



European Economic and Social Committee

NAT/665
The Paris Protocol

Brussels, 2 July 2015

OPINION

of the

European Economic and Social Committee

on

The Paris Protocol – A blueprint for tackling global climate change beyond 2020

COM(2015) 81 final

Rapporteur: **Lutz Ribbe**

On 25 March 2015, the European Commission decided to consult the European Economic and Social Committee, under Article 43(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, on

The Paris Protocol – A blueprint for tackling global climate change beyond 2020
COM(2015) 81 final.

The Section for Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment, which was responsible for preparing the Committee's work on the subject, adopted its opinion on 4 June 2015. The rapporteur was Lutz Ribbe.

At its 509th plenary session, held on 1 and 2 July 2015 (meeting of 2 July), the Committee adopted the following opinion by 193 votes to 12 with 9 abstentions.

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1. Conclusions and recommendations

- 1.1 The EESC expects the COP 21 negotiating parties to finally decide on a binding agreement which is both fair and ambitious. Apart from some minor exceptions, the Committee fully supports the Commission's negotiating position on this matter. However, it takes issue with the fact that the EU has yet to fully grasp the key role to be played by civil society in this process.
- 1.2 All parties to the framework convention on climate change must, without exception, assume responsibility for meeting the actual goal, namely to stabilise "greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic¹ interference with the climate system". Only then can even greater damage to human beings, the environment and future generations be prevented.
- 1.3 The principle of common but differentiated responsibility is correct. Most countries should rapidly embark on a process of transformation away from fossil fuels towards a high level of resource and energy efficiency and renewables. Those countries which today contribute little to climate change should be supported so that they can move directly towards a "low carbon economy". Major opportunities are opening up on this front, especially for innovative European businesses, which must be given political support in this regard. Care should be taken that such transformation does not impoverish people below the poverty line. Rather it should and must be used effectively to create fresh economic impetus, particularly at regional level, and to develop new decentralised, carbon-free energy production facilities, that involve the local people.

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i.e. man-made.

- 1.4 Negotiations at COP 21 will thus relate not to a conventional environmental issue, but rather to laying the foundations for a new global low carbon economy.
- 1.5 Such processes require pioneers. This is a role Europe has played successfully for many years. However, it can no longer be said that Europe is going it alone when it comes to tackling climate change. Many other economic blocs now invest heavily in the transformation process and in green technologies, without taking a more active role in the COP negotiations. Regardless of the outcome of the negotiations in Paris, in reality the battle for future markets in green technologies that are important for protecting the climate started a long time ago, and it is a battle that Europe needs to fight, whether or not COP 21 produces results.
- 1.6 Negotiations at the COP will not cover important economic conditions which may lead to "carbon leakage" or "low carbon leakage". It is therefore necessary, even outside the ambit of the UNFCCC negotiations, to constantly bear in mind climate issues and their economic, social and political consequences. The EU needs to promote at all levels, for example, the creation of market-based mechanisms that help to ensure that product-based emissions are taken into account in global trade issues.
- 1.7 The EESC cautions that it is not by the (hopefully) ambitious outcomes of COP 21 that our climate will be saved, but rather by their systematic implementation. And it is not politicians who will implement them, but citizens. Although they must create the right conditions, with not only environmental but also economic and social consequences in mind, it is civil society that will put them into practice. The decisions therefore need broad public approval and support from businesses, trade unions and all other elements of civil society.

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- 1.8 Unfortunately, the multiple roles played by civil society (see point 6) will be discussed only on the outer fringes of the COP, and the EU has taken no evident steps to change this. The communication provides no tangible indications whatsoever as to the role civil society should play. The new climate policy cannot and must not be imposed "from above", but needs to be based on broad support of a majority of citizens, through an active civic dialogue including - all stakeholders and to be implemented "from below". The EESC recommends that the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament (EP) finally engage in intensive and structured dialogue, so that society's fundamental willingness to develop new structures is not jeopardised. The actual EU policy in this area to date has been very disappointing. In this context the EESC recommends that the Commission creates both the structural conditions and provides the necessary resources to allow civil society to engage with all stakeholders on the basis of equal recognition and inclusion.
- 1.9 The EESC stresses that there are environmental, economic and social opportunities linked with already existing CO₂ mitigation techniques which can lead to job creation and business development world- wide.

2. Background

- 2.1 23 years ago, in May 1992, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was adopted in New York. Article 2 of the convention set out its objective, namely to stabilise "greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic² interference with the climate system" and to mitigate possible consequences.
- 2.2 In the same year, the convention was signed by 154 states at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio. It entered into force in March 1994 and has now been ratified by 196 parties.
- 2.3 These states meet once a year at the Conference of Parties (COP), also known as the UN climate summits. To date, no measures have been adopted that would even come close to achieving the objectives of the convention: so far there are only binding targets – laid down in the Kyoto Protocol adopted at COP 3 in Kyoto – for maximum emissions for industrialised countries, but, as is well known, the Kyoto Protocol has not been ratified by all industrialised countries.
- 2.4 However, there is now consensus that, after 21 years of negotiations, during which global emissions have increased by almost 50% (from 30.8 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent in 1992 to 43.4 billion tonnes in 2011)³ and the negative impact of anthropogenic climate change has become increasingly clear, it is high time to take action.
- 2.5 Almost all scientific studies show that it is still possible to cap the temperature increase accordingly. To do so, we need to act very quickly to start implementing appropriately ambitious measures: the studies also show that, while the target can also in theory be achieved later on, this would involve a disproportionate increase in costs and entail massive damage, affecting millions of people and the economy to an equal extent.
- 2.6 The framework convention on climate change does not spell out exactly what "dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system" means. At the COP 16 (in 2010), the parties reached a political agreement to limit the global temperature increase to less than 2 degrees Celsius (or even 1.5 degrees) compared with pre-industrial levels. However, they did not provide any scientific basis to show this political agreement would actually achieve that objective.
- 2.7 The EESC would once again draw the attention of all stakeholders – both politicians and civil society – specifically to the fact that even today, with the global temperature increase much

² i.e. man-made.

³ <http://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/311924/umfrage/treibhausgasemissionen-weltweit/>.

lower than 2 degrees, there are clear signs of this interference and the serious consequences it entails. The 2°C limit therefore cannot be seen as a target to be reached, but rather as a ceiling to be undercut as much as possible.

3. The COP 21 in Paris

3.1 The 21st COP will be held in Paris in December 2015, at which, it has been promised, the necessary ambitious, fair and **binding** decisions for **all** 196 parties to the convention will – finally – be adopted in the form of a "global deal" that would enter into force in 2020.

3.2 The decisions being sought include:

- a) **tackling climate change**; the parties have undertaken to inform the UNFCCC secretariat of their national emission reduction targets (Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (= INDC)) by the end of March 2015. These targets should be ambitious and go beyond the efforts made to date. The sum of these INDCs should be enough to keep the global temperature increase below 2 degrees. A summary report assessing whether this will be achieved is to be published by 1 November 2015;
- b) measures to **adapt to climate change**;
- c) **financial arrangements** for tackling and adapting to climate change and for compensation ("loss and damage"); this includes the question of a) how the promised USD 100 billion per year will be paid in the run-up to 2020, and b) what the criteria and requirements will be for its distribution;
- d) issues surrounding **technology transfer** (taking account of "intellectual property");
- e) rules on **monitoring the agreement**, including with regard to measuring, reporting, monitoring/transparency etc.⁴; and, of particular importance,
- f) the legal framework for the agreement, i.e. the **binding nature of the decisions**.

3.3 Agreement also needs to be reached on what practical measures to protect the climate should be taken to make use of the period between December 2015, when the decisions are taken, and 2020, when the binding measures enter into force ("pre-2020 action").

3.4 Governments will also consider for the first time the way in which climate policies should be implemented. The EESC supports current references to the need to respect human rights and secure a just transition which maintains and creates decent work and good quality jobs in the transition to a low carbon economy.

3.5 The EU has summed up its position and expectations for COP 21 in the communication on *The Paris Protocol – a blueprint for tackling global climate change beyond 2020*⁵. It proposes, among other things, making the agreements binding by adopting the Paris

⁴ The parties are already required to publish regular reports including information on current greenhouse gas emissions and trends.

⁵ COM(2015) 81 final, 25.2.2015.

agreement as a protocol to the climate framework convention. It should "enter into force as soon as countries with a collective total of 80% of current global emissions have ratified it".

- 3.6 The parties to the convention are agreed in subscribing to the **principle of common but differentiated responsibility**, i.e. the principle that **all** parties must bear responsibility, whether or not they contribute heavily to climate change. The precise scope of their responsibility should depend on a number of very different factors such as historical and current emissions levels, economic strength, social situation, the extent to which they are impacted, etc.

4. **What European civil society expects from the COP 21 negotiations**

- 4.1 The EESC urges all negotiating parties to finally adopt a **legally binding** agreement in Paris. It strongly supports the EU's negotiating position set out in Commission communication COM(2015) 81 final.
- 4.2 At COP 21, a consensus needs to be reached on a prevention policy in which we take, today, ambitious and far-reaching decisions for tomorrow. These decisions will form the basis for the economic and social activities of future generations, and will also help to ease the suffering of people already experiencing the impact of climate change.
- 4.3 Negotiations at COP 21 will thus relate not to a conventional environmental issue, but rather to laying the foundations for a new global low carbon economy.
- 4.4 The EESC welcomes the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. Every contracting state must acknowledge its responsibility and can no longer shirk it, "hide" behind other countries or – as has sometimes happened in the past – take the attitude that they are only willing to take on responsibility if they are paid for it.

Tackling climate change

- 4.5 The Committee points out that a globally satisfactory level of emissions can be achieved only if everyone in the world produces an average of no more than 2 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent per year.
- 4.5.1 In Europe (where the average is approximately 9 t CO₂ equivalent per person per year), this could only be achieved by implementing the 2050 target (80-95% reduction in CO₂ emissions in Europe). China (currently at approx. 6 t CO₂ equivalent per person per year) would have to reduce its current per capita emissions by two thirds, and for example the United States (currently at 16.5 t CO₂ equivalent per person per year) and the current "world leader" Qatar (40 t CO₂ equivalent per person per year) would have to make even bigger reductions.

- 4.5.2 On the other hand, countries such as Mali (0.04 t CO₂ equivalent per person per year) and Rwanda (0.06 t CO₂ equivalent per person per year) cannot be expected to make reductions. The EESC does not therefore entirely agree with the Commission statement that there need to be "substantial and sustained reductions in greenhouse gas emissions by *all* countries". These countries should instead be moving directly towards a "low carbon economy". The climate policy responsibilities in terms of tackling and adapting to climate change are thus common but differentiated. These countries need urgent support, which at the same time opens up many opportunities for cooperation for innovative companies. European companies, which (still) hold 40% of all patents for green technologies, could benefit from this in particular.
- 4.5.3 It is important to note that the emissions data referred to above do not reflect the major differences that exist within countries' social strata and also the fact that the CO₂ emissions from manufacturing are not attributed to the countries in which they are produced but rather to those countries in which the products are used. If the opposite were true, then for example China would have a much better greenhouse gas record and Germany's would be worse⁶.
- 4.6 The EESC views the establishment of national emission reduction targets (INDC) as a central part of the COP 21 process. The considerable delays in the submission of INDCs to the UNFCCC secretariat⁷ is a very bad sign.
- 4.7 The EESC realises that it is still by no means clear whether proponents of a stringent COP 21 agreement will be able to build this kind of "solidarity for future generations" between 196 parties with very different current circumstances and in some cases very different political orientations and cultural backgrounds⁸.
- 4.8 The negotiations on the EU's 2030 climate and energy package, which were effectively a "COP" at EU level, showed that even at EU level it is almost impossible to implement what is being sought at COP, namely the establishment of clear national responsibilities. The EESC therefore finds it regrettable that there are no longer any binding national targets under the 2030 EU energy and climate package, which may make it more difficult to achieve Europe's common goal and to "assign" responsibilities⁹. Announcing INDCs for EU Member States would be a right signal for the COP negotiation.

Adaptation to climate change, financial regulation and technology transfer

- 4.9 "Differentiated responsibility" also means that there is a need for solidarity, in that we need to help less developed and financially weak countries, in particular, to build a climate-friendly

⁶ University of Maryland, see: www.tagesschau.de/ausland/klimaindex104.html.

⁷ The INDCs should be submitted by the end of March 2015. As at 17 May 2015, only Switzerland, the EU, Norway, Mexico, the USA, Gabon, Russia, Liechtenstein, Andorra and Canada had submitted their INDCs.

⁸ See: <http://www.futurejustice.org/>.

⁹ See EESC opinion on a Policy framework for climate and energy in the period from 2020 to 2030 (NAT/636), points 1.2 and 3.3.

"green" economy and enable them to deal with the damage caused by climate change, which often affects them the most. Care should be taken that such transformation does not impoverish people below the poverty line. Rather it should and must be used effectively to create fresh economic impetus, particularly at regional level, and to develop new decentralised, carbon-free energy production facilities, that involve the local people.

- 4.10 Financial matters and technology transfer therefore have an important role to play. The less developed countries have already been bitterly disappointed, because the once promised "development aid" (0.7% GDP) has for some time now not been provided in the amounts that were promised. This must not continue.

Legally binding arrangements and monitoring of the agreement

- 4.11 The EESC agrees with the EU statement that a **legally binding** agreement provides the crucial basis for a global level playing field and the implementation of key decisions.
- 4.12 The advantages of a **legally binding agreement** would be, *inter alia*:
- that it would send a clear political signal from all governments to business and investors, and also to the general public, that the goal of a low carbon economy is shared by the entire global community;
 - that it would provide a long-term and predictable framework, which encourages investments in carbon reduction and adaptation technologies, in a cost effective way;
 - that transparency and accountability would be clearly specified; and
 - that investment would be available for the required measures, in other words it would create a direct link to the real economy.
- 4.13 Civil society expects that the new climate agreement will take into account its demands for the need for a just transition, taking into account human and employee rights, considering social consequences, including loss and damage and issues of adaptation to climate change, particularly in the poorest countries.
- 4.14 It is imperative that implementation of the decisions must be transparent and verifiable, and countries which do not comply with decisions should no longer be able to reap the benefits offered by the agreement.
- 4.15 The EESC acknowledges that the proposal by the Commission for dynamism through regular reviews could allow for strengthening of mitigation commitments considering different national circumstances and evolving responsibilities.

Expectations of the EU's role in global climate protection

- 4.16 In recent years, the EU has gained a good reputation around the world for its approach to climate change issues. The EESC believes it is important, not only in the negotiations but also by means of an active policy outside these negotiations, to continue to build trust in the fact that the purpose of establishing an ambitious climate protection policy is not, for example, to gain economic advantages over other nations or economic interest groups.
- 4.17 The EU should continue to lead by example in a credible way at global level: in politics and business, negotiation and change processes like this cannot work without "pioneers" and "drivers". It is important to stress that the EU can play this leading role in a credible way only if it is shown that climate policy and positive economic development go hand in hand.
- 4.18 On a positive note, it can be seen that many measures that were first introduced in the EU, and were by no means uncontroversial at the time, have now been adopted by other countries. Examples include subsidies for renewable energy sources, as well as the emissions trading system, which even China is making some use of now.
- 4.19 The EESC welcomes the fact that the EU high representative, Frederica Mogherini, is focusing heavily on climate protection in her external policy, in the form of a climate diplomacy action plan¹⁰. Likewise, President Juncker's statement that he wants to make the EU the world number one in renewable energies – not just in the interests of protecting the climate, but also because it creates jobs and promotes energy security – is an important signal in the right direction.
- 4.20 The EU thus has something to show for itself at global level. It has, for example, demonstrated that economic growth can be decoupled from an increase in emissions. No economic area in the world has lower greenhouse gas emissions per unit of GDP than the EU. Many European businesses are frontrunners as far as energy and resource efficiency are concerned. This has a lot to do with the technological achievements, and thus the innovativeness, of European businesses; these have developed in response to the EU's comparatively stringent environmental legislation.
- 4.21 Nonetheless, Europe still has a lot to do: the target of reducing CO₂ emissions by 80-95% by 2050 will not be reached with technological innovation alone. This is apparent, for example, in the transport sector, where innovation in exhaust technology has been, at least in part, quite simply offset by the increase in the number of vehicles and roads. Structural changes will thus be required – i.e., there needs to be much greater consistency than in the past between climate policy and other policies.

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Discussed at the Foreign Affairs Council meeting on 19 January 2015, 5411/15.

5. The course of negotiations at COPs in recent years – and the real world outside the negotiations

- 5.1 The EESC has been following the climate negotiations for many years. It recognises how very important it is to reach a positive conclusion in Paris, but would also point out that the climate cannot be saved by decisions alone, but only by the implementation of practical measures.
- 5.2 The international community in Paris would no doubt find it easier to reach consensus if, for example, the common decisions from the Rio+20 conference had been, or were in the process of being, implemented – specifically, "phas[ing] out harmful and inefficient fossil fuel subsidies that encourage wasteful consumption and undermine sustainable development"¹¹. Even then, it was already recognised that market-based instruments (such as carbon taxes, emissions trading systems, etc.) should be used, which the EESC considers to be appropriate¹². A new International Monetary Fund working paper¹³ estimates the total of global direct and indirect subsidies for fossil fuels at an annual figure of USD 5.3 trillion (!), equating to more than USD 15 billion per day. Even with the envisaged Green Climate Fund amounting to USD 100 billion per year, the negative impact of these subsidies is not offset.
- 5.3 There are, however, huge gaps between political commitments and implementation which have shaken the confidence that civil society has in global political agreements. Paris must not reinforce these disappointments, but bring about a fundamental change.
- 5.4 However, it is also important for Europe to pay attention to developments occurring outside the "world of COP negotiations", in the "world of real economic development". For example:
- At COP 20 in Lima, California and China signed an agreement providing for close cooperation between these powerful economic blocs on renewable energy, electromobility and energy efficiency measures. There are no such strategic cooperation agreements with Europe.
 - China and the USA have headed the list of countries with the highest investment in renewable energy for several years now. In 2013, investment in renewable energy amounted to USD 54.2 billion in China, USD 33.9 billion in the USA, and USD 28.6 billion in Japan. The United Kingdom was fourth, with USD 12.1 billion, and Germany was fifth USD 9.9 billion. Particularly in Germany and Italy, investment in this area has fallen considerably¹⁴.

¹¹ See point 225 of the outcome document.

¹² See EESC opinion "Market-based instruments towards a resource efficient and low carbon economy in the EU" (NAT/620), [OJ C 226, 16.7.2014, p. 1](#), points 1.3, 1.7, 1.8.

¹³ IMF Working Paper "How Large are Global Energy Subsidies?" (WP/15/105).

¹⁴ Germany: USD 30.6 billion in 2011, USD 22.8 billion in 2012, to USD 9.9 billion in 2013. Italy: USD 28 billion in 2011 (4th in the world at the time), USD 14.7 billion in 2012, to EUR 3.6 billion in 2013 (now 10th in the world).

Global competitiveness, carbon leakage and/or low carbon leakage

- 5.5 In terms of "today", not all the decisions that need to be taken to achieve the objectives of the framework convention on climate change will result solely in win-win situations. It is therefore quite right to highlight the difficulties there will be in reconciling, where at all possible, the COP's decisions with short-term national or sectoral (economic) interests.
- 5.6 This will not always be possible, as there will obviously be sectors that will have no role, or a much smaller one, to play in the new low carbon economy, and will therefore lose out from the necessary structural changes. It does nobody any good to hide this fact; these sectors, and the people and regions concerned, have a right to know how politicians intend to handle these changes to ensure that they are socially responsible and cause as little disruption as possible. These difficulties must, however, also not be an excuse for not taking action today: it will be cheaper to act today to promote the transition to a low carbon economy than to repair the damage in the future¹⁵.
- 5.7 The issue of opening up future markets, e.g. in renewable energy (RE) or efficiency technologies, is vitally important for Europe's future competitiveness. Of course, the voices in Europe warning of "carbon leakage" and urging Europe not to forge ahead too quickly on its own need to be taken seriously.
- 5.8 But Europe is not on its own any more – it has global competition. We therefore now also need to address "low carbon leakage", in other words the risk that Europe could lose its past technological, and thus economic, lead in renewable energy and so on.
- 5.9 This may happen very quickly. In the field of renewable energy, Europe has been left behind when it comes to battery storage technology. China and California have taken the lead in electromobility, and the cheapest solar panels in the world are made in China; this cannot be attributed to wage dumping to any significant extent. Significantly higher public and private investments are urgently required in the R&D sector.
- 5.10 The present lack of a global level playing field constitutes a remarkable challenge for European businesses competing globally. Sectors such as steel, paper and chemical industries, where there is specific global interdependence, are still economically important today. In the EU, the climate impacts from manufacturing industries decreased by 31% between 1990 and 2012 thanks to technology development¹⁶.
- 5.11 It is not likely that the role of these industries can be completely substituted with new "green" industry branches by 2050. It would not serve the European economy nor the world climate if

¹⁵ Reference to the World Resource Institute's study *Better Growth, Better Climate: the New Climate Economy Report*.

¹⁶ EEA: Annual European Union greenhouse gas inventory 1990–2012 and inventory report 2014.

these industries were forced to move production outside the EU without reductions in global emissions.

- 5.12 The extent of this carbon leakage is often debated. It can be direct, moving factories and production overseas as a direct response to new political measures. But it can also be more indirect, shown through increasing investments overseas while keeping EU production for the time being. This is far more common in global companies today, driven by many production factors. As the products from these types of "old industries" are globally increasing, balanced incentives need to be created that also foster low-carbon technologies in such EU industries without lowering their relative competitiveness.
- 5.13 EU industry and trade must help contribute to lowering impact from their businesses in keeping with the target of minus 80-95% by 2050. The roadmap towards this target might however be different between the industries and businesses. EU industry and trade can contribute to the global target by creating, producing and exporting products and services that help other countries to lower their emissions. As long as this is done with lower climate impact in Europe than other places, this could mean that higher total emissions could be accepted in the short run, without however calling into question the 2050 European reduction target. It should therefore be examined whether such EU roadmaps are useful for each industry branch.
- 5.14 The problems of "carbon leakage" or "low carbon leakage" mentioned above are not part of the COP negotiations. Therefore the EU needs to ensure at all levels that, for example, market-based mechanisms are put in place that take account of, among other things, product-based emissions relating to global trade. Further steps have to be taken to deal with "carbon leakage", such as border carbon adjustment, a system aimed at reducing CO₂ emissions while ensuring a level playing field. Under this system, the price of imported goods will be increased at the border on the basis of a calculation of the mass emissions for those goods. Models in a recent study show that border carbon adjustment can substantially reduce carbon leakage in relevant sectors¹⁷.
- 5.15 However, border carbon adjustments in the form currently being discussed are not welcomed by some of Europe's major trading partners. This issue has to be negotiated in the WTO. The treaty allows the consideration of such "non-trade" issues. The difficulty of doing this in the absence of a global agreement on carbon pricing should not be underestimated. The concerns may be addressed through better BCA design. The bottom line is that border carbon tax adjustment is not an anti-dumping tool but a contribution to a worldwide sustainable climate policy, if well designed¹⁸.

¹⁷ See EESC opinion "Market-based instruments towards a resource efficient and low carbon economy in the EU" (NAT/620), [OJ C 226, 16.7.2014, p. 1](#), point 3.5.

¹⁸ Ibid.

- 5.16 In concrete terms, this means, for example, that provision should be made for relevant mechanisms in the TTIP or CETA negotiations.

What would the (partial) failure of the negotiations mean?

- 5.17 In the comments that follow, the EESC would like to point out that even the failure or partial failure of the COP 21 negotiations would by no means mark the end of climate protection efforts – though it would be regrettable and a major setback. We would not have the clarity and predictability that a binding agreement would provide, and which would be highly desirable for the economy and society in general and would give new impetus. However, in reality, the battle for future markets in green technologies started a long time ago, and it is a battle that Europe needs to fight, whether or not COP 21 produces results.
- 5.18 As is well known, climate protection is not the only argument justifying moves towards a low carbon economy. The nascent scarcity of fossil fuels, the issue of energy security, and the fact that in many areas RE technologies already produce cheaper energy than conventional fuels are all clear signposts down a path that we cannot turn back from.

6. The role of civil society

- 6.1 Just as the EESC, on the one hand, supports the positions set out in the Commission communication on the Paris protocol, it finds it incomprehensible, on the other, that the communication lacks any strategy for how the Commission intends to communicate its positions to civil society, or to organise with it the subsequent implementation of the decisions taken. For the EESC, the Commission clearly has an obligation, as far as its climate policy strategy is concerned, to enter into a structured dialogue with civil society and in particular with the representative institutional committees.
- 6.2 Civil society has at least three key roles. First, it must help to monitor the political negotiation process and exert societal pressure to ensure that not only are the above-mentioned binding decisions taken, but that those decisions are also in line with environmental, economic and social expectations.
- 6.2.1 Negotiations – such as the COP – are thus necessary only because there are different views within the international community regarding urgency, scope, financing, accountability, etc.). Were there to be consensus, there would be no need for negotiations. Even within civil society, there were (and still are) different positions. However, the latest COP have shown that it is certainly no longer "only" environmentalists, development groups, women's organisations and representatives of indigenous peoples – to name just a few of the stakeholders – who are calling for rigorous climate protection efforts, but also a broad-based global civil society movement.

- 6.2.2 We also particularly need to acknowledge the strong commitment of the (global) trade union movement and of many economic interest groups and businesses over many years – for example, the work of the ITUC and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development. It is recognised that a resource-efficient and climate-friendly economy opens up new opportunities for economic development.
- 6.2.3 COP 20 in Lima was an impressive demonstration of this on both sides, by both employers and employees, but also civil society as a whole, which shows the politicians responsible that very broad sections of society want more than has so far come out of the negotiations politically.
- 6.2.4 Even in regions and municipalities, climate protection work has taken on a whole new dimension. They too recognise not only that there is a need to prevent further damage to certain regions and to the people living and working there, but also that opportunities are emerging to create new value chains, which should be taken advantage of.
- 6.3 The second role of civil society is to be actively involved in implementing climate protection decisions. In the EESC's view, the policy in this respect needs to be reinvented in strategic terms, it should make such participation possible and it should move towards much closer involvement.
- 6.3.1 For example, it was crystal clear from the EESC's investigation into the extent to which civil society is involved in implementing the European Renewables Directive that a broad swathe of civil society, including many SMEs, want to be directly involved in, for example, the form of civic energy projects, so that they themselves can benefit from the new economic opportunities in their regions.
- 6.3.2 The success of the "energy transition" in Denmark and Germany, for example, is very much based on the fact that individuals, farmers, municipalities, cooperatives and small businesses are involved in energy production and benefit from it economically. However, opportunities to get involved here have been systematically made worse by the Commission, rather than better.
- 6.4 Thirdly, apart from monitoring the process and helping implement decisions, civil society can also help by spreading good practices and knowledge of positive developments in businesses. It is especially important to focus on those economic areas where there seems to be a common misconception that "nothing is done, emissions just keep growing", such as transport or industrial processes. Political decisions can be more relevant if the incentives are based on knowledge of current or anticipated developments in technology and business models. This civil society task can be carried out by means of conferences and information sharing that show the broad approach of commitment from the private sector, not least in the EU Member States.

- 6.5 The strategic role of civil society will barely feature in the COP discussions, which makes it all the more important for politicians to coordinate with civil society outside the COP process and to develop appropriate strategies.
- 6.6 The EU is lagging significantly behind here. For example, the Committee finds it regrettable that neither the EU's 2030 climate and energy package nor the proposal on a European energy union contain any concrete ideas for getting civil society involved.
- 6.7 The EESC recommends that the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament finally engage in intensive and structured dialogue, so that society's fundamental willingness to develop new mechanisms is not jeopardised. The new climate policy cannot and must not be imposed "from above", but needs to be based on broad support from all stakeholders and to be implemented "from below".

Brussels, 2 July 2015

The President
of the
European Economic and Social Committee

Henri Malosse
