



Doc. 14521
04 April 2018

Climate change and implementation of the Paris Agreement

Report¹

Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development

Rapporteur: Mr John PRESCOTT, United Kingdom, Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group

Summary

The international community has massively endorsed the Paris Agreement which sets out the path for global action against climate change. Limiting global warming to below 2°C will require concerted ambitious efforts at national and subnational levels. With the withdrawal of the United States federal administration from the Paris Agreement, European leadership on cleaner, more sustainable development is paramount for the prosperity of present and future generations.

The report emphasises that implementation of the Paris Agreement should go hand in hand with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): green growth and investment is a healthy choice for the planet and makes good economic sense. The report highlights the need for more solidarity between developed and developing countries and advocates support for sustainable urban and estuarial development models.

The report also pleads for closer involvement of legislators to ensure policy coherence, a more balanced allocation of budgetary resources, and a legislative framework for green investment in line with the climate goals. It proposes recommendations to be addressed to member States for mainstreaming the SDGs, in particular where they relate to climate change concerns, across the main policy fields (such as climate finance, energy transition, circular economy and sustainable agriculture).

1. Reference to committee: [Doc. 14093](#), Reference 4232 of 10 October 2016.



Contents	Page
A. Draft resolution	3
B. Explanatory memorandum by Mr John Prescott, rapporteur	5
1. Introduction: origin, aim and scope of the report	5
2. The Paris Agreement – a springboard for global action on climate	5
3. Lessons from the COP22 (Marrakesh (Morocco), 7-18 November 2016): co-operation and efficient policies to face climate change	6
4. Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action, through investment and greater involvement of all stakeholders	7
5. Estuarial and urban models: benefits of sustainable development and low carbon economy for climate	8
5.1. The Humber estuary model	8
5.2. The urban model(s) and challenges	9
6. European nations standing together for the global climate cause	9
7. Worldwide litigation on climate change	10
8. The crucial years ahead for squeezing emissions – concluding remarks	11

A. Draft resolution²

1. By signing the Paris Agreement in December 2015, 194 countries of the United Nations and the European Union recognised climate change as an existential threat to humanity: there is no planet “B”, and the health of our planet is key to our own prosperity. The entry into force of the Agreement just one year after its signature was a remarkable sign of the global community’s resolve to act deep and wide, moving towards a “bottom-up” approach as opposed to the “top-down” logic pursued previously. Despite the recent withdrawal of the United States federal administration, over 70% of global greenhouse gas emissions remain covered by nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement. However, to stop global temperatures from rising more than 2°C by 2050, additional efforts are required over the next decade.
2. The Parliamentary Assembly hails European leadership in steering the global process to prevent the planet from overheating. Cleaner, more sustainable development is the only way forward to correctly accommodate the needs of the present and future generations, wherever they live. Considering that developing countries are most severely affected by climate change, although they are far less responsible for the greenhouse gas emissions than developed countries, more solidarity between developed and developing countries is needed to share know-how, (financial) resources and clean technologies, especially with the small island developing States (as agreed in the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action (Samoa Pathway)).
3. The Assembly therefore believes that implementation of the Paris Agreement should go hand in hand with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development agreed by the global community in the same year. It refers to the ample evidence showing that investment in more environmentally friendly development and global sustainable policies makes good economic sense, as well as being a responsible policy choice for the future. Worldwide, the cost of extreme climatic events is ever increasing, as is the cost of inaction; in Europe, the cost of damage incurred from climatic disasters has already doubled between the 1980s and the 2000s.
4. The Assembly welcomes the launch of the Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action with a view to the implementation of the Paris Agreement. This strategy aims to involve multiple actors in pro-climate action: it supports voluntary collaboration of civil society, the private sector, financial institutions, local and subnational authorities, and local communities, as applicable. In this context, urban and estuarial development models deserve special support so as to tap the huge potential of green growth in serving both the population and the climate cause.
5. Mainstreaming sustainable development and resilience to climate change in national policies through law remains a considerable challenge for European countries. The Assembly regrets that official national delegations to global climate change meetings (COPs) rarely include parliamentarians and urges European countries to lead the change by example and systematically include parliamentarians in their delegations. Such closer involvement of legislators should enable better policy coherence with a view to honouring domestic and international commitments under the Paris Agreement, ensuring a more balanced allocation of budgetary resources, and putting into place the legislative framework for green investment.
6. In the light of the above considerations, the Assembly calls for strong national measures to promote the implementation of the Paris Agreement at all levels of governance. It invites the member States to:
 - 6.1. draw up an ambitious national strategy accompanied by a concrete action plan, built and implemented with the active and direct participation of regional authorities, for mainstreaming the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular where they relate to climate change concerns, across the main policy fields;
 - 6.2. hold regular consultations with different stakeholders (civil society, the private sector, financial and academic institutions, local and subnational authorities, and local communities) to monitor progress in cutting emissions and to identify problem areas that hinder the attainment of nationally determined contributions;
 - 6.3. take advantage of regional opportunities for exchanges of good practice and co-investment in climate-friendly development models under the Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action;
 - 6.4. make pledges and honour their commitments towards replenishing the Green Climate Fund set up under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2010, in line with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities;

2. Draft resolution unanimously adopted by the committee on 20 March 2018.

- 6.5. prepare the transition to the circular economy and devise incentives for both public and private sectors for the re-use of materials at the end of the product cycle;
 - 6.6. promote a sustainable urbanisation vision by pursuing smart-city policies, with special attention to the means for cutting greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles, cooling and heating systems, energy production, waste management and industrial activities;
 - 6.7. map out the transition to more sustainable agriculture so that the use of natural resources is optimised and greenhouse gas emissions from cattle breeding are significantly reduced or captured and diverted to other uses;
 - 6.8. foster participation of the private sector – through both voluntary and binding measures – to ensure that it contributes its fair share to achieving domestic climate goals;
 - 6.9. restructure their energy production and consumption in such a way that fossil materials are increasingly diverted to non-energy uses and gradually replaced by renewable energy sources;
 - 6.10. secure the involvement of national parliamentarians in global climate negotiations and in prior governmental consultations on the national negotiating position;
 - 6.11. where feasible, consider joining the European Emissions Trading System following the example of non-European Union countries that have already done so;
 - 6.12. assure gender-responsive climate policy by implementing the Gender Action Plan as agreed by the COP23.
7. The Assembly stresses the importance of parliamentary action in relation to the above measures. It believes that legislators of the Parties to the Paris Agreement have the duty to check that the five-year roadmap for assessing national climate policies is on track and in line with the agreed national targets. The Assembly therefore calls on national parliaments to ensure that dedicated structures, mechanisms and resources are in place for stepping up national efforts on climate change.
8. Finally, the Assembly urges the three member States (the Russian Federation, San Marino and Turkey) that have not yet ratified the Paris Agreement to do so at the earliest opportunity.

B. Explanatory memorandum by Mr John Prescott, rapporteur

1. Introduction: origin, aim and scope of the report

1. On 21 June 2016, the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development tabled a motion for a resolution on “Climate change and implementation of the Paris Agreement” (Doc. 14093). This motion points out that “climate change is the most important threat to mankind of our century” with the “future of the next generation and the sustainable development of our planet” being at risk. The motion deplores that developing countries are the most severely affected, whereas they are much less responsible for the greenhouse gas emissions than developed countries. The motion therefore hails the historic Paris Agreement of 2015 and urges the Parliamentary Assembly to promote its implementation at all levels of governance, in particular through action aimed at identifying best practices of member States in addressing the challenge of climate change.

2. As the mover of this initiative and in the light of my earlier work on the issue of climate change, I was appointed by the committee on 10 October 2016 to serve as rapporteur. On the same occasion, the committee designated me to represent it at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP22) held from 7 to 18 November 2016 in Marrakech (Morocco), which gave me the opportunity to present our Assembly’s position at the parliamentary meeting held by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the Moroccan Parliament during this conference. Moreover, I took advantage of this visit to hold a few high-level meetings with the Moroccan authorities with a view to gathering information for my report. Further fact-finding included the parliamentary meeting and various events held on 12 and 13 November 2017 during the COP23 in Bonn (Germany).

3. Building on the discussions in the committee, the present text centres on the need for close and pragmatic partnerships between developed and developing countries for launching projects and the exchange of good practice to tackle climatic challenges more effectively. This report therefore takes stock of the international community’s action against climate change in the light of the Paris Agreement and demonstrates that investing in more environmentally friendly development and global sustainable policies makes good economic sense, as well as being a responsible policy choice for the future. It reviews the latest proposals for mainstreaming climate concerns into strategic priorities and considers challenges for translating the commitments of the Paris Agreement into real life. The prospects as of late got cloudier after President Trump of the United States announced the withdrawal of the United States from this Agreement.

2. The Paris Agreement – a springboard for global action on climate

4. Our planet’s climate clock keeps ticking. Climate change is a man-made disaster that can still be reversed if it serves as a wake-up call for “cleaner” and “greener” development. The impact of climate change can already be observed on ecosystems, with effects set to continue for many decades to come; immediate action is necessary on a global scale. The human race can sail together out of the storm, or drown together if we fail. The Kyoto Protocol of 1997 was a first move by 40 countries in the right direction. With the Paris Agreement signed in December 2015, we now have 195 signatories committed to action (174 countries had ratified this treaty by February 2018;³ consequently, even with the United States pulling out, over 70% of global emissions are covered). While the Kyoto process pursued a “top-down” approach, the logic has shifted to “bottom-up” with the Paris Agreement.

5. Equipped with the principle of common but differential responsibility and the promise of US\$100 billion in the Green Climate Fund to secure adaptation policies, we need more *de facto* solidarity between developed and developing countries to share know-how. To make the Paris Agreement a living instrument, we need strong partnerships between public authorities and the private sector at all levels, so that the use of resources does not exceed the limits of our planet’s capacity and preserves it from overheating. Greenhouse gas emissions must be cut to stop temperatures from rising more than 2°C by 2050. Ideally, we should aim for a 1.8°C limit underpinned by global and national targets on emissions.

6. The Council of Europe, together with the European Union, has championed European efforts on global climate action. Its Parliamentary Assembly has followed the negotiators of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) from Kyoto to Paris with a series of reports and declarations on

3. Among the Council of Europe member States the following have signed but not yet ratified the Paris Agreement: the Russian Federation, San Marino and Turkey.

climate, water and food security, the new Sustainable Development Goals, energy diversification and non-conventional fossil fuels, nanotechnology implications for public health and the environment⁴ – to mention just a few salient issues examined with climate imperatives in mind.

7. As committed parliamentarians on behalf of the Council of Europe, we are duty-bound to advocate for sustainable development, which is the only way forward to prevent human rights violations (notably regarding the rights to life, water, food and shelter) due to climatic disasters. The cost of extreme climatic events is ever increasing, as is the cost of inaction: across Europe, this represented €400 billion between 1980 and 2013 according to the European Environment Agency; the climate bill passed from €7.6 billion a year in the 1980s to €13.7 billion a year in the 2000s.⁵ In the present circumstances, Europe is uniquely positioned to take the global leadership on climate, in particular if it forges a green alliance with major players such as China.

3. Lessons from the COP22 (Marrakesh (Morocco), 7-18 November 2016): co-operation and efficient policies to face climate change

8. Our climate is warming at an alarming and unprecedented rate: we have a duty to respond. The highest political commitment to combat climate change is urgently needed, as was recognised in the Marrakech Action Proclamation endorsed in November 2016, one year after the conclusion of the Paris Agreement.⁶ The measures proposed by the Paris Agreement, which came into force on 4 November 2016, must be effectively enforced. Details concerning implementation still need to be decided and this process should be completed by the end of 2018 according to what was agreed to at the COP22. Legislators are a central element of this implementation. A five-year roadmap to assess national policies to see whether they support the agreed national targets, should be approved in every signatory country. This will allow for monitoring progress in the implementation of commitments undertaken in line with the Paris Agreement.

9. To this end, co-operation between developed and developing countries must also be strengthened. The COP22 showed that there were some disagreements concerning what action to take. Developing countries were more focused on adaptability and resilience, whereas developed countries were keener to target emissions. This lack of consensus tends to penalise the most vulnerable populations which already bear the brunt of climate change. According to the French economist Thomas Piketty, the trend of greater inequalities will be exacerbated by climate mitigation and adaptation efforts. Paris policy proposals on sustainability therefore have to be integrated nationally bearing in mind the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and the need for enhanced solidarity with the most vulnerable countries.

10. Sustainable agriculture and adaptation to climate change were the major topics of the COP22. Several initiatives regarding food security were discussed as this, due to climate warming, is going to be a crucial challenge for populations living in drought-prone regions. Developing countries need to attract foreign investment so that they can adapt to the effects of climate change on their agriculture and still play a full part in reducing global greenhouse gas emissions.

11. Sustainable agriculture implies a more parsimonious and more rational use of resources. The best energy or resources are the ones that are not consumed. A study by the University of Hull⁷ reveals the multiple benefits of new technologies for a more efficient use of water and energy in agriculture. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 70% of fresh water consumption in the world is attributable to agriculture. Besides, by 2030, world agriculture may have to produce up to 50%

4. [Resolution 1976 \(2014\)](#) "Climate change: a framework for a global agreement in 2015" (rapporteur: Mr John Prescott, United Kingdom, SOC); [Resolution 1977 \(2014\)](#) on energy diversification as a fundamental contribution to sustainable development (rapporteur: Ms Doris Barnett, Germany, SOC); [Resolution 1975 \(2014\)](#) "Stepping up action against global inequalities: Europe's contribution to the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) process" (rapporteur: Sir Alan Meale, United Kingdom, SOC); [Resolution 1957 \(2013\)](#) "Food security – a permanent challenge for us all" (rapporteur: Mr Fernand Boden, Luxembourg, EPP/CD); [Recommendation 1917 \(2013\)](#) "Nanotechnology: balancing benefits and risks to public health and the environment" (rapporteur: Mr Valeriy Sudarenkov, Russian Federation, SOC); [Resolution 2085 \(2016\)](#) "Inhabitants of frontier regions of Azerbaijan are deliberately deprived of water" (rapporteur: Ms Milica Marković, Bosnia and Herzegovina, SOC); [Resolution 2140 \(2016\)](#) on the exploration and exploitation of non-conventional hydrocarbons in Europe (rapporteur: Mr Geraint Davies, United Kingdom, SOC); [Resolution 2152 \(2017\)](#) on "new generation" trade agreements and their implications for social rights, public health and sustainable development (rapporteur: Mr Geraint Davies, United Kingdom, SOC).

5. "Climate change poses increasingly severe risks for ecosystems, human health and the economy in Europe", European Environment Agency, 2017.

6. [Marrakech Action Proclamation for our Climate and Sustainable Development](#).

7. "Economic and environmental impact of irrigation system: A case study of Souss-Massa-Draa region in Morocco", University of Hull, Logistics Institute, 2016.

more food depending on the region and this represents a huge challenge. In dry regions, the water shortage is already worrying, including for households. The transition to sustainable agriculture by the use of modernised water supply systems and more efficient irrigation could allow savings of up to 40% in comparison with traditional water use patterns. This would also help reduce carbon emissions and relieve pressure on the critical aquifers in dry regions. Green finance should enable developing countries to green their economies and build resilience.⁸ Besides immense economic opportunities for sustainable development, this transition would boost the creation of skilled jobs and anti-poverty action.

12. When discussing “decarbonisation” policies, we should keep in mind the fact that carbon emissions are just a fraction of the overall greenhouse gas emissions. For example, methane has a global warming potential 86 times that of CO₂ on a 20-year frame. Animal agriculture is responsible for about 18% of greenhouse gas emissions, consisting predominantly of methane. This often ignored aspect has to be properly taken into account for the transition to environmentally friendly, green development. In total, man-made greenhouse gases include seven types of emissions (CO₂, CH₄, N₂O, HFC, PCF, SF₆, NF₃) among which CO₂ has the lowest global warming potential but is also that which has contributed the most to heating up the planet since 1750.⁹

4. Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action, through investment and greater involvement of all stakeholders

13. The collective movement started with the Paris Agreement will be crucial to ensuring a sustainable future for all and the irreversibility of the dynamics, according to the Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC. Under the Paris Agreement, in addition to States, regional authorities and private businesses are willing to make commitments and take initiatives favouring climate-friendly, sustainable development. It is in this spirit that the Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action (“Marrakech Partnership”) was launched during the COP22. Designed to provide a strong foundation for the UNFCCC process, it is intended to catalyse and support climate action by parties and non-party stakeholders alike in the period from 2017 to 2020, giving effect to the existing arrangements agreed by parties at the COP21 in Paris. The Marrakech Partnership seeks to involve multiple actors in pro-climate action: it supports voluntary collaboration including civil society, the private sector, financial institutions, cities and other subnational authorities, local communities and the population at large.

14. It is crucial that governments work in partnership with major financial actors, development banks and private institutions to mobilise finance on the scale required for transition to a low-carbon, climate-resilient global economy. Without financial power supporting sustainable development objectives, the goals of the Paris Agreement cannot be reached in a timely manner. In this context, public-private investment partnerships should be particularly encouraged. The renewable energy field is a good example of a sector where private-public partnerships can wield substantial benefits to both sides – and the climate cause. As many European countries have already started their transition to cleaner energy, private companies could position themselves as industrial facilitators of energy transition across the continent and its neighbourhood.

15. Private-public partnerships will not work optimally without synergies with universities, research centres and civil society. Data and know-how transmission on a European scale should boost the search for new sustainable solutions. Civic action by citizens should also be given more attention: the States must establish a global framework to reach the Paris goals, while citizens in Europe and all over the world have to play their part as conscious, well-informed and supportive actors of this gigantic effort. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and local authorities enable sustainability action at regional or urban level. Agenda 21, a comprehensive United Nations action plan launched at the Earth Summit in 1992, remains a useful tool not only for multilateral organisations and governments around the world, but also for NGOs and local authorities. The Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action set up a structured and coherent platform to step up this global and urgently needed action.

16. The level of civic and regional partnership between developed and developing nations/regions follows the Kyoto Agreement as the global framework and the Paris Agreement with national commitments to national targets. Such co-operation is a significant step in reducing carbon emissions at regional level. One major example of partnership is Hull University (United Kingdom), which has plans for the implementation of regional

8. “Paris Agreement and Marrakech Climate Conference”, House of Commons Library, Elena Ares.

9. “Key figures on climate – France and worldwide”, 2016 edition, Institute for Climate Economics, French National Observatory on the Effects of Climate Warming (*Observatoire national sur les effets du réchauffement climatique*) and the French Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Energy.

development via agreements between the Humber (United Kingdom), Morocco and Ghana regions. The University of Hull has thus established a new Energy and Environmental Institute to develop this innovative regional partnership approach between a Moroccan region and Ghana under the Estuarial Agreement.

5. Estuarial and urban models: benefits of sustainable development and low carbon economy for climate

17. If the 19th century was all about the inception of industry to boost production and the 20th century economy was built around consumption, now, the 21st century economy must focus on sustainability. More environmentally friendly development does not necessarily conflict with economic development; it can actually support it and wield substantial benefits to society in the medium to long term. Indeed, according to the Global Footprint Network, 48 countries managed to keep their gross domestic product (GDP) growth and cut their ecological footprint between 2000 and 2013, whereas the global footprint has been in an ever growing deficit since 1971. This sustainable growth relies primarily on a low carbon economy, renewable energies, rational use of resources (combined with waste recycling) and close-range circuits. Various economic models may be relevant depending on the geographical and economic situation. Estuarial and urban models are presented here to illustrate the huge potential of green development for both the local population and the climate.

5.1. The Humber estuary model

18. In terms of climate-friendly development, the Humber estuary is an eloquent example. The Humber is a north-eastern region of the United Kingdom with a population of nearly one million and an economy worth £14 billion a year. A study conducted in 2009¹⁰ has shown that a 30% drop in the Humber's carbon emissions between 1990 and 2022 is achievable through cost-effective or cost-neutral investment. This modernisation leading to a low carbon economy has a considerable potential to reduce energy use and carbon footprints while creating jobs in new economic sectors. According to this study, "decarbonisation" on a regional scale is possible, with the technological and behavioural options being readily available. Moreover, worldwide, the size of the low carbon and environmental goods and services sectors is estimated to be worth £3.2 trillion a year and is growing steadily, which illustrates the attractiveness of the sector for private investors.

19. The key to this low carbon development on a regional scale is renewable energy production that is technologically feasible and economically attractive. The main advantages here are: a gradual emancipation from the dependence on fossil fuels; a significant reduction in pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions; and, last but not least, new future-oriented jobs. In the case of the Humber, wind energy has been chosen with inshore and offshore turbines installed: the region counts three of the world's biggest wind farms and its industries are working on the development of high-performance turbines. Solar energy, too, remains an option to be pursued further in the sunny areas thanks to considerable technology improvements in recent years (although more progress is needed in recycling used equipment).

20. This particular model is also an example of the Moroccan civic partnership with the Humber estuary, which produces 20% of British electric power in one of the largest European areas of carbon production. This challenge has led the Humber estuary to a civic partnership development contributing to the United Kingdom's statutory requirement under the Paris Agreement to reduce Britain's carbon emissions by 80% by 2050. Civic partnership agreements are developed with regions in Ghana and Morocco. Importantly, this estuarial model has been endorsed by the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, who piloted the international community's action on Millennium Development Goals in the partnerships field.

21. Estuaries have long played a central part in the economic lifeblood of all major coastal and maritime countries. They are hubs of development themselves, with ports, cities and industries, but also a key connecting link as transport corridors within and between countries. They are also vital for wildlife and link the seas with the river catchments. Therefore, the main aim of estuarial development is to allow economic growth and benefits for society while at the same time protecting wildlife. Estuaries may be both sources of carbon emissions (from transport, urban areas and industry) and also sinks for carbon storage. The loss of natural wetlands reduces their capacity for this, and because of this they need special protection. The estuarine uses need, first and foremost, to be sustainable, in order to withstand stressors from development. We thus require management models based on what we may call an integrated approach to "carbon, corridors and connectivity".

10. "The Economics of Low Carbon cities: A Mini-Stern Review for the Humber", Anny Gouldson, Niall Kerr, Corrado Topi, Ellie Dawkins, Johan Kuylenstierna and Richard Pearce, Centre for Low Carbon Futures.

5.2. The urban model(s) and challenges

22. As urban citizens are increasingly dominating the planet's population, shaping a green urban development model to cope with climate change and pollution is becoming vital. To achieve a successful environmental transition, cities have to be managed in a resilient manner: enhancing adaptive capacity can drastically decrease the vulnerability of cities to climate-related risks and reduce their environmental footprint. Adaptive capacity relies on know-how, modern technologies and infrastructure, as well as economic resources and effective institutions. Some ambitious cities such as Oslo and Seoul are already pursuing a zero-emissions campaign, with the former aiming to achieve this goal less than a decade from now.

23. Urban adaptation to climate change in Europe is a task that concerns all levels of government. While municipalities and local authorities focus on the implementation of place-based adaptation measures, national and European authorities have a supporting role to play.¹¹ Where nation-States are slow or inefficient in tackling environmental imperatives, cities must assert their responsibility and right to usher in a more sustainable world.¹² Enterprising municipalities can put on track truly innovative projects, such as for facilitating the expansion of electric-powered car fleets, investment in green infrastructure and modernisation of urban housing. Horizontal co-ordination between different sectors should amplify the impact of the measures taken.

24. Urban models, just like estuarial models, being set up in developed countries could also be tried as pilot models in developing countries. Assisted by technological progress, economic development should become less voracious in terms of resources used, in particular through enhanced energy efficiency and close-range circuits. The latter will be crucial for anchoring sustainability because the transport of goods and resources (including energy) is costly both economically and environmentally. Circular economy is a part of the equation too, and should gradually prevail over "business as usual" in order to reduce waste and compensate for the depletion of non-renewable resources. This transition to greater sustainability needs to build on reduced energy consumption and a strategic orientation towards greater use of renewables. With the European and world population growing, energy and resources must, more than ever, be used with effectiveness and reason.

25. China's urban sprawl has long been likened to an environmental nightmare with massive pollution: in two decades, from 1991 to 2012, the urban population doubled to reach 53%, whilst air pollution limits were respected in only 8 out of 74 major cities in 2014 and serious health problems exploded among the population. However, the wind may now be turning as the country's central authorities are actively experimenting with a holistic eco-city concept, such as in Guyang, which I had the opportunity to visit recently. No less than 280 cities have an ambition to pursue urban transformation based on green transport and buildings, large vegetation areas, smart waste management and recycling, water preservation and massive use of renewable energy sources (for business and residential needs). If this green urban concept lives up to expectations, it might become a global reference for green urban excellence.¹³

26. Moreover, with the Paris Agreement goals in mind, the "green silk-road" sub-regional strategy of China is weaving a new large-scale eco-investment track for European and Chinese enterprises across urban and rural areas of south-east Asia. All in all, China's 7 000-mile "Belt and Road" initiative involves 60 countries connecting the Asian Pacific region with the European economies. This initiative focuses on promoting policies, co-ordination, connectivity of infrastructure and facilities for unimpeded trading and financial integration, with ecological considerations involving extensive consultation and shared benefits. The corridors of growth are also developing in Europe with the European Union's concept of "motorways of the sea" and the land corridor stretching from Ireland through the United Kingdom into continental Europe.

6. European nations standing together for the global climate cause

27. Sustainable development is a long-term and large-scale strategy for the future we want: the new Sustainable Development Goals agreed by the international community in 2015 are crystal clear in urging action to combat climate change as part of the broad vision for mankind for the next few decades. Climate change is deep-rooted in the industrial expansion of developed countries which have neglected the environment for far too long. Europe's southern and south-eastern regions are particularly vulnerable and

11. "Urban adaptation to climate change in Europe", Report of the European Environmental Agency, 2012.

12. "How to fix climate change: put cities not countries in charge", article by Benjamin Barber, *The Guardian*, 7 May 2017.

13. *The Online Journal of the China Policy Institute*, 26 June 2017, Nottingham, United Kingdom.

need prompt action.¹⁴ However, solutions implemented now will take time to show results, which is why the sustainable development goals need solid and continuous political backing. European nations have to face the global climate challenge together, whether they belong to the European Union or not.

28. Brexit is causing unhelpful confusion. However “the UK is leaving the EU, not Europe”. The British climate policy is so enmeshed in EU environmental law that negotiating future changes in the trading relationship would inevitably pose a question of either complying with or seeking to adopt measures equivalent to EU environmental standards in general and climate goals more specifically. The decision to leave the European Union might put at stake the stability of United Kingdom policies and its commitment to the European and global climate cause. Brexit could have some serious environmental consequences not only in the United Kingdom but also more broadly in Europe.¹⁵ In many areas, such as species conservation or air and water quality, European and British futures are bound together.

29. “It will be vital for the UK and the EU to continue to co-operate in order to protect the shared European environment” according to the British House of Lords. Environment was not the main topic during the Brexit referendum campaign and 80% of the British people support at least the same level of environmental protection – if not higher – than that sought under EU law. The British Government will therefore have no respite and will need to map out environmental and climate priorities rapidly. Beyond the domestic environmental legislation there is a deep necessity for mutual co-operation between the United Kingdom and continental Europe.

30. Mainstreaming sustainable development and resilience to climate change in national policies through European law is a considerable challenge. Further to the EU policy benchmarks on climate,¹⁶ the Council of Europe instruments, notably the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5, “the Convention”) and the European Social Charter (revised) (ETS No. 163, “the Charter”), together with the case law of the European Court of Human Rights, are all relevant for the climate cause.¹⁷ The Court has ruled that the right to life (Article 2 of the Convention) covers environmental hazards to human security and that in some cases Article 8 which protects the right to private life may be applied. Moreover, the Charter’s Article 11 provides for the protection of a healthy environment through the right to protection of health. Even if these tools were not initially designed for environmental protection, they can be invoked in the protection of individual rights that may be affected by the environment and, by extension, climatic disasters.

31. Pro-climate alliances between States, local communities and cities would usefully complement action at European level. The aim is to improve policy coherence to face climate change across different policy areas and governance levels. This is particularly true in respect of pollution problems which spill over national borders and have an impact on climate and public health. European regulations on air quality, such as those established by EU legislation, have clear advantages over stand-alone national efforts to rein in pollution.¹⁸ The wider the co-operation, the more tangible the results which can be achieved.

7. Worldwide litigation on climate change

32. It is a widely accepted practice for citizens to sue a State when it has failed to do something it should have done. Various States have been taken to court because they failed to ensure a proper protection of the environment, or because public policies were deemed not efficient enough. Now, States can be held responsible for climate change. Although the very first case of climate litigation dates from 1994, the first milestone case in Europe on climate change itself is from 2015 when some 900 Dutch citizens sued their State and won (Urgenda climate case). Indeed, the Court ordered the government to lower greenhouse gas emissions by 25% by 2020 as opposed to 17% at best on current track (however the verdict is now undergoing the appeal procedure).

14. “Climate change poses increasingly severe risks for ecosystems, human health and the economy in Europe”, European Environmental Agency, 2017.

15. “Brexit: environment and climate change”, House of Lords, European Union Committee, 12th Report of Session 2016-17 (Paper 109).

16. The 2020 climate and energy package seeks a 20% cut in greenhouse gas emissions (compared to 1990 levels), a 20% share of EU energy to be produced from renewables and a 20% improvement in energy efficiency. The 2030 climate and energy framework puts these targets at, respectively, 40%, 27% and 27%.

17. “Manual on Human Rights and the environment”, Council of Europe, 2nd edition, 2012.

18. The committee is currently preparing a report for the Assembly on “Air quality and diesel emissions in urban centres” (rapporteur: Mr Serhii Kiral, Ukraine, EC).

33. In the same year in Germany, environmental associations sued the State for not bringing down air pollution to within legal limits. The United Kingdom was also sued by its citizens in 2015-2016, when the Supreme Court ruled that the State did not respect the Air Quality Directive (of the European Union) due to failure to take immediate measures to reduce N₂O (nitrous oxide) emissions in line with EU standards. In both the German and British case, the population's grievances to a large extent concerned gases that are not only pollutants but also greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming.

34. Portuguese children are preparing to sue Council of Europe member States after devastating fires took a deadly toll in Portugal in the summer of 2017. They believe that the member States – collectively responsible for about 15% of global emissions – are to blame for those fires because they did not act strongly enough to stop climate change which led to massive fires. The claimants, represented by environmental lawyers and the British NGO Global Legal Action Network, are very determined to act as representatives of the current and future generations.

35. In France, an association "*Notre affaire à tous*" ["It concerns us all"] pleads for more climate justice and has criticised the French authorities for the lack of ambition in policies against climate change despite a major energy-climate package officially launched in the summer of 2017. For this association, currently foreseen measures and public investment are too weak to achieve substantial reductions in emissions in the near term. In the margins of the "One Planet Summit" (organised just after the COP23 meeting in Bonn), the association has raised the pressure on the government and might proceed to legal action in 2018.

36. Overall, environmental prosecutions are increasing worldwide: close to 900 legal actions have been launched since 1994, with about a quarter of court cases relating to climate change.¹⁹ This litigation can change a lot of things, and should not be underestimated by the States concerned, notably the United States where the lion's share of court cases have been launched (over 600). Fourteen of the 25 countries studied in terms of climate litigation are Council of Europe member States, representing 80 out of 250 lawsuits reviewed, and another 42 cases concern the European Union. So far, about 40% of cases were brought by corporations challenging governmental decisions that protect the climate and have an impact on businesses. Thus, on one side there are companies that sue the government because it is too eco-friendly, and on another side there are NGOs, associations and citizens (about 33% of cases) that sue their government because it is not eco-friendly enough. Importantly, however, two thirds of cases related to climate litigation have had a favourable outcome for the planet, because the courts chose to strengthen, or at least to preserve, existing climate regulation.

8. The crucial years ahead for squeezing emissions – concluding remarks

37. According to calculations by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the coming three years will be crucial for reining in greenhouse gases. The fact that the last four years (2014-2017) were the hottest on record for our planet, but with carbon emissions remaining globally stable, gives hope that the emissions' curve could be bent downwards by 2020. This goal is both monumental and achievable in the opinion of Christiana Figueres, the former chief of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change who steered States Parties towards the signature of the Paris Agreement, because this "challenge coincides with an unprecedented openness to self-challenge on the part of subnational governments inside the US, governments at all levels outside the US, and of the private sector in general".

38. The impact of the much-criticised US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, as announced by the Trump administration, could be contained thanks to pro-climate action by the US federal States, global and local business leaders, as well as massive multi-level efforts all over the world. The outcome of the G20 meeting in Hamburg (7-8 July 2017) shows the strong political will of the leading nations to deploy efforts on climate deep and wide with an emphasis on renewable energy sources and sustainable development. The European Union, China, India, the Russian Federation, Australia and many more big global players have pledged to continue the fight against climate change "with or without the US". At the COP23 in Bonn (6-17 November 2017), an alternative "We are still in" delegation of high-level non-federal US actors, launched the "America's Pledge" report; it shows how the coalition of cities, States and businesses representing over half of the US economy intends to step up climate action towards honouring the national commitment under the Paris Agreement²⁰.

19. "Global trends in climate change legislation and litigation", 2017 update, by the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment, the Sabin Center for Climate Change Law, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), and the Centre for Climate Change Economics and Policy (hosted by the University of Leeds and the London School of Economics).

39. In a worst-case scenario, the American decision could add 0.3°C to global temperatures towards the end of this century according to the United Nations World Meteorological Organisation; in the better and more likely scenarios, the global reaction could lead to scaled-up pro-climate measures worldwide. This positive thinking stems overwhelmingly from enterprises and local authorities voluntarily making clean investment choices for the future. For instance, already in 2015 clean energy sources (such as wind and solar ones) constituted more than half of the new electric power capacity installed that year around the world (as stated by the International Energy Agency), and many countries – with the exception of the United States under the Trump administration – are phasing out coal. The tide has turned in favour of green and responsible corporate strategies in response to public expectations.

40. In this context, the rationale for parliamentary involvement is also becoming stronger: elected representatives connect their electorate with policy-making bodies, in particular through the oversight of government in implementing domestic and international commitments, allocating budgetary resources in a balanced manner and ensuring the continuity of long-term investment destined to guarantee prosperity for current and future generations. It is regrettable that national delegations to global climate change meetings (COPs) rarely include parliamentarians; this state of affairs could change if European countries systematically associated parliamentarians and thus led by example. This is one of the recommendations that the present report should make.

41. Parliamentarians should moreover plead for the timely and full replenishment of the global Green Fund (set up under the UNFCCC) with the US\$100 billion promised years ago to developing countries. This fund is necessary to assist the more vulnerable and poorer countries in combining development and sustainability without “reinventing the wheel” or making the mistakes that developed countries made in the past. Each country is facing specific but sizeable challenges in terms of climate commitments and sustainable development in the framework of the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals. It is time to make the “polluter(s) pay”-principle work in real life, and parliamentarians could propose adapted solutions in their national context through, for instance, carbon taxes, abolition of subsidies to fossil energy sources and redesigned waste management policies.

42. The time for completing the implementation modalities of the Paris Agreement by the end of 2018 is rapidly running out. Legislators will have the duty to check if a five-year roadmap for assessing national climate policies is on track and in line with the agreed national targets. They will also have to push for the ratification of the Paris Agreement in some countries (three ratifications by the Council of Europe member States are still outstanding) and monitor progress in the implementation of commitments undertaken. At the European level, broader support to the European Emissions Trading System is necessary: for instance, the non-EU countries could join the scheme as Switzerland did.²¹

43. Moreover, specific efforts will be needed to adapt each country's energy mix so as to increase the share of renewable energy sources and reduce the share of fossil fuels. As the earlier reports of this Assembly have pointed out, putting a solid ceiling on global emissions requires keeping 80% of existing fossil fuel resources underground, or converting them to non-energy uses (as raw materials) in the chemical industry, construction and other sectors.²² We should also reiterate the warning concerning non-conventional hydrocarbon production which is incompatible with sustainable development and climate goals.²³ In a bold move, some countries, such as France and the United Kingdom, are already committing to phase out petrol and diesel cars as a matter of priority by 2040, while some big cities plan to enact bans much earlier.

44. Many European cities are taking forward-looking initiatives on sustainable development and should be encouraged to persevere: what is good for lowering pollution (in terms of mobility, resource use and waste management) is also good for the global climate cause. Circular economy schemes can be tested at local level and then be mainstreamed at national level. Similarly, the estuarial development model could be promoted more actively through the existing development aid schemes.

20. The US committed to reducing its emissions by 26%-28% below 2005 levels by 2025. Between 2005 and 2015, clean technologies and innovation led by States, cities and businesses have enabled the United States to reduce its net greenhouse gas emissions by 11.5% whilst the country's economy grew by 15% in that period.

21. By signing a formal agreement on 23 November 2017, the European Union and Switzerland agreed to join efforts on emissions trading.

22. At present, about 6% of fossil fuels are used for non-energy purposes in the European Union.

23. See the Assembly reports on “Climate change: a framework for a global agreement in 2015” ([Doc. 13362; Resolution 1976 \(2014\)](#)) and on “The exploration and exploitation of non-conventional hydrocarbons in Europe” ([Doc. 14196; Resolution 2140 \(2016\)](#)).

45. In conclusion, climate change as a global problem requires a global solution with local inputs: “Think global, act local.” The health of our planet is the key to our own prosperity. A reliable path to this continued prosperity is sustainable development which needs to be mainstreamed at all levels of governance, first and foremost through local communities and cities. The Paris Agreement embodies a global solution for the climate and represents a beacon for action at national (from local to subnational) and international levels. We as parliamentarians have a moral duty to deliver on this overwhelming challenge – to anchor a more sustainable future for us all now.