



LES NOTES DE SUD

Building alliances for equitable climate action for people and the planet

In 2021, CARE France, Coordination Sud, GRET and Fern organised a series of webinars to discuss civil society's role in implementing climate action that protects biodiversity and local communities. These meetings provided an opportunity to explore concrete actions, and increased collaboration between Northern and Southern civil society groups to strengthen their impact on Nationally Determined Contributions. In this briefing we explore some of the key contributions made during these webinars.



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2021 has been a pivotal year to agree on ambitious action to address the climate, environmental and social crises, which have been compounded by the health emergency affecting the world. These multiple crises are having a major impact on the most vulnerable, as they are exacerbating pre-existing trends towards marginalisation and exclusion. The 26th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP26) and the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP15) are opportunities to highlight this emergency.

There is a consensus that governments, civil society, and the private sector must act together in response to these interrelated crises. In this context, nature-based solutions (Nbs) have a key role to play in addressing climate change, particularly in helping to implement the targets set in countries' Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). However, there is still some confusion as to what these solutions exactly mean and how to implement them. This lack of clarity results in the concept being abused for greenwashing purposes by companies responsible for climate disruption, notably through the exaggerated focus on tree planting as a "miracle solution".

Forests cover 38% of the world's habitable land area¹ and, along with soils, are the world's second largest carbon sink after the oceans. However, overexploitation is causing them to release more and more carbon into the atmosphere, gradually turning some of them into net emitters of greenhouse gases. On top of the carbon issue, too little attention is being paid to issues around governance, production and consumption patterns, and the needs of communities who protect the forests and depend on them.

It is therefore crucial that civil society continues to act to (I) create favourable conditions for effectively implementing NDCs in vulnerable countries, (II) stimulate climate finance, and (III) develop strategies for nature-based solutions that protect and restore the environment, particularly forests, while respecting human rights.

1 BUILDING POSITIVE CLIMATE ALLIANCES AND ALTERNATIVE SOCIETAL APPROACHES

The climate emergency requires us to find solutions together to build more resilient societies. This is what some progressive foundations are working towards, as Claudia Neubauer from the Charles Léopold Mayer Foundation for the Progress of Humankind (FPH) explains. The transition to a low-carbon economy has begun, but it is not happening at the speed and scale needed to solve the current crisis.

// Public authorities need to see the big picture in order to support an ecological transition that goes hand in hand with social justice. //

CLAUDIA NEUBAUER
Charles Léopold Mayer Foundation
for the Progress of Humankind

Private foundations: key players with a limited mandate

In their own way, philanthropists can help to highlight pressing issues and challenges, and to call out contradictory public policies. As the dominant economic model is not compatible with climate action and environmental protection, it must be challenged as a matter of urgency. The FPH wants to contribute, as far as its means allow, to moving societies towards a social and ecological transition.

2 GLOBAL AND LOCAL CLIMATE STRATEGIES: EXPERIENCES FROM AFRICA, ASIA, AND EUROPE

Effective participation from civil society remains a central issue. Without it, there can be no inclusiveness, no accountability, and no transparency from governments about their commitments. This implies having the means to contribute, creating spaces for exchange and interaction, including at regional level, where all have a right to be heard, including faith-based groups. José Mokengo Itela explained that his organisation, Cercle pour la Défense de l'Environnement, has supported developing a strategy for monitoring and advocating with public authorities by preparing civil society contributions into meetings and key government decisions.

// Each new NDC must be more ambitious than the previous one and no dilution of commitments is possible. //

FANNY PETITBON
CARE France

1- Source: <https://ourworldindata.org/forest-area>

The Climate Action Network (CAN) brings together international nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) working on climate issues. Its #WorldWeWant campaign aims to elevate the voices of communities on the frontline of the climate crisis and demands that governments respond with urgent action to protect people and build more resilient societies. Barbara Rubim of CAN says that pressure must be kept on the governments of the highest emitting countries to lead by example by establishing transformative NDCs to keep warming below 1.5°C. Fanny Petitbon from CARE France explained that these NDCs must be aligned with the goal of reducing emissions by ending fossil fuel use. They must also add to community resilience through poverty reduction, human rights, equity, and gender mainstreaming and NGOs must advocate for ambitious NDCs.

Transformative NDCs for adaptation and resilience

At the current rate of climate change and related impacts, NDCs must not only address mitigation – with specific targets for all major economic sectors – but also adopt an inclusive adaptation approach.

// Civil society organisations have stronger and better links with local communities and have a responsibility to build their capacity to engage in NDC dialogues. //

ALBERT KATAKO
Civic Response, Ghana

In Costa Rica, a wide range of people were consulted following a detailed mapping exercise.

Vietnam and Ghana have also promoted civil society engagement by building on reforms to promote trade in legal timber with the European Union (EU) notably through the Voluntary Partnership Agreements². Hợp Vũ Thị Bích, from Vietnamese NGO the Centre for Sustainable Rural Development, emphasised the importance of sharing responsibilities among different stakeholders. Albert Katako, from Civic Response in Ghana, stressed that civil society can only participate sufficiently if it has the necessary resources and expertise. In both countries, CSOs have been able to advocate for forest governance to be truly integrated into their NDCs.

We can see that environmental NGOs are united by common priorities, including promoting nature-based solutions that strengthen rights and environmental integrity, and that reflect forests' importance for both

// Securing community and Indigenous land rights and tenure is essential for sustainable ecosystem management. //

NINA CYNTHIA KIYINDOU

Observatoire Congolais des Droits de l'Homme,
Republic of Congo

communities and the climate. NGOs also agree on the need to establish accessible monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for NDCs, so that all stakeholders will know (I) when the targets have been met, (II) whether financial commitments have been fulfilled, and (III) whether funds have been used wisely.

No impact without outreach

NDCs and climate change are technical, even scientific subjects. All stakeholders, especially civil society, need to be informed and trained so that they can play their role. According to Rolande Azakia, a journalist with ECO CONSCIENCE TV, this means finding the right information and ensuring that the media is used to relay it.

3 SUFFICIENT, RELIABLE, AND EQUITABLE FUNDING: THE KEY TO SUCCESS?

Climate targets will only be achieved if they are supported by national budgets and investment plans. Many developing countries lack the resources to address climate change. Developed countries have long promised to provide support to help them. Yet, in most cases, the assistance provided to date has not been sufficient, according to Rachel Simon of CAN. It is therefore essential that, prior to COP26, the richest countries make a clear commitment to increase climate finance for the 2021–2025 period and to allocate 50% of the promised finance to adaptation. This finance must (I) link climate, biodiversity, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), (II) reach the most vulnerable people, including women, and (III) close the adaptation finance gap while prioritising approaches that protect and restore nature.

2- Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs) are bilateral agreements between the European Union (EU) and tropical wood exporting countries, which aim to improve forest governance and guarantee that the wood imported into the EU is from legal sources.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EQUITABLE AND SUSTAINABLE CLIMATE ACTION FOR PEOPLE AND THE PLANET

Consolidate multisectoral synergies and civic space

Civil society must ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable groups, including women and Indigenous Peoples, are considered. Multisectoral alliances are crucial for common messaging and strategy development. Given the disparity between resources available for Northern NGOs and those for CSOs in

the South, a revised approach is needed to restore the balance and strengthen civic space, which is still limited in some African and Asian countries. NDCs and climate plans should not be shaped by governments alone, but by society.

Promote NDCs that address the climate emergency, decarbonise economies, protect nature and create resilient societies

Protecting and restoring biodiversity-rich ecosystems can contribute to climate mitigation, adaptation, and resilience. Therefore, NDCs should prioritise protecting natural ecosystems, restoring degraded ecosystems, and urgently reducing deforestation and

forest degradation. NbS should not focus on carbon offsetting. Solutions should be implemented in close partnership with local people and communities and through rights-based approaches.

Secure finance that meets the needs of the most vulnerable countries and populations

The contributing countries and the EU must fulfil their commitments. The most vulnerable countries are waiting for adequate finance for resilience and adaptation that will also enable them to follow a

development trajectory consistent with the goals of the Paris Agreement. This should be reflected in additional and adequate finance, notably through a substantial increase in grants rather than loans.



This publication is produced by Coordination SUD's Climate and Development Commission (CCD) and Fern.

Since 2007, in response to the intensifying impacts of the climate crisis in the most vulnerable countries, Coordination SUD's member NGOs working on climate issues have been meeting within the CCD. They aim to promote the integration of climate change mitigation and adaptation issues, in line with the SDGs, into development projects. To this end, the members work to (I) build the capacities of development actors, (II) generate knowledge in conjunction with the research community, (III) develop a common position for effective communication and advocacy towards French and European decision-makers, and (iv) share and capitalise on each other's experiences.

The CCD brings together the following organisations: 4D, Action Against Hun-

ger, ActionAid France – Peuples Solidaires, Acting for Life, Agrisud International, ATD Fourth World, Association La Voûte Nubienne, Agronomists and Veterinarians Without Borders (AVSF), Bolivia Inti – Sud Soleil, CARE France, Centre d'Actions et de Réalisations Internationales, Centre de Recherche et d'Information pour le Développement, Electricians Without Borders, Entrepreneurs du Monde, France Libertés, GoodPlanet Foundation, Fondem, France Volontaires, Geres, GRET, GRDR, Humanity & Inclusion, Initiative Développement, Oxfam France, Planète Urgence and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). It also includes the following guest members: all4trees, Coalition Eau, French Red Cross, Réseau Action Climat – France, Disaster Risk Reduction Network (RepR), IUCN French Committee Working Group on Developing Countries and Biodiversity and Forum des Organisations de So-

lidaire Internationale issues des Migrations.

Fern

Fern is a European environmental organisation dedicated to protecting forests and the rights of people who depend on them. It works to achieve greater environmental and social justice, with a focus on forests in the policies and practices of the European Union and its Member States.

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