

# Liège Declaration on Adaptation to Climate Change

*Roadmap on adaptation to climate change in Europe of non-state actors gathered at*

*The Climate Chance Europe Wallonia Summit, 8-9 February 2024 in Liège,*

*Under the auspices of the Belgian Presidency of the EU Council*

We, European networks and organisations of non-state actors – including businesses, researchers, civil society, local governments –, gathered in Liège to discuss the future of the European Green Deal post-2024, in particular regarding adaptation to climate change, nature-based solutions (NbS) and resilience,

**Recognising** the increasing impact of our economic model, our consumption and resource management patterns and other anthropogenic factors on biodiversity and climate, the growing frequency and intensity of hazardous climate extremes, and the detrimental impacts they have on our societies, with exacerbated inequalities, the economy and ecosystem and recognising therefore the urgency of adapting to climate change;

**Noticing** the importance of building resilience of citizens and communities in the potential event of failure of socio-economic systems, particularly in respect to being able to source and maintain the essentials to sustain life (food, energy, medicine) and upholding a democratic framework that enshrines fundamental human rights;

**Stressing** that the unprecedented triple planetary environmental crisis (climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution), but also social, economic, and geopolitical crises are interconnected and mutually reinforcing, requiring a holistic, rights-based and intersectional approach that addresses these existential threats collectively;

**Reaffirming** that the best adaptation policy is a greenhouse gas emissions reduction policy, that the European Union has a key role to play in terms of exemplarity and influence on the emissions of other big emitters worldwide, and the need to develop the policies and maintain the initial ambition of the Green Deal;

**Highlighting** the necessity to base adaptation strategies on the latest available science, such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) scenarios of increasing global temperatures, the United Nations Environment Programme's Adaptation Gap reports, and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) reports on biodiversity loss, and taking into account the known commitments of States within the framework of the Paris Agreement;

**Noting** with concern that maladaptation, as defined by IPCC, and unmanaged cascading risks, may lead to dramatic and sometimes irreversible outcomes for ecosystems and our communities, and may create lock-ins of resources-intensive practices which are difficult to reverse and often exacerbate inequalities;

**Acknowledging**, that precarious populations, especially women and people facing multiple discriminations, often have less influence on adaptation planning and less benefits

brought by the adaptations policies, and are particularly at risk of incurring damages and job losses;

**Underlining** that, for all stakeholders, especially young people and future generations, the cost of inaction is higher than the cost of action and that the social impacts of adaptation policies have to be taken into account, aiming at social progress and gender equality, following to the guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all, as defined by the International Labour Organization (ILO);

**Highlighting** the potential co-benefits of NbS and ecosystem-based approaches, when adopting a human rights-based approach and ensuring environmental and social safeguards, to tackle the climate and biodiversity crises while contributing to disaster risk reduction, food and water security, resilience and benefitting human health, well-being, and the economy;

**Stressing** the importance of multilevel and multi-stakeholder action, among citizens, communities, education sector, local governments, associations, trade unions and the private sector, in collaboration with national and European institutions and supranational authorities and organisations;

**Underlining** the importance of an insurance system which preserves equality among citizens and territories, which is an actor of solidarity and prevention, leaving no one without insurance protection and support the stakeholders in their risk integration policies;

**Stressing** the urgent need to tackle the global water crisis with a comprehensive EU water strategy, an EU Blue Deal, also integrated into the Green Deal, and embedded in all EU policies; underlining the need to foster the protection, conservation and restoration of water resources and aquatic and marine ecosystems, which also play a key role in delivering climate adaptation benefits and co-benefits, while ensuring social and environmental safeguards, as recognised in the Conclusion of the first Global Stocktake of the Paris Agreement;

Collectively agree to:

**Call on** all political levels as well as the non-state actors to make adaptation a key priority in policy-making, to integrate a culture of prevention and resilience at all levels of governance and to produce climate and environmental risk assessments to inform and strengthen future adaptation plans.

**Mobilize** local governments, the private sector including insurers and investors, trade unions, and civil society, by involving them in the conception of bottom-up, gender-responsive local and regional adaptation plans and policies.

**Commit ourselves to** a community-led and community-based local and regional approach to adaptation issues, considering the diverse and place-based nature of vulnerabilities. The resourcing, mobilisation and capacity building of community-led initiatives and local authorities, leading to meaningful participation in democratic processes is important for the success of adaptation policies.

Urge the decision-makers at all levels in the EU, noting their essential and leading role on climate issues, to:

**Accelerate** the implementation of policies on adaptation, resilience and NbS projects, integrating gendered vulnerabilities, paid and unpaid care work, gender-sensitive communication and training, and monitoring and reporting on gender-responsive actions up to the challenges we are facing and aligned with the scientific recommendations.

**Ask** the European Commission to update and increase the ambition of its policies beyond its 2021 Adaptation Strategy, addressing the vulnerabilities and policy needs identified in the first EU Climate Risk Assessment conducted by the European Environment Agency (EEA), and relating climate adaptation considerations to the broader regional resilience context. In particular:

- **To implement** the EU Green Deal to build a socially just, resilient Europe, mitigate climate change, halt biodiversity loss and limit resource use, including water and integrate the EU objectives on gender equality.
- **To set** intermediary targets and milestones to pave the way to the Strategy's 2050 resilience objective including indicators to track progress on the ground, following the European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change.
- **To elaborate** concrete proposals to mainstream adaptation in all levels of governance and sectoral policies, in particular in the agriculture, industry, energy and transport sectors, showing that a greener and resilient economy will preserve and create jobs that reduce inequalities and create a safer, prosperous society fostering green and social entrepreneurship and innovation.
- **To dedicate** a sufficient share of EU funds and new EU resources to NbS, in connection with the strategies of biodiversity recovery, and to local adaptation and prevention projects, and ensure funds are made more easily accessible to community-led initiatives and local authorities when discussing the next EU Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2028-2034.
- **To create** platforms of knowledge-sharing and capacity-building regarding funding and financing mechanisms, integrating guidelines on environmental and social safeguards, that are accessible and adapted to any public or private stakeholders that have the power to design and implement adaptation and NbS interventions.
- **To phase out** biodiversity- and climate-harming subsidies, and actively implement the Biodiversity 2030 and Farm to Fork strategies, integrating gender-responsive measures and a bottom-up approach.
- **To advance** the understanding of what it means and how to operationalize a just transition on climate adaptation policies and strategies to strengthen resilience.

**Commit** and **deliver** on the international climate discussion to set a “new collective goal on climate finance” considering the needs and priorities of developing countries, as well as to advance on the importance of reforming the multilateral financial architecture taking the opportunity that the discussions on the UN Summit of the Future provide.

**Promote** best practice policy design rules – Monitoring, Reporting and Verification – that considers adaptation, resilience, NbS, as well as preventing maladaptation as the necessary elements for success, efficiency, quality, and well-being, within the planetary boundaries.

**Emphasize** the importance of taking into consideration adaptation issues in the public procurement framework in the EU.

**Consider**, in a European society where most of the population lives in cities, the importance of urban and housing planning which take into account the accelerating need for adaptation to the triple planetary crisis, particularly in terms of health.

**Design** sustainable territorial development and adaptation policies based on the relevance of rural territories for biodiversity and NbS, which address the functional links between rural and urban territories and their natural environments.

**Favour** knowledge development, teaching and exchange iterative learning, based for example on the MRV mentioned above and relevant scientific research, on climate adaptation planning and action, to stimulate innovation and transnational collaboration, including all the territorial and governance levels and to effectively learn from action on the ground.

**Urge** the private sector and the financial sector to scale up investments, in adaptation following the holistic approach of this Declaration.

In conclusion, this declaration demonstrates our collective commitment to adapting to the challenges posed by climate change, without prejudice to our commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to restore the role and functionality of biodiversity. It is a call to action, rooted in the spirit of the European Green Deal, encouraging cooperation, resilience and shared responsibility for the well-being of our communities and the planet.

### **This is our Liège Declaration**

In the occasion of the [Climate Chance Europe 2024 Wallonia Summit](#), which gathered nearly 1.000 participants from more than 20 countries.



Supported by the following organisations:







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