



*Comité économique et social européen*



**Final declaration of the presidents of unions of Economic and Social Councils<sup>1</sup>**  
**and of the European Economic and Social Committee**

as a conclusion to the seminar “Will the Climate Conference keep its promises?”

Paris, 23 October 2015

1. Climate change poses an immediate and potentially irreversible risk to human society and to the biosphere. Scientific data prove that climate change is the result of a global warming that has been observed since the middle of the last century. Its major effects on human and natural systems are already apparent, across all continents and oceans.
2. Although the gravity of the climate change threat is now recognised, it is worrying that the international community has departed noticeably from the right way to limit the maximum average increase in global warming to 2°C in comparison to pre-industrial levels. As the situation stands in terms of the commitments contained in the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs), global emissions in 2030 in tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent will still be above the level that would allow the 2°C target to be achieved.
3. Civil society representatives from across the world, meeting in Paris on 23 October 2015 at a seminar of Economic, Social, Environmental and Cultural Councils and Committees, therefore call on governments to adopt substantial measures without delay to combat climate change and ensure that the international agreement that will be concluded in Paris in 2015 enables this objective to be achieved.
4. The agreement must be ambitious, looking beyond 2020 to eliminate global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2100. This objective will require an effective, transparent system for regularly verifying the efforts made by every signatory.
5. The agreement must be universal, global, sustainable, balanced and legally binding in nature. Governments will in this way send a clear political signal to society as a whole, with the international community united in its aim to establish a low-carbon economy.
6. While policy-makers are responsible for putting an appropriate framework in place, it is civil society as a whole which will be tasked with implementing and monitoring measures. Thus it is

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<sup>1</sup> Union of African Economic and Social Councils (UCESA), Union of Economic and Social Councils of French speaking countries (UCESIF) and International Association of Economic and Social Councils and of Similar Institutions (AICESIS), co-organizers of the seminar with the European Economic and Social Committee and the French Economic, Social and Environmental Council.

essential to involve civil society in the process of drawing up and implementing targeted policies. These decisions must therefore enjoy broad acceptance in society and be backed by businesses in the agricultural, industrial and service sectors, trade unions, all other civil society players and, more broadly, the general public. This requires a structured dialogue with all the relevant parties and new ways of involving civil society in the permanent mechanism for verifying commitments under the Paris agreement. The economic, social, environmental and cultural councils must be fully involved in this process.

7. The transition to a zero-carbon economy is based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. This means ensuring a fair balance between countries defined as developed or as developing, with the costs of transition shared fairly between them and within each country, taking responsibility and means into account in each case.
8. Countries must promote economic policies that support the creation of productive and decent jobs as part of a "fair transition" with social dialogue at its heart. Particular attention must be paid to agriculture: policies must favour low-carbon agriculture – particularly small-scale agriculture – emphasising food security and taking account of the role of soils in carbon capture.
9. A climate agreement in Paris would provide a new opportunity to strengthen North-South cooperation. Such an opportunity should be seized to give new impetus to the economy, putting it on a path of sustainable and inclusive development, and to introduce new, green technologies that engage the public and seek to secure public wellbeing. Mitigation and adaptation measures are essential and must play a key role in the agreement. There must be a focus on developing countries, in particular the least advanced countries and Small Island Developing States, which are the smallest contributors to climate change and yet the most vulnerable and least able to adapt to it without support from the international community. These countries must receive more support in their fight against the increasingly perceptible effects of climate change on their populations and environment and in their efforts to switch to a low-carbon economy.
10. The question of financing will be critical to the conclusion of an agreement at the Paris conference. The more consistently and steadily additional resources are mobilised to help them, the greater will be the efficacy and ambition of developing countries' efforts to address climate change. Persistent failure on the part of the developed countries to meet their international commitment to contribute 0.7% of GDP to development aid rankles with the least developed countries and should not be a precedent. States must mobilise sufficient funding to ensure that the United Nations Green Climate Fund and other funding sources for emissions reduction and adaptation measures have resources of at least USD 100 billion in 2020, this being the target unanimously adopted at the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference in 2009. To achieve this, all the options available should be explored in terms of alternative funding and market-based mechanisms such as carbon taxes and emissions trading schemes.