. But that is how the U.S. government finances about one-third of its annual budget these days; by "borrowing" from the Federal Reserve Bank, which manages the supply of money. On a \$34 trillion U.S. debt, what's another \$3 billion?

Nathan Thanki is not impressed. He is the International Project Coordinator for a group called the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty [Initiative](#), which supports banning all new oil and gas exploration. His and many other organizations at COP28 were set up to spread the gospel of climate change and the need to keep oil, gas, and coal in the ground, undisturbed, to save the planet. Living standards and economic betterment take a back seat.

Without new sources of such traditional fuel, I asked Thanki, whose group was one of dozens set up in booths in the conference "Blue Zone," how developing nations mired in poverty can advance economically as the United States and western nations have done for decades. "They have to 'leapfrog'," he said, to renewable energies. In other words, skip right over expanding fossil fuels and instead develop energy from wind and solar projects.

I then asked the rhetorical question, how is "leapfrogging" oil and gas possible? Thanki began with the United States, which should bear "the lion's share" of the expense. Specifically, he was referring the estimated climate-mitigation costs from the latest edition of a [report](#) by the Civil Society Equity Review, *The 2023 Fair Shares Deficit*. At least \$100 billion over the next decade is needed for nations to fight climate change, and financial commitments from the United States and other European nations fell woefully short, by tens of billions of dollars. Even this huge number is "wholly inadequate," according to the report.



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Thanki and his organization are hardly outliers in this desire to stop fossil fuels and thinking that the United States in particular is way too stingy on funding the fight for climate change. Later that day, there was a modest but loud protest led by Environmental Defence Canada against oil and gas production in the Canadian tar sands, 90 percent of which is exported to the United States, according to its Associate Director for National Climate Julia Levin. Since Canadian provinces govern their respective oil and gas development, not the federal government in Ottawa, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau nonetheless intends to impose a cap on emissions from such development to the delight of Levin and her fellow protestors.

Which brings us back to Vice President Harris' promised \$3 billion gift to the UN.

The Global Climate Fund was established back in 2010 to redistribute money from wealthier nations, primarily the United States, to developing nations to help them "adapt" to climate change, meaning, replace oil, gas, and coal with so-called renewable energy to reduce carbon emissions. Thus far, the United States has contributed \$2 billion to this fund over a dozen years, and now promises to up its contribution by 50 percent.

There's a catch, however.

The U.S. Department of Treasury said at the tail end of its statement issued last week that the vice president's pledge "is subject to the availability of funds." Exactly. The U.S. Constitution stipulates that Congress, not the Executive Branch, authorizes spending by the federal government.

At least some in Congress are in no mood for more spending on almost everything, especially on climate change projects for other nations. But that is tomorrow's problem for the Biden administration. V.P. Harris got her frequent flier miles and her polite applause from her soundbites delivered.

Mission accomplished.



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