

News Greening

Greenwashing Clouds Over Oil Giant's COP28

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Slick PR or climate leadership? The oil-rich UAE's COP28 climate summit ambitions are marred by greenwashing claims

Leading agencies, like the BCW, Hill+Knowlton Strategies, and FleishmanHillard have taken lucrative contracts to advise the UAE's Ministry of Climate Change and Environment, on how to promote its green credentials while still fundamentally depend on fossil fuel revenues.

The polemic comes from the environmental watchdog, Clean Creatives, who updated their recently published F-List, with the Advertising agencies who are working to greenwash polluters at COP28.

The UAE has spent big on building global goodwill and a reputation for its progressive climate policy, hiring multiple Western PR and advertising giants for that purpose.

Critics allege these agencies have helped the UAE use COP28 to sport green credentials that distract the global public opinion from its real heavy oil-based economy.

According to major News media such as the BBC, the country wanted to use its role in hosting UN climate talks as an opportunity for oil and gas deals.

"The UAE has continued expanding oil production capacity even while positioning itself as a leader in climate action. This seems a clear case of greenwashing - promoting green credentials while still fundamentally depending on fossil fuel revenues," said Clean Creatives in a statement.

Per reporting, the UAE remains devoted to increasing oil capacity by 30% through 2030. Yet its climate ministry has presided over high-profile renewable energy projects used to cast the UAE as a steward of sustainability. This month, the UAE sent climate envoys on a 5-country Africa tour to underscore COP28 commitments.

The UAE has spent over $1 billion on building its climate-friendly image. Activists admit the PR blitz has succeeded so far, casting UAE as a credible climate broker in the eyes of

public officials and bringing COP28 to Dubai.

COP28 organisers may claim that the summit will be deeply engaged with fossil fuel divestment. But for critics, doubts remain about whether substance will match the UAE's slick branding campaign.