



RESOLUTION

Climate matters: The vision of European Youth for COP21

COUNCIL OF MEMBERS/
EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY
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The global climate change negotiations in Paris this year (COP21) will decide the future of young people in today's world. The last Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report states it clearly¹: there is an increased likelihood of severe, pervasive and irreversible impacts for people and ecosystems as a result of climate change.

Projected changes, taking into account various scenarios, will likely include rising surface temperatures, more regular and longer heat waves, more intense and frequent extreme precipitation events, a rising global mean sea level, and an acidifying and warming ocean. All of these changes are starting to disrupt the lives of living beings on Earth and impact biodiversity.

Given that our socio-economic system is already vulnerable, climate change could have potentially catastrophic global effects, as entire ecosystems will have to adapt to new conditions. In the end, it is our whole way of life that is at risk.

This is why the recently agreed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) put a focus on climate change: without radical climate action, hundreds of millions of young people worldwide risk falling into extreme poverty.

As young global citizens and actors of change, we demand immediate action from the world's leaders. COP21 must agree on an ambitious and binding agreement that will adequately mitigate and adapt to climate change. We also express solidarity with those who are currently most affected by climate change in the Global South. Thus, we want to see an agreement that achieves real sustainable development worldwide.

This resolution states the position of the European Youth Forum on key social, youth and sustainable development aspects of climate change. It builds on previous position papers adopted by the European Youth Forum about sustainable development and climate change². Combined, they make up the Youth Forum vision to be advocated for, during COP21 and afterwards.

Young people at the centre

Young people are already, and will continue to be, one of the social categories most affected by the effects of climate change. The socio-economic burden they carry, especially in the current context, will increase with the consequences of climate change. Indeed, climate change reveals and reinforces inequalities especially for young people and particularly young women, and more so if they are living in the Global South.

Climate change also raises the issue of intergenerational justice as today's action or inaction has implications on current youth and future generations.

We consider young people to be actors of change, able to advocate for and take action to preserve our future. Youth organisations play a major role in empowering young people, advocating for their rights and educating wider society. Yet their voices are not being adequately reflected in the debate and the decision-making process.

Taking this into account, we call for:

- **increased participation of young people from all backgrounds in the decision-making process of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)** and permanent structures to foster youth participation at all stages and levels of the process;

¹ [IPCC Fifth assessment report](#)

² 2006 Policy Paper on "Sustainable Development"; 2008 Resolution "On European youth fighting against Climate Change"; 2009 Position paper "What kind of global climate deal do youth deserve?"

- **a legally binding instrument at international level that commits States to the protection of future generations**, as mentioned in article 3³ of the UNFCCC;
- **a global agreement that ensures greater intergenerational solidarity through funding mechanisms for loss and damage due to climate change**: young people and future generations should not carry by themselves the burden resulting from climate change phenomena and inadequate responses to them.

A social and human rights-based approach

It is crucial to recognise that climate change has consequences in terms of socio-economic conditions and access to human rights; a rights-based approach is needed in addressing this issue.

The necessary ecological, economic and social transition can only take place if public and private actors, as well as individuals, change their habits. Thus, it is highly necessary for young people to have access to education on sustainable development. Education, both formal and non-formal, is fundamental in raising public awareness and developing newly needed skills, and should be recognised as a powerful tool to disseminate relevant information and to empower people for positive change. Youth organisations are important partners in this education process and their work needs recognition and funding.

Specifically, youth, women, indigenous and marginalised groups are at higher risk of living in conditions of isolation and social exclusion. These groups therefore have limited access to early warning signs in time of disasters and forecasts of drastic changes in climate. Thus, they are susceptible to forced displacement and to extreme poverty that may endanger their physical and mental health, food and water security, and capacity to survive.

Taking this into account, we call for:

- **the inclusion of the principles of article 6 of the UNFCCC on education, training and public awareness in the Paris agreement;**
- **a climate justice approach that links human rights, including youth rights and development**, to achieve a human-centred approach which safeguards the rights of the most vulnerable by sharing the burden of climate change. This rights-based approach must consider access to global public goods such as water, clean air, clean and renewable energy, and food safety as universal human rights;
- **a proactive stance from developed countries on the matter of environmental displaced populations.**

Promoting a new sustainable model

Because we are aware of the connection between climate change and all dimensions of our society, the global agreement that should come out of COP21 should adopt a **transversal approach**. Adaptation and mitigation measures, to adapt to climate change and reduce its impact, are key for this new sustainable model. This should be an opportunity, through innovation, for young people to have a better future.

Taking this into account, we call for:

³ "The Parties should protect the climate system for the benefit of present and future generations of humankind, on the basis of equity and in accordance with their common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities." United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Article 3, 1992

- **a global transition to a green, carbon neutral and circular economic system** based on a “cradle to cradle”⁴ approach and short supply chains. It is a tool to create new quality jobs for young people and promote innovation;
- **an integrated EU Energy market and Energy Union that moves away from non-renewable sources.** It should enable the full potential of renewable energy and interconnectivity to create security of supply, move surplus energy internally within the EU, and promote energy saving;
- **the acknowledgement of the hidden costs⁵ of current policies.** Young people should not bear the double burden of a degrading environment and a transition that becomes more expensive the longer we wait;
- **a transparent and regular assessment of the impact of climate change at all levels;**
- **relevant funding mechanisms** such as a global tax on environmental impact, and implementation of an efficient Emission Trading System. Resources should be divested from fossil fuels to be invested in the green economy;
- **the acknowledgement and support of the right to sustainable development for the Global South.** Inter-regional cooperation should support accurately targeted mitigation and adaptation actions through the Green Climate Fund⁶ that the Global North should pledge to;
- **research to support resilience strategies** to be encouraged and funded by all States according to their capacities;
- **an agreement balancing innovation and precautionary principles,** especially when it comes to health issues (cancer, chronic diseases, lowering fertility rates, etc.) that affect more and more young people.

The way forward

In order to achieve the above-mentioned calls, some basic principles should be applied.

Thus, we demand:

- **a legally binding agreement,** including accountability measures;
- **a commitment to the 2°C goal** and a focus on ‘step by step’ objectives to facilitate follow-up processes. It should be based on a common time-frame for all countries;
- **the European Union and other countries of Europe to lead the process by example,** setting ambitious goals that exceed the existing target for 50% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions⁷, such as being carbon neutral by 2050;
- **a financing solution for every political decision** taken at COP21;
- **a more democratic and equitable process** within the climate negotiations;
- **a commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals** at COP21.

⁴ This framework seeks to create production techniques that are not just efficient but are essentially waste-free.

⁵ Negative externalities, i.e. costs that affect a party who did not choose to incur those costs.

⁶ The Green Climate Fund (GCF) is a fund within the framework of the UNFCCC founded as a mechanism to assist developing countries in adaptation and mitigation practices to counter climate change.

⁷ [EU position for Paris climate change conference - 18.09.2015](#)