ENI KNEW

THE ITALIAN OIL AND GAS GIANT HAS KNOWN SINCE THE EARLY 1970S ABOUT THE DAMAGE CAUSED BY FOSSIL FUELS TO THE PLANET'S CLIMATE

In recent years, several investigations have revealed how the world's major fossil fuel companies have been aware, at least since the early 1970s, of the destabilizing effect of coal, gas and oil exploitation on the climate as a result of greenhouse gas emissions changing the chemical balance of the atmosphere, as a consequence of greenhouse gas emissions.

The biggest oil and gas majors have known for decades that their activities could have contributed significantly to the ongoing climate crisis. Yet they decided to continue to extract fossil fuels, instead of switching to alternative renewable sources of energy that do not impact on the climate and the lives and health of millions of people.

If nowadays these companies are accused of maintaining the status quo through greenwashing - pulling the wool over everyone's eyes by making claims to be environmentally sustainable that are not supported by facts - in past decades their tactics were slightly different.

Books such as *Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming*, written by historians of science Naomi Oreskes and Erik Conway, described in detail how, for a long time, the big oil companies have been implementing well- honed strategies, for example, allegedly to downplay, cast doubt upon and discredit the work of those who, since the 1960s, have begun to clarify the correlation between the rising temperature of the planet and the increase in carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere caused by the exploitation of fossil fuels[1].

Oreskes and Conway called this tactic 'the tobacco strategy'. "*It has also been the perfect escape route for fossil fuel companies, which have mounted a decades-long climate disinformation campaign to hide the link between their product and rising emissions"*, explains journalist Stella Levantesi in the Italian newspaper *Domani*. *"Companies like Exxon and Shell knew about this link because, as in the case of the tobacco companies",* they had scientific advisors who "*had predicted extremely accurately what would happen if they continued with business as usual*"[2].

Exxon or Shell, to report some examples, are not the only oil companies whose decades-old awareness of the damage that the exploitation of fossil fuels was doing to the planet's climate has been exposed. In November 2021, a study published in the scientific journal *Global environmental change* showed how the French oil and gas giant TotalEnergies had published articles in its official publications, finding that it had been aware since 1971 of the effects of the increase of CO_2 in the atmosphere on the global climate[3].

Now, thanks to research carried out by Greenpeace Italia and ReCommon in libraries, public and private archives (including that of Italy's oil multinational ENI itself), it can be established that ENI also knew of the climate impacts of fossil fuel extraction since 1970. This report sets

[1] Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming, 2010

[2] "Il negazionismo climatico è un affare per le lobby", Domani, 4 November 2021

[3] "Early warnings and emerging accountability: Total's responses to global warming, 1971–2021", Global Environmental Change, Volume 71, November 2021

out the evidence of ENI's knowledge from the early 1970s to the very early 1990s. Before going into the details, however, it is necessary to take a plunge into the more distant past.

A GREEN WAVE

The 1960s were a period of exceptional socio-cultural revolution. Among other issues, the importance of protecting the environment and the planet came to the fore. This was certainly due in part to the concerns raised, for example, by pioneering publications such as *Silent Spring* (1962) by biologist Rachel Carson, which turned the spotlight on a topic, that of pesticide pollution, which until then had been underestimated or of interest only to a small circle of people.

The widespread awareness of the damage being done worldwide to the environment led, in several countries, to policy measures being taken to study phenomena beyond those that were then beginning to be monitored (air or water pollution). Such new areas of research included the impacts of noise pollution, solid waste production and pesticide contamination. There were also new forms of land protection or 'updating and strengthening of legislation and institutional structures in the field of town planning'[4]. All this to begin to understand what countermeasures to implement in order to protect the environment.

In response to the growing public anxiety, new institutional bodies for environmental protection sprang up in various countries, such as the Department of Environment in the United Kingdom, the Ministry for the Environment in France, and the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) in the United States, the latter on the initiative of President Richard Nixon - a long wave of changes that led in 1972 to the UN Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm from 5 to 16 June, the first international gathering on environmental issues. Also on 5 June 1972, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was founded.

AND IN ITALY?

Even in Italy something moved. If the birth of the first Ministry of the Environment in republican history is dated to 1973 (to tell the truth, this first initiative did not have much luck, since this ministry without portfolio only remained in existence for a few months), the first steps at a political level were taken a couple of years earlier. In fact, in February 1971 the 'Steering Committee on Ecological Problems' was set up, chaired by the then president of the National Research Council (CNR), Vincenzo Caglioti. On 28 May 1971, the Senate also voted for the creation of the Commission on Ecology. Large state-owned companies such as ENI also began to move in those years. Also on 28 May, ENI founded TECNECO[5], a company set up to deal with cleaning up pollution, which we will return to later. 1972 also saw the birth of the in-house company magazine 'Ecos', which took the place of the previous publication 'Gatto Selvatico', and whose name was chosen – as the dedicated section on the company's online archive explains - '*because it was short and easy to remember: it referred to the 'E' of 'Eni' and 'energy', but also to the words 'economy' and 'ecology'*'". The magazine was '*published both in Italian and English, distributed free of charge to the group's employees and to personalities from politics, economics, culture and journalism in Italy and abroad". It was "conceived as an internal communication tool, yes, but also oriented to illustrate the group's activities in Italy and abroad*'. We will also return to this publication later.

However, these were not the first 'environmental' initiatives introduced by the company at that time. Concerns about the damage caused by pollution were beginning to be compounded by concerns about the economic costs of a lack of environmental protection. In order to understand more about this phenomenon and to quantify its potential costs, in 1969 ENI

[4] First report on the country's environmental situation, TECNECO, 1973

[5] ENI 1971 annual financial report, page 82

entrusted one of its study centers, the Istituto per gli Studi sullo Sviluppo Economico e il Progresso Tecnico (ISVET), with the task of carrying out a technical-economic survey[6], the results of which were presented at a meeting held at the Palazzo dei Congressi in Rome on 18 and 19 June 1970[7].

AWARENESS OF ENI

"*It is now common knowledge that, all over the world, the phenomenon of pollution is a consequence and a result of the industrial development and related urban concentration of recent decades*". This is how Raffaele Girotti, then vice-president of ENI - he would become president shortly afterwards in 1971 - began the introductory preface to the technical-economic survey commissioned from ISVET. "*The applications of technology, on the rapid and constant development of which the economic destiny of the most industrialized countries rests to a large extent, have led and continue to lead to a serious disturbance of the natural equilibrium in areas affected by industrialisation and above all by the phenomenon of industrial agglomeration [...] ENI, with the collaboration of ISVET, therefore intends, by undertaking this study, to offer its own contribution of knowledge and insight to the public, Parliament and the Government, through a first attempt to estimate the costs and economic benefits of eliminating the main forms of pollution in our country*", concluded Girotti[8].

In the introduction of the summary of the ISVET study, which is kept at the Marconi Library of the CNR in Rome, Greenpeace Italy and ReCommon found a passage that shows how ENI - at the time wholly controlled by the Italian State - had been aware at least since 1970 that the release of CO_2 into the atmosphere, resulting from the exploitation of fossil fuels, was causing potentially 'catastrophic' damage to the planet's climate. In paragraph 1.1. of the summary report, entitled '*The ongoing technical industrial revolution and pollution',* we read:

"*Pollution is an alteration of the state of nature caused by human intervention in the natural environment, i.e. 'that infinitely complex network of living beings and resources (air, water, nutrients and materials) on which life, including human life, depends'. In his efforts to transform his environment to make it more suitable for his survival and development, man has often altered its balance, to the point of destroying natural resources of incalculable value, because they are irreplaceable and non-reproducible. [...] The balance between man and the environment [...] has, however, lasted a long time. It was only with the advent of the industrial revolution that the process of systematic and increasing destruction of natural resources began in the palaeo-technical era, leading in the last twenty years to the current crisis in the relationship between man and the biosphere. In fact, this crisis, which manifests itself in the progressive compromise of the natural environment, has taken a decisive turn in the recent post-war period as a result of the expansion of industrialisation, the uncontrolled application of modern production techniques, the growing increase in motorisation, the worsening of disordered urbanization processes, the population explosion, and the increase in production and consumption. In short, the drive for economic development has led to an increasing aggravation of the process of social metabolism, according to which nature's resources are wrested from the environment and returned to it after the cycles of production/processing and consumption, in the form of waste products (urban solid waste, industrial effluents, combustion products, civil sewage, and so on). The damage done to the environment has been all the more serious, the more the myth of producing the maximum amount of goods and services at the minimum cost has so far prevailed over the need for harmonious development of man and the balance between man and nature. Thus pollution has increased in tandem with the expansion of production, causing increasing damage to human health and the environment on which, ultimately, human life itself depends. [...] Indeed, alterations to natural balances are generally negative, because man has not yet learnt to regulate the system of natural dynamic balances. When he tries to achieve maximum economic effect, he touches almost the entire causal-consequential 'web' of nature, causing a huge amount of unpredictable and often lethal consequences. Beginning with Commoner's famous studies on strontium-90 and Lake Erie, the development of ecological studies has made it possible to denounce in an increasingly well-documented manner the execrable character of many forms of environmental impairment. For example, the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, according to a recent report by the UN Secretary, due to the increased use of mineral fuel oils, has increased over the last century by an average of 10 per cent worldwide; towards the year 2000 this increase could reach 25 per cent, with 'catastrophic' consequences for the climate."*[9]

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[6] "*L'intervento pubblico contro l'inquinamento; valutazione dei costi e dei benefici economici connessi a un progetto di eliminazione delle principali forme di inquinamento atmosferico ed idrico in Italia*", ISVET, 1971

[7] "L'economia dell'inquinamento", Corriere della Sera, 19 June 1970,

[8] "*L'intervento pubblico contro l'inquinamento; valutazione dei costi e dei benefici economici connessi a un progetto di eliminazione delle principali forme di inquinamento atmosferico ed idrico in Italia*", ISVET, 1971, page 5

[9] Our own translation - "*L'intervento pubblico contro l'inquinamento; valutazione dei costi e dei benefici economici connessi a un progetto di eliminazione delle principali forme di inquinamento atmosferico ed idrico in Italia*", ISVET, 1971, page 24

Very clear words which, we repeat, are found in an official publication commissioned by ENI in 1970, produced by a study center belonging to ENI itself. The findings echo the contents of a report on the state of the environment presented in 1965 to the White House by the US President's Scientific Advisory Committee. Namely:

"*By the year 2000 the increase in atmospheric CO_2 will be close to 25%. This may be sufficient to produce measurable and perhaps marked changes in climate, and will almost certainly cause significant changes in temperature*".

However, the ISVET study is not the only evidence of ENI's awareness of the impacts of emissions from fossil fuel extraction on climate. Greenpeace Italy and ReCommon have found other examples.

THE FIRST REPORT ON THE COUNTRY'S ENVIRONMENTAL SITUATION

As mentioned earlier, in May 1971 ENI set up a new company - TECNECO - to position itself in the ongoing debate on combating pollution. ENI's 'Financial report and balance sheet as of December 1971' reads:

"At present, awareness of ecological problems is spreading at all levels in our country too and is leading to precise political and administrative guidelines [...] The activity programmes in the anti-pollution plant sector, coordinated by Tecneco, therefore envisage developing a decisive organizational and promotional action as early as 1972 in order to further consolidate ENI's contribution to the fight against pollution at the level required by the country's needs".

ENI's move to engage in the environmental debate was fully supported by the then government. During a session held in the Senate on 20 October 1972, Senator Cifarelli (an environmentalist, who was one of the first members of the NGO Italia Nostra) formally asked the government:

"what consequences [the Presidency of the Council of Ministers] intends to draw, in terms of planned action by the State and the impetus and coordination of action by the Regions, from the conclusions of the recent Stockholm World Conference on Ecology and Environmental Protection".[10]

In response, the then Minister for Scientific Research Giuseppe Romita, after describing various international initiatives that Italy had joined up to that point, declared that the government:

"is moving to implement both the technical-scientific initiatives and the necessary institutional initiatives. I would like to say that we have already made some progress along these lines in recent times. First of all, the report on the state of the environment, i.e. the periodic definition of the state of the environment, is already underway. The Presidency of the Council [of Ministers] has placed under its auspices and instructed the Minister of Research to coordinate an initiative carried out by a company of the ENI group, which gives every guarantee of competence and technical capacity and which precisely must produce this first report on the environment as the first manifestation of a periodic assessment of the state of the environment; an initiative - I was saying - placed under the coordination of the Minister for Scientific Research with the coordinated participation of all the public administrations and which is carried out on an operational level, with the control and guidance of a special committee, by the company TECNECO of the ENI group"[11] .

In June 1973, the "First Report on the Environmental Situation of the Country", undertaken by TECNECO, was officially presented in Urbino[12]. As with the ISVET study mentioned above, Greenpeace Italy and ReCommon found evidence in the TECNECO report of ENI's awareness of the negative role of fossil fuel exploitation on the planet's atmosphere.

Section *1 0 2* of chapter on 'Climate and Meteorological Characters' - written, among others, in collaboration with the Air Force Meteorological Service and the CNR Institute of Atmospheric Physics - states:

"The atmosphere is one of the essential components of the environment in which man's life takes place and therefore its phenomena, its perturbations, its changes in structure, which can be assessed through climatic and meteorological

[10] Stenographic record of public sitting No. 49 of the Senate of the Republic, 20 October 1972

[11] Ibid.

[12] "Il fronte dei dissensi al convegno sull'ambiente", Corriere della Sera, 1st July 1973

events, profoundly condition it. In the man-atmosphere system, contrary to what was tacitly believed until not so long ago, the relationships are not exclusively unidirectional, i.e. they are all made up of the interference of the atmosphere on the human sphere: there is now also a sum of actions in the opposite direction, whereby human activities, in turn, provoke transitory alterations or stable changes in the structure and quality of the atmosphere, as well as in the course of some of its important phenomena. Human action can have either limited or significant effects, potentially ranging between the two extreme limits of pernicious modifications that gradually cause the disappearance of life on earth, or, in the opposite direction, of a complete 'control of the weather' that allows knowledge and advance planning of all atmospheric manifestations. When analyzing the intense network of interdependencies and interactions between the atmosphere and man, the importance of meteorological and climatological studies and the very way in which we understand and deal with the problems of the atmosphere have undergone a profound evolution compared to the past (practically only 10-20 years ago). Not only have the methodologies and technologies available been substantially modified and advanced, but some topics have taken on a completely new and unpredictable importance, such as turbulence and the diffusion of substances in the lower layers of the atmosphere, climatic modifications, exchanges between the atmosphere and the biosphere and between the air and the sea, artificial weather modification, climatic water and energy balances, and atmospheric circulations at various scales of space and time [...]"[13].

Section *1 2 2* 'Atmospheric Emissions', contained in the chapter 'Production Activities', which is part of the same first volume of the TECNECO report, also states:

"Industrial discharges to the atmosphere are mainly related to the following activities: processing of ferrous (steel and foundry) and non-ferrous materials (production and finishing), processing of non-metallic minerals (cement, lime, bricks, etc.), chemical industry, oil industry (refining and petrochemicals), food industry, pharmaceutical industry, paper industry, electronics, etc. [...] Heat production plants are also very often present in technological cycles, which normally use fuels for the operation of thermal generators [...] The pollution generated by combustion reactions, with emissions of sulphur and nitrogen oxides, particulate matter and so on, derives from these plants'[14].

In an accompanying table which schematically summarizes the list of "the *main polluting compounds emitted during the various phases of industrial operations and their sources in relation [...] to the gasses*", CO_2 is also included. The list (whose source is: H. F. LUND, *Industrial pollution control handbook*, Mcgraw Hill, 1971) mentions CO_2 resulting from combustion processes and the fact that although it is not considered a pollutant, *"its increase in the atmosphere is considered a potential cause of climate change"*[15]

'A MAJOR PROBLEM AT THE END OF THE CENTURY'

Let us jump forward a few years and turn to another TECNECO publication, entitled 'Ambiente e fonti di energia esauribili e rinnovabili' (Environment and exhaustible or renewable energy sources), dating back to 1978[16]. Here Greenpeace Italy and ReCommon found even clearer and more definite references to ENI's awareness of the threats that fossil fuels pose to the planet's climate. According to the introduction, this publication was:

"an attempt comprehensively to assess the environmental implications of massive 'concentrated' energy production and to indicate, in broad terms, those aspects of the development of energy sources that deserve special attention for their suitability to be exploited without causing further degradation to the environment. This type of work is part of a strand of studies that has already been underway for some time within Tecneco, whose tasks are mainly dedicated to the development of two areas: one concerning the protection of the environment and the other the search for environmental resources suitable for use in energy production".

In the foreword of the first chapter, entitled "Energy sources for 'concentrated' energy production and their environmental effects", the authors ask what limits the environment places on ever-increasing energy production and consumption. They state that:

"[...] it is desirable, technically feasible, and economically sound to reduce the rate of growth of energy consumption, without decreasing the gross national product [...] It would also be necessary to implement an intensive programme of energy development from renewable and extensive sources such as solar, geothermal, and wind power [...].[17]

[13] Our own translation - "Prima relazione sulla situazione ambientale del Paese", TECNECO, Volume 1, page 71-72

[14] "Prima relazione sulla situazione ambientale del Paese", TECNECO, Volume 1, page 243

[15] "Prima relazione sulla situazione ambientale del Paese", TECNECO, Volume 1, page 244

[16] "Ambiente e fonti di energia esauribili e rinnovabili", TECNECO, 1978

[17] "Ambiente e fonti di energia esauribili e rinnovabili", TECNECO, 1978, page 7

The chapter continues with a discussion on the different energy sources used at the time, and continues with an in-depth look at 'Pollutant emissions from fossil-fuel power plants and their environmental effects'. These include CO_2 in section 3.4:

"Carbon dioxide (CO_2) is the ultimate oxidation product of fossil fuels [...] it exists in the air in concentrations of about 300 p.p.m. and only human activity increases this value by interfering with natural processes, so that above a certain threshold it becomes a pollutant [...] it has been found to have increased from about 295 p.p.m. to 320 p.p.m. (1970 values), i.e. by about 10 per cent, during the last 110 years. It is assumed that with the increasing consumption of fossil fuels, which began with the industrial revolution, the concentration of CO_2 will reach 375-400 p.p.m. in the year 2000, assuming that 35-45% of the emitted CO_2 remains in the atmosphere, the remainder being removed by the bio-geochemical cycle. This increase is regarded by some scientists as a possible long-term problem, especially since it could alter the heat balance of the atmosphere, leading to climate change with serious consequences for the biosphere'.[18]

Climate effects are the subject of a separate section (3.8):

"Various hypotheses have been made about the effect of fossil fuel emissions on climate. On a local scale, even considerable changes to climate have been noted [...] Similar climatic changes may occur on a regional scale due to the continued, increasing consumption of fossil fuels, and this may become a major problem by the end of the century [...] As already noted, the best available data indicate that the CO_2 content of the atmosphere will reach 375-400 p.p.m. in the year 2000; this would increase the temperature of the atmosphere by 0.5°C." [19]

"IT IS OUR DUTY TO WORK NOW, AS FAR AS POSSIBLE, TO CONTAIN THE PHENOMENON OF CARBON DIOXIDE EMISSIONS".

Going back to the 1980s, there are several references to the greenhouse effect and climate change in ENI's company magazine Ecos, which we have already mentioned. In the July/September 1988 issue focused on energy, for example, in an article by Paolo Gardin we read that 'there is no *energy source that does not have a significant impact on the environment, nor is there any part of the natural ecosystem that does not suffer this impact to varying degrees. However, the atmospheric environment is the one primarily involved in energy production processes, given the prevalence of fossil sources. The tremendous development of combustion processes during this century has led scientists to fear the greenhouse effect that could lead to climate change with devastating effects on the entire earth's ecosystem*."

On page 23 of the October/December 1988 issue of the same magazine, it is stated that '*while scientists continue their investigations to delve into the nature of the phenomenon and quantify its possible consequences, it is incumbent on us to work as of now, as far as possible, to contain the phenomenon of carbon dioxide emissions*'.

Again on page 32 of the same issue, in a detailed article, we read: "*The term 'greenhouse effect' indicates a scientific phenomenon that has been known for a long time, but which has only recently been understood and disseminated by the mass media [...] Thus, carbon dioxide, water vapor and methane are substances that are part of a natural cycle whose equilibrium concentration in the atmosphere has determined the climatic conditions of our planet in the last geological era. Scientists are concerned about the change in this balance as a result of the enormous development in the demand for energy and, therefore, the consumption of fossil fuels that characterized the transition from the pre-industrial era to the industrial era. The combustion process in fact transforms carbon into carbon dioxide and hydrogen into water*. [...] *From samples of air trapped in glaciers, data on the concentration of carbon dioxide in the air in past times can be obtained. It has been estimated by this route that the concentration of CO_2 in the air has increased by about 25% in the last 200 years, from a level of 275 parts per million by volume to a current level of around 330-340 ppm (volume). Although the carbon cycle of the geosystem (air, water, soil) is not yet well understood, it is an undisputed fact that fossil fuel consumption has increased sharply over the past 40 years. It is therefore logical to expect some increase in the concentration of CO_2 in the atmosphere. What this change means,*

[18] "Ambiente e fonti di energia esauribili e rinnovabili", TECNECO, 1978, page 19

[19] "Ambiente e fonti di energia esauribili e rinnovabili", TECNECO, 1978, page 21

however, has not yet been established. Scientists generally agree on 'global warming', i.e. a probable increase in the temperature of the atmosphere. Opinions are still very divided on the extent of this increase and its consequences in terms of climate change. It is generally agreed that it is very important to 'buy time' so as to refine the complex prediction models and identify the most appropriate solutions. Buying time means limiting the increase in CO_2 as far as possible."

THE BIRTH OF THE INTERNATIONAL PETROLEUM INDUSTRY ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

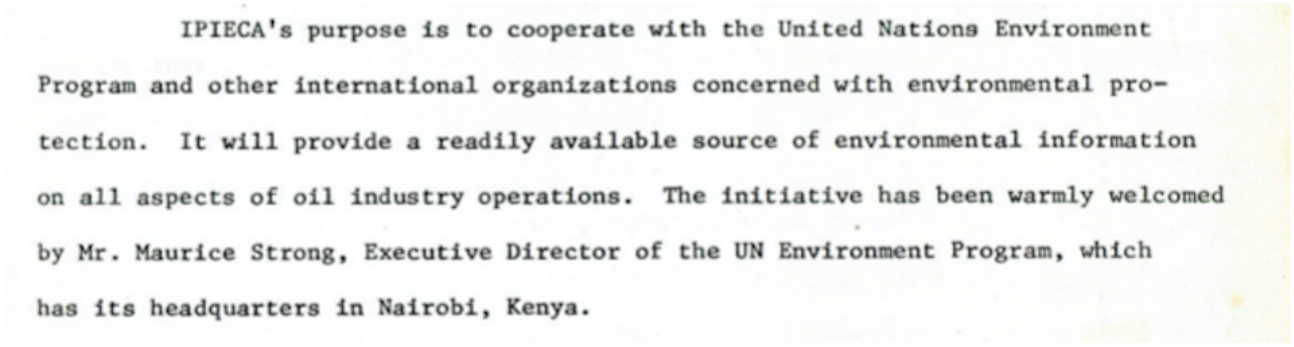
In the 1980s, even as ENI was publishing warnings about the greenhouse effect in its own magazine, according to Desmog it carried out an "advertising campaigns promoting natural gas, which is mostly comprised of planet-warming methane, as a 'clean' fuel", as the investigative journalist group Desmog has pointed out in an in-depth study. The tactic of pushing its own products, albeit products as climate-damaging as gas, as a solution for reducing emissions was planned by the fossil fuel companies, as we will recount later. The tactic remains central to the industry's strategic-communication rhetoric, as evidenced by similar statements that representatives of fossil fuel companies (ENI included) still issue today.

For some time now, ENI has also been an active member of an international organization that, according to a recent scientific study, became the instrument used by Exxon during the 1980s to coordinate - as reported by the recent study "Early warnings and emerging accountability: Total's responses to global warming, 1971–2021" - 'an international campaign to dispute climate science and weaken international climate policy'.

If we have thus far focused on ENI's actions in Italy, it is time to expand to the international arena. And to do so, we need to take a leap backwards again. This time to 1974.

After the Stockholm Conference, at the urging of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), on 13 March 1974 the major oil companies, together with the major oil industry associations, announced the birth of the International Petroleum Industry Environmental Conservation Association, a non-profit organization now known as IPIECA.

"*IPIECA's purpose is to cooperate with the United Nations Environment Programme and other international organizations concerned with environmental protection*", reads the announcement press release (photo below), which Greenpeace Italia and ReCommon found in ENI's archives. In fact, IPIECA was created with the aim of providing "*a readily available source of environmental information on all aspects of oil industry operations*"[20].



IPIECA's purpose is to cooperate with the United Nations Environment Program and other international organizations concerned with environmental protection. It will provide a readily available source of environmental information on all aspects of oil industry operations. The initiative has been warmly welcomed by Mr. Maurice Strong, Executive Director of the UN Environment Program, which has its headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya.

Screenshot of the IPIECA's press release stored in the ENI archive

Was this a first step towards a fruitful collaboration between fossil fuel companies and global institutions to reduce the impact of pollution on the planet? Perhaps initially yes. Over the years, however, the role of this non-profit organization has evolved towards something else. But let us go step by step.

[20] IPIECA's press release, document stored in the ENI archive

"The major American and European oil companies, in collaboration with Maurice Strong, the first director of UNEP, were the architects of the creation of this association," explains Christophe Bonneuil, a historian of science, currently director of research at France's largest public research organization, the Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS), and one of the authors of the study 'Early warnings and emerging accountability: Total's responses to global warming, 1971-2021'. "From the beginning, these companies made sure that smaller European companies (ENI, Elf, Total) and those from developing countries (Pemex, Aramco, Pertamina, Sonatrach) were involved", explains Bonneuil.

In fact, the initial membership of this initiative was broad: the Association continues to enjoy a wide membership with dozens of affiliated fossil fuel companies. In 1974, 15 oil companies (including Exxon, BP, Shell, Total, ENI) and two oil and gas trade associations were among the first members[21]. These were joined by the American Petroleum Institute (API), an association that has risen to international prominence over the years as a result of journalistic investigations that have described, among other things, how it has been "actively working to promote 'uncertainty' about climate change science and links to fossil fuels".

But how did IPIECA become a tool in Exxon's hands allegedly to "organize petroleum companies internationally to dispute climate science and weaken controls on fossil fuels"?[22]. As Bonneuil, who has studied this in depth as part of his work on Total, explains in an interview with Greenpeace Italy and ReCommon in July 2023:

"Since some of IPIECA's members were state-owned companies, this association from 1974 onwards took on the role of an international oil diplomacy in the face of emerging transnational regulations (for example on oil spills, air pollution and, in the 1980s, global warming). Although IPIECA has never described itself as a pressure group, from 1988 to 1994 it clearly became a channel through which oil companies from around the world shared information and strategies regarding the work of the United Nations on the road to the 1992 Rio Earth Summit and the details of the negotiations on the Climate Change Convention".

In the 1980s, in fact, the issue of *global warming* had become a major public issue around the world, thanks to the work of scientists such as James Hansen and their raising of awareness, including institutional awareness, of an issue that was already beginning to become a serious threat to the future of humanity. Such awareness that led to the birth, in 1988, of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the main international body for the assessment of climate change, set up by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and UNEP 'with the aim of providing the world with a clear and scientifically based view of the current state of knowledge on climate change and its potential environmental and socio-economic impacts'.

Bonneuil comments: "As Nathaniel Rich showed in his book *Losing the Earth* and as we show in our 2021 article, IPIECA started talking about global warming as early as 1984 during its meetings and launched an 'Ad Hoc Group on the Greenhouse Effect' in 1988, soon renamed the 'Working Group on Global Climate Change'. The group was chaired by Duane LeVine, Exxon's chief science and strategy officer, and included Brian Flannery also of Exxon, Leonard Bernstein of Mobil, Terry Yosie of API and other representatives of the world's major oil companies."

Bonneuil told Greenpeace Italy and ReCommon that the group followed three areas of work:

1) Documenting the state of the science of climate change induced by the possible exacerbation of the greenhouse effect, including the main areas of uncertainty;
2) Devising 'no-regrets' response strategies – that is, strategies that would still be beneficial to the industry;

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[21] Articles of incorporation stored in the ENI archive

[22] Early warnings and emerging accountability: Total's responses to global warming, 1971–2021", Global Environmental Change, Volume 71, November 2021

3) Considering improvements in energy efficiency and substitution between different fossil fuels as industry-friendly responses to global warming.

For example, in 1989 the working group sent the IPIECA member companies a climate dossier, which included a strategy paper by LeVine, stating that:

"Although some declare that science has demonstrated the existence of PEG [Potential Enhanced Greenhouse] climate change today... I do not believe such is the case. We will require additional scientific investigation to determine how its effects might be experienced in the future'[23]."

Bonneuil continues: "In order for industry to counter public policies that might 'shift... the energy resource mix' away from fossil fuels, 'reduce CO_2 emissions by 20 per cent' or 'even [require] abandoning resources'[24] LeVine recommended emphasizing the uncertainties of climate science and the need for further research, emphasizing the costs of political action, and promoting alternative environmental policies that would not threaten industry's core business. IPIECA's 1990 'briefing document' to its members also included the American Petroleum Institute's 'Position on Global Climate Change', which echoed LeVine's conclusions[25]. Another part of IPIECA's agenda was to postpone any significant monitoring of CO_2 emissions until detection research could provide what the group called a clear 'verification of climate change'[26], even though an internal Exxon document from 1982 had noted that the statistical detection of global warming might take decades and then come too late ('once the effects are measurable, they may not be reversible', the document observed[27])". But, according to Bonneuil, when this detection was finally demonstrated in the IPCC's Second Assessment Report in 1996, the industry attacked both the IPCC and the individual scientists linked to the work.

ENI AND IPIECA

As mentioned above, ENI was one of the companies that joined IPIECA from its inception, taking an active part in its work, as shown by documents found in the company's archives by Greenpeace Italia and ReCommon, and as the company itself recounts in its internal magazine Ecos. In April 1986, for example, ENI hosted the annual general meeting of IPIECA in Italy, attended by representatives of Exxon, Elf, Shell and Texaco, among others.

Although not directly represented in the 'Working Group on Global Climate Change' chaired by Exxon's then chief scientist, in its magazine Ecos ENI claimed to have been involved in the early 1990s in supporting IPIECA-led climate change studies and actions - activities which, as we shall see, refer to one of the strategies already described by Bonneuil above, namely highlighting the alleged uncertainties of climate science by promoting further research to delay the necessary action to end the burning of fossil fuels.

Describing the approach of French oil companies during this period, Bernard Tramier, a French executive at Elf (now TotalEnergies), who was interviewed as part of the study 'Early warnings and emerging accountability: Total's responses to global warming, 1971-2021', recalls:

"Exxon had taken hold of the issue, and that suited us because we [French companies such as Elf and Total] did not have the knowledge or the means to have weight in the scientific community, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC] or the UN process. [...] We were followers of Exxon [...] we agreed that we did not know enough [scientifically] for emission reductions or [carbon] taxes to be enacted, and we let Exxon do the rest [...] What we did not want was for drastic decisions to be taken before being certain of the reality and extent of anthropogenic warming. For us, the idea of a 20% reduction in emissions [called for at a June, 1988 intergovernmental conference in Toronto, Canada] was premature and should not be codified in Rio [the UN conference in 1992]. [...] What we feared was that in this kind of conference, for reasons of diplomacy and communication, the world would take measures harmful to the industry"[28].

[23] LeVine, 1989, p. 1
[24] LeVine, 1989, p. 16
[25] LeVine et al., 1990; cf. Rich, 2019, p. 246.
[26] Flannery , 1992, p. 20
[27] Exxon, 1982
[28] Interview with B. Tramier reported in Bonneuil et al, 2021

According to Bonneuil, this points to how the oil industry conducted a coordinated strategy to delay climate change mitigation actions and ensure that no serious climate policy emerged from Rio.

Tramier himself was president of IPIECA from 1991 to 1994, years in which the association approved the funding of scientific research - according to Bonneuil and Franta study - "that could sharpen the industry's ability to emphasize climate model limitations and potentially make global warming appear less alarming, such as work on aerosols and clouds at the Hadley Centre in the UK [...]" .[29]

An article published in 1992 in ENI's Ecos magazine gives more detail of this research and the strategy behind it:

IPIECA has been actively involved in the preparatory work for the Rio de Janeiro Conference since the early stages of the International Programme on Climate Change (IPCC) promoted by UNEP and the World Health Organisation, providing information and technical advice. In addition to supporting the efforts of governments and the scientific community to try to fill the remaining uncertainties and gaps in knowledge and conceptual understanding, IPIECA, with the support of some of its members, including ENI, has supported a three-year research campaign on the still little-known phenomena of the effects of clouds and oceans on climate change processes. These programmes are being carried out by two scientific research centers of global importance, the Lamont-Dorety Institute in the US and the Hadley Centre for Climate Prediction and Research in the UK. [...] During the seminar held in Lisbon in the spring of last year - which was attended by a small but very qualified group of experts in technical, economic and social fields from scientific centers and oil companies - it emerged that there was a need to improve the methodologies of analysis and to fill the serious gaps in the information and concepts used to develop policy decisions in such sensitive matters [...].

THE ROME SYMPOSIUM ON CLIMATE CHANGE

In April 1992, in collaboration with ENI, IPIECA organized a symposium in Rome - opened by the then Minister of the Environment Giorgio Ruffolo and ENI's Gaetano Cecchetti - to promote its agenda before the forthcoming United Nations conference in Rio de Janeiro, according to Bonneuil.

According to the Ecos chronicles, the various companies participating in the symposium, "called for a greater commitment on the part of all in the deepening of understanding of still little-known issues, such as the role of the oceans and of meteorological factors on the phenomenon of global climate change".
Thus in his speech 'Climate change: science and environmental impacts' in front of industry representatives, policy makers and scientists, Exxon's Head of Global Climate Change Corporate Research, Brian Flannery (as already mentioned, also a member of the IPIECA working group on climate change), stated:

"After more than a decade of intense study, climate change includes important scientific gaps and uncertainty which limit our ability to predict the magnitude, timing and regional distribution of impacts. [...] To date, direct observations cannot distinguish possible changes induced by human forcing against a backdrop of little understood, large, climate fluctuations [...] it is unlikely that we will be able to detect or to refute predictions of climate change from an enhanced greenhouse effect for at least a decade. Also, it is unlikely that we will have confidence in predictive capabilities for many years. [...] model-based projections are controversial, uncertain, and without confirmation, scientists are divided in their opinion on the likelihood and consequences of climate change [...] Evaluation of public policy needs to recognise and consider this uncertainty, and ignorance, explicitly"[30].

Small parenthesis: it is worth noting that Flannery worked for Exxon and that, far from being unreliable, the predictions made in the 1980s by scientists named in its organizational chart later turned out to have been "extraordinarily accurate", as reported in *Science* in early 2023 by Geoffrey Supran and Naomi Oreskes.

[29] "Early warnings and emerging accountability: Total's responses to global warming, 1971-2021".
[30] Flannery, 1992, p. 1-2

Returning to the symposium in Rome, the event was closed by Ennio Profili, then manager of ENI's Safety, Quality and Environmental Protection Department, with words that confirmed that the Italian company had fully endorsed the line taken by Exxon and IPIECA.

"[...] During these days of intense activity, we have heard from a large number of experts from the international scientific world, from industries, from economic and social planning activities and public administrations, and many aspects will have become clearer. But, as often happens when complex problems are tackled, new doubts will have arisen and existing problems will have remained open or without solutions. [...] Even before taking political decisions, such as of adopting of (*sic*) a carbon tax, which could lead to dire and unexpected consequences at the economic level, it is necessary to obtain data with high scientific reliability and confirmation on several controversial points such as the role of oceans and clouds in climate change, as well as data on their behaviour from various countries and economic and geographic areas".

After listing some of ENI's environmental initiatives, Profili concluded by stating, among other things, that 'ENI feels that its objectives are very similar to those of IPIECA and strongly supports this important international association founded by oil companies'.

FROM CLIMATE DENIALISM TO THE AGE OF GREENWASHING

As explained above, some fossil fuel companies initially resorted to the 'tobacco strategy' over the years to call into question or deny studies correlating the exploitation of fossil fuels with the increase of CO_2 in the atmosphere and resulting climate change. However, as explained by Ben Franta, one of the leading experts on the subject globally, since the early 1990s the industry's tactical response evolved and changed shape.

"Documentary evidence shows that climate denialism was created by the fossil fuel industry around 1990 (after the birth of the IPCC and before the Rio Conference, *ed.*) to obstruct the fossil fuel controls necessary to prevent global warming", Franta says. In addition to climate denialism, large fossil fuels companies have also resorted to other tactics to obstruct and delay climate policies. The Oxford scientist highlighted the following tactics to Greenpeace Italy and ReCommon, confirming what Bonneuil has already explained:

- exaggerating scientific uncertainty and insisting on further research before acting;
- focusing on economic arguments, i.e. exaggerating the cost of fossil fuel control policies and downplaying the costs of climate change consequences;
- promoting false and inadequate solutions to combat the climate crisis, in order to distract from the need to replace fossil fuels.

"Since the end of the 1990s," Franta continues, "many fossil fuel companies have moved away from blatant denialism and have turned to greenwashing, i.e. they have started to deceive the public into believing that the fossil fuel industry would solve the problem it created."

This evolution of tactics is confirmed by Bonneuil. "In 1993-1995, climate change denial was becoming increasingly counterproductive for European oil companies in the face of scientific advances and the scrutiny of civil society," says the French historian. "Shell and BP distanced themselves from the Global Climate Coalition. It is possible that the oil companies that were part of IPIECA have become less aligned compared to the 1984-1993 period. Some have preferred more subtle forms of emissions mitigation than Exxon's hard-line denialist line. Examples include 'sustainable development', 'corporate responsibility', 'voluntary efforts' or 'carbon markets'. As far as the years 1997-2023 are concerned, it is difficult to say more about IPIECA's lobbying activities, because researchers do not have access to public or private archives that could provide background information".

What we can say with certainty is that, to this day, IPIECA continues to be a key reference point for many oil and gas companies such as ENI. Through membership in IPIECA, these companies take advantage of its IPCC observer status to take part through the IPIECA delegation in events that are crucial for climate negotiations, which ENI did for COP26 in Glasgow.

THE JUST CAUSE

It can therefore be said that ENI - like other oil and gas majors - was already aware from the very early 1970s that its core business, the exploitation of fossil fuels, was a serious danger not only to people's health, but also to the planet's climate. "Fossil fuel companies knew decades ago that their products would cause devastating climate change and enormous economic and human damage," Franta points out. "They also knew that the damage could be avoided if fossil fuels were replaced with other energy sources. Instead of informing the public and avoiding the damage, these companies chose to damage the entire world simply to make more profits for a few more decades. Much of the documentary evidence proving all this has already been found and plays a crucial role in lawsuits and liability efforts", he concludes.

It is also for this reason that Greenpeace Italy, ReCommon and twelve citizens have decided to take ENI to court.

ENI's responsibility for the climate crisis is well established. Indeed, a Greenpeace Italy and ReCommon calculation, based on data from ENI and ISPRA (a public environmental institution) estimates that the company is globally responsible for more greenhouse gas emissions than Italy as a whole, thus being one of the main contributors to ongoing climate change. Moreover, as reconstructed in this report, ENI and the other oil companies have been aware for more than 50 years of the impact their activities have on the climate, so much so that they have implemented *lobbying* and *greenwashing* strategies to downplay their responsibility.

Through their civil lawsuit and the #LaGiustaCausa campaign, Greenpeace Italy and ReCommon, together with private citizens, all people who directly suffer and fear to suffer in the future the consequences of the worsening of the climate crisis due to the conduct of the Italian oil multinational, ask to ascertain and declare that ENI, Italy's Ministry of Economy and Finance and Cassa Depositi e Prestiti (the latter two entities as influential shareholders of ENI) are liable to Italian citizens for damage to their health, safety and property, as well as for having put, and continuing to put, the same property at risk from the consequences of climate change. These entities have contributed to causing this damage due to emissions into the atmosphere of greenhouse gasses beyond internationally recognised and accepted limits, in particular emissions of CO_2, resulting from the industrial, commercial and energy transport products sold by ENI.

Greenpeace Italia and ReCommon, together with private citizens, do not ask for a quantification of damages, financial or otherwise by the court, but for a declaration of the defendants' responsibility for the damages caused. They also ask the court to force ENI to revise its industrial strategy to reduce climate-changing gas emissions by 45% by 2030 compared to 2020 levels, in line with the Paris Agreement, and to force the Ministry of Economy and Finance, an influential shareholder of ENI, to adopt a climate policy that directs its participation in the company according to the same provisions of the Paris Agreement.