

Hamburg, 16th June 2022

## **Hamburg needs an exit from coal, fossil gas and wood!**

### **Joint statement against ongoing climate change emissions by Hamburgs heat and power plant Tiefstack**

On 1st July 2022, the Board of Directors of *Hamburger Energiewerke*, the municipal energy company, is to publish a statement about a phaseout of coal firing in heat and power plant Tiefstack.

As representatives of a broad national and international network, we highlight the fact that burning fossil gas or wood is not a climate-friendly alternative to burning coal. We call on the City of Hamburg to reject such a conversion of the Tiefstack plant.

When **wood** is burned, greenhouse gases are emitted, leading to a 'carbon debt' which will be borne by generations to come over decades if not centuries. This is how long it takes until the same volume of wood has regrown. We do not have that much time, given the dangerous acceleration of the climate crisis!

Burning wood harms the climate, regardless of how 'sustainable' forestry in the wood sourcing regions is.<sup>1</sup> Upfront CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from the Tiefstack plant per unit of energy would be no less than those from burning coal.<sup>2</sup>

The public does not yet know where *Hamburger Energiewerke* wants to source the wood for industrial-scale production of heat and power at the Tiefstack site. Hamburg's Senator for the Environment has not even ruled out future use of Namibian bushwood, despite broad opposition to such a proposal. This is despite the fact that the German Environment Agency had strongly objected to those wood-energy energy plans in Hamburg.<sup>3</sup>

If the Tiefstack plant was to burn wood sourced from within Germany, this would put further pressure on the country's forests which are already severely damaged by over-exploitation by intensive forestry, nitrogen emissions, and climate change impacts. This would be irresponsible. Healthy forest ecosystems are urgently needed to help mitigate the climate crisis.<sup>4</sup>

Replacing coal with **fossil ('natural') gas** in the Tiefstack plant would also dramatically undermine Hamburg's climate commitments. Fossil gas consists almost entirely of the extremely potent greenhouse gas methane. Due to methane leakage throughout its supply chain, the scale of which depends on the methods and location of gas drilling, it results in similar harm to the climate as burning coal.

Furthermore, converting the heat and power plant to fossil gas would increase Germany's dependence on fossil fuel imports. The war against Ukraine shows the brutal impacts which such a dependence can lead to. Continued reliance on fossil gas means continued

harm for the environment and for public health in regions where the gas is drilled, in order to satisfy our energy demand. And it means ongoing finance for wars and dictators, as well as an acceleration of the climate crisis.

As signatories of this letter, we strongly reject plans to burn either wood or fossil gas in the Tiefstack plant. Every Euro invested in converting the plant to either of these types of fuel would cause more global warming, and would not be available for insulating homes and other buildings and for modernising the municipal heat network.

At the same time, we are calling for a public debate. The participatory process set up by Hamburg's environment agency was designed in such a way that it prevented any transparency and ruled out civil society participation in decision making about the transformation of heat generation in Hamburg.

We demand that Hamburg's environment ministry, BUKEA, undertakes a public information campaign about options for a coal phaseout in Tiefstack.

The Senate of Hamburg must set out how the municipal *Hamburger Energiewerke* can guarantee a socially just, climate compatible and democratically controlled energy supply based on renewable energy, in line with the City's referendum decision in 2013 as well as its climate commitments. The far-reaching judgement by the Federal Constitutional Court on 29th April applies to Hamburg, too. That judgement makes it unlawful to delay CO2 reductions and thereby place that burden on future generations, thus limiting their freedoms.

### **Signatories**

AG Saubere Luft bei KLUG e.V.  
Anja Behrens, Sprecherin AG Saubere Luft

Arbeitsgemeinschaft Regenwald und Artenschutz (ARA) e.V.  
Wolfgang Kuhlmann, Director

Australian Forests and Climate Alliance  
Meredith Stanton, Secretary

Biofuelwatch  
Almuth Ernsting, Co-Director

BUND Hamburg  
Lucas Schäfer, Landesgeschäftsführer

Comité Schone Lucht  
Fenna Swart, Director

Denkhausbremen e.V.  
Peter Gerhardt, Geschäftsführer

Deutsche Umwelthilfe  
Sascha Müller-Kraenner, Bundesgeschäftsführer

Dogwood Alliance  
Rita Frost, Campaigns Director

Earthlife Namibia  
Bertchen Kohrs, Coordinator

Ecology Action Centre  
Raymond Plourde, Senior Wilderness Coordinator

Forests, Climate and Biomass Working Group  
Peg Putt, Coordinator - Policy, Campaigns & Networking

Forum Ökologie & Papier  
Evelyn Schönheit, Umweltwissenschaftlerin

Friends of Fertö Lake Association  
Zoltan Kun, Secretary

Global Forest Coalition

Hamburger Energietisch e. V.  
Bernd Liefke, Vorsitzender

Landelijk Netwerk Bossen- en Bomenbescherming, NL  
Marjan Houpt

Leefmilieu, NL  
Maarten Visschers, Board Member

Mobilisation for the Environment, NL  
Johan Vollenbroek, Chair

NRDC (Natural Resources Defense Council), USA  
Debbie Hammel, Deputy Director - Land Division

NABU-Bundesfachausschuss Wald und Wild  
Heinz Kowalski

NABU Hamburg e.V.  
Malte Siegert, Vorsitzender

NaturFreunde Hamburg e.V.  
Helene Hohmeier, Vorsitzende

Parents for Future Hamburg  
Maren Glueer, Delegierte

Partnership for Policy Integrity  
Mary S. Booth, Director  
Protect the Forest Sweden  
Lina Burnelius, Project Leader and International Coordinator

Rettet den Regenwald e.V.  
Klaus Schenck, Forest and Energy Campaign

Save Estonia's Forests  
Liina Steinberg, Member of Board

umweltFAIRaendern  
Dirk Seifert, Energiewende-Blogger

ROBIN WOOD e. V.  
Heike Schoon, Vorstand

Urgewald  
Sonja Meister, Energy Campaigner

Wild Europe Foundation  
Toby Aykroyd, Director





## Background information

Joint Statement about Tiefstack, 9th October 2020:

[robinwood.de/sites/default/files/Hamburg-Namibia%20biomass%20statement-Stand-31-10-2020\\_0.pdf](https://robinwood.de/sites/default/files/Hamburg-Namibia%20biomass%20statement-Stand-31-10-2020_0.pdf)

1[researchgate.net/publication/](https://researchgate.net/publication/342056209_It's_time_to_stop_pretending_burning_forest_biomass_is_carbon_neutral)

[342056209\\_It's\\_time\\_to\\_stop\\_pretending\\_burning\\_forest\\_biomass\\_is\\_carbon\\_neutral](https://researchgate.net/publication/342056209_It's_time_to_stop_pretending_burning_forest_biomass_is_carbon_neutral)

2[hamburger-energetisch.de/WP-Server/wp-content/uploads/Informationen-zur-Tiefstack-Transformation-17.5.22.pdf](https://hamburger-energetisch.de/WP-Server/wp-content/uploads/Informationen-zur-Tiefstack-Transformation-17.5.22.pdf); also data about CO2 emissions contained in Drax Plc's Annual Reports:

[drax.com/investors/announcements-events-reports/annual-reports-and-accounts/](https://drax.com/investors/announcements-events-reports/annual-reports-and-accounts/)

3[hamburger-energetisch.de/WP-Server/wp-content/uploads/2021-07-](https://hamburger-energetisch.de/WP-Server/wp-content/uploads/2021-07-13_Antwortschreiben_Hamburger_Energetisch_Buschholz_Nambia_v2.pdf)

[13\\_Antwortschreiben\\_Hamburger\\_Energetisch\\_Buschholz\\_Nambia\\_v2.pdf](https://hamburger-energetisch.de/WP-Server/wp-content/uploads/2021-07-13_Antwortschreiben_Hamburger_Energetisch_Buschholz_Nambia_v2.pdf)

4[naturwald-akademie.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Waldvision-fuer-die-Europaeische-Union.pdf](https://naturwald-akademie.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Waldvision-fuer-die-Europaeische-Union.pdf)