



Turning off the lights because we care for our earth

29/03/2019



The EESC will switch off the lights in support for [Earth Hour](#). This important annual event reminds us to take joint action for a better future on our planet.

We can no longer turn a blind eye to climate change and its impact on our environment and people's lives. The latest [UN report](#) is another wake-up call. It warns that 2015-2018 were the four warmest years on record. Ocean heat is at a record high and the global mean sea level rises. In 2018, extreme weather has hit 62 million people worldwide. These highly worrying trends will continue if we don't step up our efforts rapidly to address them.

I assure you that the EESC remains committed to our planet and the environment and I hope to see many people around the world joining and turning off lights for one hour as a symbol of their commitment.

The UN's Sustainable Development Goals, agreed in 2015, provide the world with a blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. I can only repeat that sustainable development is a chance for Europe - in terms of protecting biodiversity, sustaining competitiveness, and fighting against increasing social disparities. However, to become a real opportunity, it has to be put in motion and we are not quite there yet.

The EESC has been calling for the adoption of an overarching EU Sustainable Development Strategy ever since the adoption of the SDGs. The long-awaited Reflection Paper "Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030" from 30 January 2019 is a good analysis of where we are; yet, it is not ambitious enough. Four years after the adoption of the universal Agenda 2030, it is, nevertheless, a first step in the right direction.

If Agenda 2030 is firmly embraced by all Member States and by European civil society, it would allow us to embark on a virtuous economic, social, environmental and institutional path of renewal for the future. Bottom-up initiatives involving citizens and civil society will have a key role to play in this agenda to achieve economic prosperity, which must go hand in hand with environmental sustainability and social inclusion.

I want to say it loud and clear **Europe must be sustainable or it will not be**. I am confident that as long as we dare we can achieve a sustainable Europe.

And I want to also remind you of the voice of our youth. Our young people through Greta Thunberg are saying it plainly: the winning recipe is welding sustainable development, youth and civil commitment. Hundreds of thousands of young people have joined Greta in a global climate strike. They give us hope and further enhance our commitment at the EESC.

And let's be clear, a **healthy and sustainable planet is in everyone's interest**. To ensure this, we must work together and **#Connect2Earth**.