

'Delivering on the Urgency of Climate Change: nowhere left to hide'

Statement by the Diversity Europe Group III

"It is unequivocal that human influence has warmed the atmosphere, ocean and land. Climate change is already affecting every inhabited region across the globe with human influence contributing to many observed changes in weather and climate extremes"¹

Climate Change is already upon us and there is **nowhere left to hide**. Regular severe floods, fires, droughts and hurricanes. This is what the world looks like at 1.1 to 1.3° Celsius warmer than when the steam engine was invented. Today, it is **impossible to ignore the impact of Climate Change** on our daily lives. Nor can we imagine its impact, even if we reach the goal of the Paris Agreement to limit global warming to 1.5 ° Celsius. Our planet's future is very much under threat and there is no choice but to **urgently deliver on our common promises**.

Cutting emissions, even at faster rates, will not be enough. We must also **heavily invest in preparing emergency plans and in adapting to the changing climate**. This will entail a **mental shift**: investing today and reaping the benefits in the next generation. But invest we must, with **increased sustainable financial resources**, backed up by strong commitments from public authorities, business, civil society and citizens. The **European Green Deal** and the **'Fit for 55' package** are both necessary and urgent. Moreover, the EU should take the global leadership on Climate Change, or risk losing its influence to other major economies. The latter must also demonstrate commitment, promoting climate neutrality with ambitious and concrete plans, before the **COP26 in Glasgow**. Similarly, they should commit and deliver climate finance for mitigation and adaptation costs in the **least developed and vulnerable countries**.

Without doubt, the EU's 'Fit for 55' package will affect the lives of **every European citizen** and shape the **future role of European civil society**. Hence, it is imperative that the climate transition is also a **just transition** leaving nobody behind, informing, involving and assisting **vulnerable consumers and vulnerable citizens**. The new **EU Social Climate Fund** to tackle energy poverty is a welcome step in this direction. Incentives for consumers to renovate smartly and sustainably must also be delivered, in tandem with strategies such as the **EC's Renovation Wave**.

However, without doubt, **civil society organisations** want to be and must be allowed to be at the **centre of this entire process**. Whether it is environmental, farmer, consumer, youth, the liberal professions or social organisations, every socio-economic sector of civil society must be empowered to lead, design and implement the climate transition. Civil society organisations can also promote **new economic models**, such as the social economy, which have proven very useful in addressing previous socio-economic challenges. It is essential for civil society organisations to establish **viable alliances and work constructively together**. The **Biodiversity Strategy** and the **CAP's Sustainable land use (greening)**, both share the overall objectives of the European Green Deal. Success in each sector is dependent on mutual delivery. The **EESC**, representing European civil society organisations and notably the **Diversity Europe Group**, must also fully play their role in mitigating this human-induced calamity. Putting pressure on **European Institutions** and acting as a conscience against impending calamity for our Planet and humankind. Promoting innovative solutions such as **mobile emergency European assistance**, able to intervene immediately in cases of natural disasters in EU Member States.

¹ 6th Assessment report of the IPCC, August 2021

Crucially, it is **civil society** which has the ambition and creativity to imagine this **sustainable, resilient and fairer world**. It is civil society which has a pivotal role in **driving and maintaining the momentum** on climate mitigation and adaptation among communities and citizens. It is these same actors who will have the tenacity to **invest in, accelerate and embrace change with bottom-up initiatives** which respect the opinions and the rights of local people.

Ultimately, we can only embark on this new world by **changing perceptions and attitudes**, by anchoring climate mitigation and adaptation firmly within our **European values and identity**. **Delivering on Climate Change** must become a **positive European narrative**. A narrative which embraces and finds the balance between environmental sustainability, prosperity, innovation, social inclusion and democratic participation.

Brussels, 22 September 2021