

## **DECLARATION 6<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2015, NGO ACTION DAY AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE**

We, NGO's in official partnership with UNESCO signatories of the Declaration, spokespersons of population's victims of Climate Change, send an urgent appeal to face the increasing challenges of the endangered planet.

We have to face these challenges together in order to save human lives and to protect the lives of future generations. We strongly require an inclusive and binding international agreement and insist on: social and societal accountability, human security, energy transition, biodiversity, legal mechanisms and a new international law.

Civil society, a major stakeholder in the global fight against climate change stands up to refuse fatalism and to implement innovative projects and initiatives. It solemnly calls for the mobilisation of all stakeholders to the COP21 and to all levels of decision-making.

A working group of the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee organized an online consultation and a meeting of 70 representatives of NGOs from 26 different countries in formal relations with UNESCO, reflecting diverse approaches to climate change, to find common positions and commitments towards this global problem.

We bring concrete and precise propositions developed under five selected themes. We draw attention to the work of this movement as we strive towards global solutions for a balanced sustainable relationship with our environment.

### **Social and Societal Responsibility**

From our discussions emerged a common vision of how the necessary changes should be brought about while adhering to overriding principles of social and societal responsibility.

The first principle is that methods and actions must be based on solidarity. Climate change threatens the world's populations. It is a threat only to be overcome if faced together in a spirit of cooperation to arrive at a common understanding and commitment. Following from the universality of the threat the second principle is that of consultation with and participation by all peoples. So proposals, processes and actions must be debated and implemented in our societies both from the bottom up

as from the top down. Procedures should be based on equal and just relationships in terms of social, cultural as well as peoples and gender rights.

Representatives were unanimous in the stress they laid on the role of local and scientific knowledge and of education whether of a formal, non-formal or informal nature. This is vital in the achievement of a common understanding and for effective consultation and participation as outlined above. Moreover its focus can be directed at analysis and problem solving of local situations caused or threatened by climate change. Women play a crucial role in all societies-it is essential that they should be fully involved in an education that draws on their knowledge and experience thus fully empowering their communities. Women have a vital role in environmental management and development. Their full participation, whether at an economic or political level is therefore essential to achieve sustainable development.

A consequence of effective education and universal participation should be the free flow of information and communication in all directions through the various strata of our societies. This is enabled by NGO's playing a leading role in supporting and organizing education programs and awareness campaigns in their local communities empowering them for action and advocacy.

The result is an approach that is both comprehensive and inclusive. The need to empower individuals and local communities is considered as a prerequisite to effective cooperation with all stakeholders to include civil society, families, national, local and regional government, public and private sectors, teachers and academia.

Social and societal responsibility requires commitment and accountability for consumers, producers and members of the global village that climate change has created. This applies to individuals as well as governments and all organizations whether public or private.

### **Human Security**

Climate and consequent environmental change give rise to extreme weather impacting seas and oceans. The melting of glaciers and permafrost, rising sea levels, desertification and floods that constitute an immediate and ongoing threat through localized disasters and widespread destruction of habitat to millions whose lives are already on the margins of existence. The risk of endangered food supply and massive population displacement is global.

### **Energy Transition**

Energy production and consumption is a key driver of climate change. The most damaging method of production involves the burning of fossil fuels. A transition is required towards clean and renewable

energy. Energy consumption must be reduced by each of these sectors: industry, commerce, transport and in homes.

### **Biodiversity**

The threat to the earth's incredible biodiversity is both due to direct destruction and environmental change. Ecosystems are endangered by rising sea levels and changes in temperature and rainfall. A threat to one species represents a threat to many and according to the IPCC 20 - 30% of land based species will be gravely endangered by an increase in temperatures of 1.5 - 2.5 degrees Celsius.

Man is by far the main instrument of environmental change and destruction by deforestation, pollution of the seas and oceans, urbanization, industrial methods of agriculture, manufacturing industries and armed conflicts.

### **Legal Mechanisms and New International Law**

The community of nations must decree the planet itself as common good for humanity and protect it by a legal and governance system with the objective to put into place an international treaty designed to implement a worldwide common goal of limiting global warming to a maximum rise in temperature of 2° Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

### **Call to Action**

We call for consultation and collective action. Political decisions must be taken to set binding agreements for communities, nations and internationally, thus addressing a situation that is already devastating the lives of millions of people.

We emphasize the role of formal, non-formal and informal education, parental involvement, volunteering, cultural action, research and CSO as well as measures with systematic sex-disaggregated data and gender sensitive indicators to provide for the needs of women and their families, as regards to food, hygiene and access to safe water; we ask for women's inclusion in political decision mechanisms on climate change.

We call for a program that involves full community participation in recognition that these global problems need global, local and integrated solutions for all our wellbeing.

NGOs play a key role in all the recommendations for actions and mobilization of local populations and should be involved in all future international programs and governmental policies.

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

The community of nations must decree the planet itself as common good for humanity and protect it by a treaty with the following objectives:

- Proper management of the environment, controlling, capturing and storing carbon, such as oceans, forests and organic soils and the implementation of a common global goal of limiting global warming to a maximum temperature increase of 2 ° C above pre-industrial levels
- A sustainable and dynamic balance between nature conservation and development by focusing on the needs of people and not financial profit.

- Governance, legal instruments, responsibility and accountability

The United Nations should implement or promote:

- The active participation of civil society organizations on any matter within the jurisdiction of the United Nations organization, from development to control of the implementation of the directives
- Promote the subsidiarity principle and social responsibility governance according to “ISO 26 000” rules (<http://goo.gl/YKpwjP>)
- Collective consultation for the elaboration of policies and decision making by governments, corporate organizations at all levels of civil society
- The preservation and legal protection of local knowledge and know-how
- The establishment by each State of its own commitments based on criteria which are proportionate, fair and objective
- National and international legislation establishing the rights and responsibilities of citizens and organizations to contribute to the fulfilment of the commitments made by States in a market where the production and supply of energy is set by human and social values and not only by monetary values
- Obligation of Member States responsible historically or today for high levels of pollution to implement laws and procedures to ensure that “the polluter pays” i.e. those who own and control identified sources of pollution must, at the same time:
  - ✓ Pay for cleaning-up
  - ✓ Close down polluting operations, switching to non-polluting technology, also making it available to all victims of pollution
  - ✓ Pay compensation in full to all victims, regardless of national borders

- ✓ Cooperate with other Member States to achieve the global common goals promoting transparency, education and local market initiatives
- ✓ Technically and financially assist developing countries to develop and implement energy projects promoting the use of low carbon technologies
- Enhanced procedures to review and make annual reports on the progress of implementation of commitments
- Reward mechanisms for exceptional success and penalize breaches
- A competent international judicial body in the field of the protection of the planet accessible to all stakeholders, including group actions

- Policies

On all levels the States should engage in:

- Promoting financing and subsidizing of small scale local or individual clean energy production, storage and consumption e.g. solar, geothermal and wind energy, hydropower and seas, biomass, low energy houses...
- Designing, planning and converting commercial and residential urban areas to exclude the internal combustion engine giving priority to foot and cycle pathways
- Developing circular exchanges at the local level for production, transport and distribution of consumer products
- Encouraging and financing local initiatives aiming to create and maintain a sustainable environment
- Encouraging individuals and civil society organizations to cultivate gardens, waste and poorly utilized land for the production of food by organic methods
- Removing excess packaging and the use of plastic and discouraging the transportation of goods over long distances
- Promoting the consumption of “zero kilometre” goods, less transportation of goods; outlets where local farmers can sell their seasonal produce
- Promoting sustainable farming methods by avoiding extensive monoculture
- Distributing free effective technological tools in the world without trade barriers or patent protection

- Formal, non-formal and informal education, research, adaptation and innovation

The States and competent organisms of the United Nations must:

- Establish formal, non- formal and informal education and information campaigns on:
  - ✓ The extent of biodiversity and its essential role in sustaining human life and health
  - ✓ Climate change, its causes and effects and necessary counter measures
  - ✓ Reduce consumption
  - ✓ The generalization of recycling through education for sustainable development
- Promote the study, respect, development, adaptation to present conditions and improvement, sharing and protection of cultures and traditional ways of life especially of minority groups following a sustainable existence in balance with nature
- Incorporate – at all levels in education and in all curricula – the study and collection of good practices by local students and students themselves
- Implement new models and economic criteria including the dimension of social responsibility for governments and companies (cost/efficacy/ risks)
- Engage educational establishments, research and experimentation, the media and public institutions to encourage individuals, families, society in general and organizations to act through advocacy and challenges to government policies and information
- Adapt traditional construction methods and innovate to reduce energy consumption

*Signatories:*

NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee

*And the NGOs in Official Partnership with the UNESCO: [Click for FULL LIST](#)*