



EU civil society contribution to discussion on and implementation of the climate change policy (at international and the EU levels)

1. Introduction

- The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC or the Convention) was negotiated at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED, also known as the Earth Summit), held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 with the objective of setting out a legal framework to "stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system".
- The UNFCCC adopted at the 1992 Rio Convention entered into force on 21 March 1994 and currently has 196 parties - 195 nations and the European Union.
- Since Rio in 1992, climate conferences known as the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), have taken place each year. The Conference of the Parties (COP) is the supreme body of the Convention to assess the progress in dealing with climate change. The last conference (COP20) was held in Lima, Peru, in December 2014 and the next one will take place in Paris, France, in December 2015. This will be the 21st session of the Conference of the Parties (COP21).
- The Convention was augmented in December 1997 at COP3 in Kyoto, Japan, with a protocol in which industrialised countries and those in transition to a market economy (collectively known as Annex I parties) took on emission caps. The Kyoto Protocol entered into force on 16 February 2005 and now has 192 parties.
- From 2005 until 2012, the parties to the Kyoto Protocol negotiated further commitments for Annex I Parties for the years 2012-2020. This was supplemented, following COP13 in Bali, in 2007 by the establishment of a second group that focused on mitigation, adaptation, finance, technology, capacity building and a shared vision for a long-term cooperative action for all countries. These groups aimed to conclude a new agreement at COP15 in Copenhagen, Denmark in December 2009. However, no conclusion was reached except for a political agreement, the "Copenhagen Accord".
- COP21 in Paris is expected to be the culmination of the years of discussions since 2005 that have resulted in the development and adoption of a draft negotiating text at the February 2015 Geneva meeting.
- All countries that are members of the UNFCCC have agreed to adopt a new global climate agreement in Paris in December 2015 which will take effect in 2020. It is expected that a new legally binding instrument will be adopted that should aim to limit

the rise in global average surface temperature to below 2°C compared to pre-industrial times to avoid the most dangerous impacts of climate change.

2. Participation of civil society in the UNFCCC

- Since Rio 1992, ensuring broad public participation in decision-making has been identified as a major prerequisite for sustainable development. Several categories of observer organisations also attend sessions of the COP and its subsidiary bodies. Civil society engages with the climate change process through representative non-governmental observer organisations.
- Engagement of civil society on climate change at international level is ensured through Article 7, paragraph 6, of the UNFCCC which provides for the admission of non-governmental organizations to sessions of the Convention bodies as observers.
- To that end, Agenda 21¹ identifies nine major groups within civil society recognized as constituencies in the UNFCCC negotiation process:
 1. Business and industry non-governmental organizations (BINGO);
 2. Environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGO);
 3. Farmers non-governmental organizations (Farmers);
 4. Indigenous peoples organizations (IPO);
 5. Local government and municipal authorities (LGMA);
 6. Research and independent non-governmental organizations (RINGO);
 7. Trade unions non-governmental organizations (TUNGO);
 8. Women and gender non-governmental organizations (Women and Gender);
 9. Youth non-governmental organizations (YOUNGO).
- Business works together within their constituency to prepare for the relevant meetings and when possible make plenary statements on behalf of the world's business community. The same applies for the European trade union movement which has followed the climate change negotiations closely.
- It is important to note the increasing mobilisation of the civil society organisations, but also business, cities and local authorities and their contribution to the debate on climate change. The latter will play an important role in implementation of the climate change policy as they can contribute with own commitments concerning e.g. transport policy and reduction of CO₂ emissions.
- With a view to strengthening climate action throughout 2015, in Paris in December and beyond, the Peruvian and French COP presidencies, the Office of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the UNFCCC Secretariat adopted the Lima-Paris Action Agenda, a joint undertaking that promotes collaborative actions and initiatives involving states and non-states actors to accelerate the adoption of low carbon and resilient solutions and pathways.

¹ Agenda 21 is a non-binding, voluntarily implemented action plan of the United Nations with regard to sustainable development that was adopted at the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992

- The Lima-Paris Action Agenda includes proposals for actions by different stakeholders: <http://www.developpement-durable.gouv.fr/L-agenda-des-solutions-qu-est-ce.html>² and also: <http://www.cop21.gouv.fr/fr/espace-medias/salle-de-presse/decryptage-lagenda-des-solutions-ou-le-plan-daction-lima-paris>
- Ensuring a comprehensive and balanced representation of the major civil society groups is now a common practice within the UN system and UNFCCC texts should not be an exception. The Paris agreement must firmly promote and acknowledge the role played by all major groups.

3. The EU level

- Public consultations are launched by the European Commission when it intends to develop a new policy or a legislative proposal at the EU level or to review the existing one, with an aim at hearing views of the relevant stakeholders, including civil society. A questionnaire is published on-line and the consultations last for up to three months. This method applies also to climate change policy: http://ec.europa.eu/clima/consultations/index_en.htm. Consultations were launched on the revision of the EU Emission Trading System Directive (in 2014) and on the preparation of a legislative proposal on the effort of Member States to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions to meet the European Union's greenhouse gas emission reduction commitment in a 2030 perspective (in 2015).
- The Commission organises also workshops (or other events) bringing together relevant stakeholders, including civil society. These take place when a new initiative is developed or the existing instrument (e.g. legal act) is reviewed or when it is considered useful that those who participate in development and implementation of a policy (e.g. in the area of climate change) share with each other their experience and best practice (peer review): http://ec.europa.eu/clima/events/index_en.htm
- Also the European Parliament, in the course of its debate on legislative and policy proposals organises workshops or other events (such as hearings) with participation of different stakeholders, including civil society, to hear their views and proposals which may be then taken into account in the European Parliament's own position: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/envi/events-workshops.html?id=20141023CHE91684>
- In the run up to the Paris Conference, own-initiative civil society contributions to the global and EU debate on the future climate change policy also increased.
- In June 2014, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) issued Opinions on the EU energy and climate change package for the period until 2030 and in July 2015

² Non-State Actor Zone for Climate Action. NAZCA showcases commitments to action by companies, cities, subnational regions and investors to address climate change. Up to date 2940 commitments to actions were submitted, included from regions, cities, cooperatives. They can be accessed on this website: <http://climateaction.unfccc.int>

an opinion on the Paris Protocol (the future outcome of the Paris conference): <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.climate-change-opinions>.

- In June 2015, BUSINESSEUROPE published its position paper with ten recommendations to the international decision-makers on what constitutes a successful global agreement (Annex I) and ETUC has also adopted its position (Annex II).
- The starting point for the EU stakeholders/civil society groups' involvement in the elaboration of the EU position in view of COP21 is that an effective fight against climate change requires the participation of all stakeholders including business (as the originator of a major part of the greenhouse gases emitted but at the same time as the provider of solutions through greener technologies and investments to finance the transformation to a low carbon economy) and trade unions (which have a role to play in the changes such transition will entail for the labour market).
- The EU stakeholders wish the EU to play a strong role in the international climate negotiations and have called on the EU Institutions to work with other partner countries to build a meaningful agreement in Paris.
- The European Union has set out its vision for the new global climate change agreement due to be adopted in Paris in December. The Communication, "The Paris Protocol - a blueprint for tackling global climate change beyond 2020", is part of the EU's Energy Union package unveiled by the Commission in February 2015. As well as securing Europe's energy supply, ensuring affordable and competitive energy and an integrated energy system, the strategy also aims to tackle climate change through the transition to a low-carbon, climate-friendly economy. The EU is confident that a new agreement will be adopted in Paris that will significantly strengthen and broaden collective international efforts to tackle climate change.

4. Key events

- In November 2014, the Sustainable Development Observatory of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) organised a public debate with the objective to promote civil society messages for the COP20 conference in Lima in Peru: <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.events-and-activities-climate-agreement-2015>).
- Similarly, in the run-up to the COP21 conference in Paris, the EESC is going to organise in November 2015, in cooperation with the Committee of Regions (CoR), a preparatory civil society debate in Paris.
- In December 2014, during the COP20 conference in Lima in Peru, the EESC organised in cooperation with the CoR, the Italian Ministry of Environment (holding the presidency of the European Union at the time) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) two civil society side events focusing respectively on renewable energy as a local development opportunity and on climate and employment: <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.events-and-activities-cop20-climate-green-jobs-dialogue>
- It is envisaged that the EESC will organise two side events involving civil society also at the occasion of the conference in Paris (COP21) in December 2015.

5. Other preparatory meetings for the Paris conference include:

- De-briefing session after the Lima conference organised by the EESC in January 2015: <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.events-and-activities-debriefing-20th-conference>
- Meeting organised on 23 March 2015 in Brussels by the EESC in cooperation with the European Partners for the Environment, with participation of representatives of French networks, including Comité 21: <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.events-and-activities-cop-21>
- Meeting organised on 19 May 2015 in Brussels by the EESC Sustainable Development Observatory: <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.events-and-activities-climate-roadmap-paris>
- Business and Climate Summit on 20-21 May 2015 in Paris (BUSINESSEUROPE participated as a signatory and the EESC sent a delegation): <http://www.businessclimatesummit.com/>
- MED COP 21, i.e. Mediterranean Climate Summit in Marseille (4-5 June 2015) with a contribution by the EESC, notably its President who spoke in Round table 1 "Review and the positive agenda for civil society": <http://www.medcop21.com/en/>
- World Summit "Climate and territories", 1-2 July 2015 in Lyon, France with presence of the CoR representatives: <http://cor.europa.eu/en/news/Pages/UN-greenhouse.aspx>: <https://europa.eu/eyd2015/en/platforma/events/world-summit-climate-and-territories>
- Meeting of the EU Economic and Social Committees / Councils on 13 July 2015 in Paris <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/ceslink/?i=ceslink.en.press-and-media-news.688>.