

The SEI Initiative on Fossil Fuel Development and Climate Change Mitigation

There is a growing recognition that if we are to avoid dangerous climate change, most fossil fuel reserves will need to be left in the ground. Achieving this outcome, however, will be a daunting challenge. For many countries, fossil fuel extraction and trade are central to energy security and economic development. There is also limited knowledge about climate-related policy interventions that might affect future patterns of fossil-fuel production.

Climate policy analysts and decision-makers, both at the domestic and international levels, have focused almost exclusively on curtailing demand for fossil fuels energy, with scant attention, until recently, to the supply side. Research by SEI and others suggests that, for economic and political reasons, effective climate change mitigation requires both demand- and supply-oriented approaches. We need to better understand how the institutions, investments and infrastructure that support fossil fuel production can lock in dependence on fossil fuels, and identify strategies to help societies move away from such dependency. Such insights can help policy-makers, international organizations, businesses and civil society to develop more effective climate strategies.

This SEI Initiative aims to create a platform for high-quality, timely, and policy-relevant research and communications on various facets of fossil fuel development, and its implications for climate change mitigation and development. Building on ongoing SEI activities and partnerships, the initiative will take a multi-disciplinary approach, focusing on issues such as:

- emissions implications of new fossil fuel infrastructure;
- constraints on fossil fuel development (e.g. water availability, local community impacts and competing pressures);
- geopolitical dynamics of fossil-fuel interests at national and international levels;
- domestic and international policy options for inducing a shift away from economic dependence on fossil-fuel production, taking into account equity perspectives and development needs.

The initiative builds on ongoing SEI work on **fossil fuel development**, **geopolitics**, and **economy and climate**, which has involved extensive new research and analysis and produced several publications, including a series of briefing papers and a forthcoming article in *Nature Climate Change*. The initiative also builds on SEI's partnerships and knowledge-sharing and capacity-building activities around the world, and will engage recognized leaders on climate change mitigation, energy modelling, political economy, equity and the climate change negotiations.

To engage the broader research, policy, and thought leadership communities, SEI is developing an outreach strategy that will include multiple publications and a strong online presence, and plans to organize the first major international conference on fossil fuel development and climate change mitigation (to be held in Stockholm in 2016), followed by publication of a journal special issue. Our goal is to build a thriving community of practice and to contribute to practical policy development and implementation at the national and international levels.

SEI is currently consulting with potential partners and stakeholders on the design of the programme of activities. For further information or to discuss possible engagement with the initiative, please contact: Harro van Asselt, harro.vanasselt@sei-international.org, and Michael Lazarus, michael.lazarus@sei-international.org.