

HOT AIR OR CLIMATE JUSTICE? THE COP21

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It was called a breakthrough and beginning of an end of fossil fuel. Months of negotiation which come to a climax at the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP21) when an agreement was reached on December 12th, 2015.

The Paris Agreement is a two sided medal: Ambitious for what was possible, catastrophic with regard to what is needed. The inclusion of the 1.5°C goal is a success for the Global South and the climate movement. The universality of signatories and the rhetoric leaders used at the COP21 were unprecedented and this agreement is the most ambitious up to now, in addition to it being legally binding. The deal makes reparations for losses & damages caused by the climate crisis impossible. Human Rights and other principles are not ensured. Necessary support for the Global South is not provided. The failure of Paris leaves the planet with a manifestation of global injustice and a poisoned 1.5°C goal.

The current commitments would only go as far as reducing the man-made the temperature increase to more than 3° C, if the agreement is respected, which is uncertain, considering the lack of effective compliance mechanisms.

More voluntary commitments are needed to achieve a real decrease in temperature and avoid catastrophic consequences for the globe. Any review of the intended nationally determined reductions or INDCs will not happen before 2018. Bearing in mind that current estimates predict that by 2020 the world will have reached the emission levels causing temperatures to rise above the 1.5 °C threshold injects some reality to the ambitious talks. In practice the 1.5 °C commitment was never made and is certainly not legally binding: it remains an ambition mentioned in this final agreement and that alone was cause for celebration.

The celebratory mood the COP21 generated was born out of political hibernation and avoidance on the issue of climate change. Highlighting the lack of political will which has prevailed for years causing a minimal agreement with a mildly progressive look to cause such celebration. It illustrates the weakness and failure of the climate politics. The significance of the agreement and commitments in their current form will not halt climate change nor do they provide mechanisms to pay reparation payments for loss and damage or lay out a financing strategy to leave fossil fuels.

A declaration of rights for climate refugees was not on the table at the COP21 in Paris. From a scientific point of view, it's been said that Climate refugees will reach more than 150 million by 2050¹. These refugees can play a key role in mitigating and in adapting to climate change over the next few decades, provided some of the yearly 100 billion dollars pledged in COP21 are allotted to the socioeconomic programmes geared to mitigation and adaptation and are implemented mostly for and by climate refugees. We as Young European Greens have an opportunity to push this issue on the political agenda for COP22 in Morocco.

¹<http://nationalgeographic.org/encyclopedia/climate-refugee/>

Furthermore, there has been no reflexion associating Global South countries on how to avoid them from going through a fossil fuel intensive transition of their economy. Financing for climate protection and adaptation for countries from the Global South is completely missing from the agreement.

A commitment to renewable energies is missing from the legally binding text and is only mentioned as a preamble. Together with vague passages that have replaced the clear aim of de-carbonising the economy, the agreement implies that very drastic reduction policy is not necessary due to carbon storage, while both measures are indispensable for a target of 1.5 degrees. There is no clear political commitment to end the era of fossil fuels, nor are there clear targets and plans for the urgently needed energy transition to clean renewable energies.

Hopes for Paris were a climate financing plan where availability and distribution and the steady increase of funds available to the Global South would be announced. When demanding drastic climate action from a global community, it is ignorant to demand drastic climate action from e.g. India where 21.3 % or 266 million² inhabitants have no access to electricity, without providing adequate financial and technological support.

Should a country not comply with their climate commitments, there is no penalty mechanism which applies. Our role as young Europeans is to hold our governments accountable, to seek further political commitment, to push the agenda for legally binding enforcement mechanisms. As climate should be a main topic in the European instances, we demand the European Union to end the negotiations of TTIP/CETA, considering its destructive impact on the environment. The European Commission and the member states must start divesting from fossil fuels and invest in the renewables to stay consistent with the statements expressed during COP21. Energetic efficiency and sobriety are essential to lead a real transition: climate change must be tackled on a global and local level. The climate crisis is the consequence of a system reinforcing growth, and of a failure of global cooperation.

Political pressure can only be mounted if civil society movements are mobilised and join the climate fight. We need broad alliances with social movements from below in order to challenge the capitalist system which inherently causes the destruction of our environment.

Divestment and decarbonising the economy is an easy, essential next step for the Global North to take and must be a priority to call for from governments and businesses. Our full commitment and the combined pressure of civil society and political actors must change the carbon-intensive industries not to only cut our own emissions but to drive low carbon technologies forward and demonstrate that quitting the addictive carbon intensive diet is overdue.

The UN Climate negotiations are not nearly as successful as it would be necessary. Still, we as Young European Greens think that the UNFCCC is one of the main forums to discuss the climate crisis and to take action against it. Therefore, COP22 in Morocco represents an important opportunity to further mobilize and cooperate on a global level. Still, we see

² <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EG.ELC.ACCS.ZS>

the danger of fossil fuel corporations contradict climate protection. We want Big Polluters to be kicked out of climate policy.

However, an action is not only needed within the protected walls of the UNFCCC. The fight against the climate crisis is manual labor. The Greens have one of their origins in the environmental movement – and are still part of it. As Young European Greens, we want to show solidarity with the climate movement and its different strategies. Civil disobedience and direct action are becoming central elements in the fight against the climate crisis. Therefore we also stand in solidarity with actions like "Ende Gelände" and "Breakfree". They are not necessarily legal, but legitimate. We want to show resistance – ranging all the way from blockades into parliaments!



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