Proposal for Spring Congress Proposal 601

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Status: ❑ accepted ❑ rejected ❑ transferred to _____

The Spring Congress may decide:

Resolution on the future of our environment: climate change, pollution and looking forward to sustainability

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Archiving Resolutions 6.02, 6.03, 6.05, 6.09

Noting with grave concern the alarming trends of climate change and environmental deterioration in the last couple of decades;

Regretting that despite the international discussions and commitments taken, the Rio Summit, Kyoto Protocol and Paris Agreement, efforts in achieving sustainability and halting the impact of climate change continue to constitute mainly paper promises;

Acknowledging:

- that according to the European Environment agency, EU greenhouse gas emissions increased by 0.6% in 2017, following a 0.4.% decrease in 2016[1], and by estimates of the Agency a 32 % reduction of EU greenhouse gas emissions could be achieved by 2030, compared with 1990 levels. These projected reductions fall short of the 40 % target for 2030.
- that human activities are estimated to have caused approximately 1.0°C of global warming above pre-industrial levels and Global warming is likely to reach 1.5°C between 2030 and 2052 if it continues to increase at the current rate[2].
- that maritime transport alone emits around 1000 million tonnes of CO2 annually and is responsible for about 2.5% of global greenhouse gas emissions, shipping emissions are predicted to increase between 50% and 250% by 2050, depending on future economic and energy developments and direct emissions from aviation account for about 3% of the EU's total greenhouse gas emissions and more than 2% of global emissions. By 2020, the global international aviation emissions are projected to be around 70% higher than in 2005 and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) forecasts that by 2050 they could grow by a further 300-700%[3].
- that according to analyses by the World Resources Institute (WRI) and the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (UN FAO) total contribution of GHG from all agricultural activities on the planet is between 14% to 18%[4].
- that Global warming is a phenomenon witnessed in most land and ocean regions, causing hot extremes in most inhabited regions, heavy precipitation in several regions and the probability of drought and precipitation deficits in some regions[5]. That this poses

the rising concern of access to water and food security and climate migration.

- that a publication of the World economic forum[6] reaches the conclusion that policy delays in climate action leads to higher ultimate CO2 concentrations and produces persistent economic damages. A "delay that results in warming of 3° Celsius above pre industrial levels, instead of 2°, could increase economic damages by approximately 0.9% of global output. To put this percentage in perspective, 0.9% of estimated 2014 US Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is approximately $150 billion". These costs would not be incurred as one-time losses but are rather year after year because of the permanent damage caused by increased climate change resulting from the delay in climate action. That the matter of the economic impact of climate change lack of action was already the subject matter of the Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change published in 2006, which estimated that the costs and risks of climate change inaction will be equivalent to losing from 5% to 20% or more of the global GDP each year, at the same time the estimate for the annual cost of achieving stabilization of the levels of CO2 emissions is amounting to around 2% of global GDP per year.
- that as a consequence of Global warming, the oceans have absorbed much of the increased heat, with the top 700 meters of ocean showing warming of more than 17.5 Celcius since 1969[7]. The increasing ocean temperatures affect marine species and ecosystems, causing coral bleaching and the loss of breeding grounds for fish and marine mammals. This also causes more extreme weather events and the loss of coastal protection[8].
- that the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets have decreased in mass. Data from NASA's Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment show Greenland lost an average of 286 billion tons of ice per year between 1993 and 2016, while Antarctica lost about 127 billion tons of ice per year during the same time period[9]. The rate of Antarctica ice mass loss has tripled in the last decade.
- that recent research indicates that global sea level rose about 8 inches (20.32 cm) in the last century. The rate in the last two decades, however, is nearly double of that of the last century and is accelerating every year[10]
- that since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, the acidity of surface ocean waters has increased by about 30 percent according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration[11]. ?his increase is the result of emitting more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere and hence more being absorbed into the oceans. The amount of carbon dioxide absorbed by the upper layer of the oceans is increasing by about 2 billion tons per year[12].
- that recent research findings indicate that Annual global production of plastics has increased more than 200-fold since 1950. By 2015 cumulative plastic production was more than 7.8 billion tonnes. This is equivalent to more than one tonne of plastic for every person alive today. Of the global plastic produced over the period from 1950 to 2015: 55% straight to landfill, 30% was still in use, 8% was incinerated, 6-7% was recycled. Of 5.8 billion tonnes of plastic no longer in use approximately only 9% was recycled[13], whereas the global plastic waste in 2010 was 275 million tonnes. Whereas this leads to severe impact on ecosystems and wildlife.
- that around 90 % of Europeans living in cities are exposed to pollutants at concentrations higher than the air quality levels deemed harmful, having been estimated to reduce life expectancy in the EU by more than eight months[14].

Whereas:

- the EU committed itself to play a global leadership role in tackling climate change, but

needs now more than ever to step up its commitment and lead by example in order to address its impact, as well as marine pollution and sustainable development.

- free individual choices on a functioning market and international co-operation are fundamental for reaching sustainable development.
- the EU has developed the world's largest company-level scheme for trading in emissions of CO2, creating business opportunities for EU companies for low-carbon goods and services.
- Youth engagement plays an essential role in climate policy, as it is the youth that will have to face the results of the decisions of today.
- insisting on guaranteeing a stronger environmental protection is a long-standing priority for LYMEC.

LYMEC calls its Member organisations, and the ALDE Party, ALDE Group members of the European Parliament and Liberal Prime ministers to insist on:

- an **urgent global response, to address climate change with more tangible actions**, research and investment to match the commitments made under the Paris Agreement. Europe's leaders should ensure increased international cooperation, diplomatic pressure and staying united on the efforts to tackle climate change, by achieving the targets of the Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals, especially as regards to the world's major industrialized countries.
- **ensuring a smooth transition to EU's carbon neutral economy by 2050**, as envisaged by the European Commission in its strategic plan "A Clean planet for all". We insist on a firm commitment and immediate practical steps to reducing EU's greenhouse emissions by 55% by 2030, compared to the 1990 levels, and reaching net-zero emissions by 2050.
- making sure that **all transport models contribute to the de-carbonization strategy**. We need a smart organization of the mobility network, increase in Europe's rail capacity, support for the transition to low and zero-emissions vehicles and the appropriate infrastructure for that.
- working towards **ending the 65 billion USD (57.5 billion Euro) fuel tax exemption** for **international aviation** and a revision of the Chicago Convention as an essential step towards decarbonization.
- promoting **sustainable agriculture** and targeted investment in alternative farming such as rotations, soil building practices, crop-livestock diversification. Farmers should be encouraged to prevent and control pests with minimal use of chemicals.
- **member states to allocate at least 2% of their GDP to environmental policies** and investment in climate action;
- introducing realistic, yet **high environmental standards as an engine for new technology and innovations**. Member states need to **increase the public and private investment for research and development** in support of sustainable development and environment-friendly technologies, renewable energy (wind power, solar energy, hydropower), the use of alternative fuels, hydrogen, nuclear power, waste management and fusion energy. In order to adapt to the new realities and required action, it is an imperative for the European Union to support research centers, Universities and business initiatives developing innovations not only in the field of introducing more green energy sources, but also resource-effective circular economy and new, creative solutions to tackle air, sea and land pollution. It is important in that regard, that funding supporting low-carbon research is efficiently allocated under the NER 300 program, and actions under the Strategic Energy Technology Plan and Horizon 2020.
- providing design appropriate **incentives to promote green public procurement** for the

private sector and private **individuals to engage in climate-friendly technologies**;

- **strengthening the European Emission Trading System** (ETS) as an investment driver by expanding it to all carbon-emitting sectors, increasing the pace of annual reductions in allowances to 2.2% as of 2021 and reinforcing the Market Stability Reserve. We need to provide support for the industry and the energy sector to meet the innovation and investment challenges of the low-carbon transition through low-carbon funding mechanisms. In addition we want to strengthen the Clean Development Mechanism and prospectively, reach a global emission trading system and a halt in high-carbon investment.
- **strive for more ambition in the field of energy efficiency**. While we welcome the recent revision of the Energy Efficiency Directive, as part of the Clean Energy package, we insist on a 40 % binding EU energy efficiency target for 2030, annual savings requirement at least 2% to reach the 40% target, and less exemptions provided, in order to achieve EU's climate goals.
- the **prioritisation of food security and access to water in EU's global agenda** and even considering it as an aspect of the security policy of the Union.
- the food produced in the EU to be sustainable and safe for the environment and the individual. We should also invest in **information campaigns on the environmental impact of food production**, including energy, water waste and long-distance transportation.
- the EU member states should also prioritise the sustainable use of natural resources, by reducing **food and water wastage**. Innovative solutions, for example applications and campaigns such as "Too Good to Go", "Zu gut für die tonne" etc., which tackle food waste need to be incentivised and supported both on national and EU level.
- a tangible **plan on reducing the use of plastic** wrappings and single-use plastics as and transition to a minimized-plastics economy, while taking into account that market prices have a powerful influence on the behavior of individuals and businesses. In order to achieve this transition, a joint effort across industry, NGOs, local, national governments, EU institutions, and our Global counterparts will be necessary. The plastics and plastic-wrapping manufacturing businesses, enjoying access to the free single market of the EU, the municipalities, controlling the after-use and disposal of plastics, the waste collection and processing facilities and consumer organisations should all be involved in the development of standards and incentives schemes for plastics use reduction. The EU should further insist in its international communications and trade negotiations for global standards on decreasing the use of plastics, in favour of the development of new sustainable markets for plastics alternatives.
- that as a matter of urgency, the EU member states focus more on **preserving Europe's unique nature and wildlife**, and Commission respond in cases of severe pressures to environmental conservation such as excessive deforestation and industrial-scale logging, large-scale infrastructure in the vicinity of protected areas, and the encroachment of reserves and national parks by vast tourist facilities. In addition, **more attention** needs to be paid **to the Arctic areas**, as their economic importance will grow in the upcoming years.
- **increased awareness** of sustainable development and climate issues, not just to young people but **across generations**, as the matter is already high in the agenda for the youth;
- finally, we insist that the EU's leaders come up with a consensus and **contingency plan on how to act on the consequences of climate change**, including natural disasters, climate migration and the projections of its impact, as it is not really in the future, it's already happening.

[1] https://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/indicators/greenhouse-gas-emission-trends-6/assessment-2

[2] Global warming of 1.5°C - An IPCC Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty

[3] https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/transport/aviation_en, https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/transport/shipping_en

[4] https://www.wri.org/resources/charts-graphs/world-greenhouse-gas-emissions-2000, www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/wsfs/docs/expert_paper/How_to_Feed_the_World_in_2050.pdf

[5] Global warming of 1.5°C - An IPCC Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty

[6] Jason Furman, World Economic forum's Council of Economic Advisors – What is the cost of delaying climate action. https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2015/02/what-is-the-cost-of-delaying-climate-action/

[7] Levitus, S., Antonov, J., Boyer, T., Baranova, O., Garcia, H., Locarnini, R., . . . Zweng, M. (2017). NCEI ocean heat content, temperature anomalies, salinity anomalies, thermosteric sea level anomalies, halosteric sea level anomalies, and total steric sea level anomalies from 1955 to present calculated from in situ oceanographic subsurface profile data. NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information. doi:10.7289/V53F4MVP

[8] https://www.iucn.org/sites/dev/files/ocean_warming_issues_brief_final.pdf

[9] https://www.jpl.nasa.gov/news/news.php?feature=7159

[10] Nerem, R. S., Beckley, B. D., Fasullo, J. T., Hamlington, B. D., Masters, D., & Mitchum, G. T. (2018). Climate-change–driven accelerated sea-level rise detected in the altimeter era. *PNAS*. doi:10.1073/pnas.1717312115

[11] https://www.pmel.noaa.gov/co2/story/What+is+Ocean+Acidification%3F, https://www.pmel.noaa.gov/co2/story/Ocean+Acidification

[12] Sabine, C. L., & et al. (2004). The Oceanic Sink for Anthropogenic CO2. *Science, 305*, 367-371, Copenhagen Diagnosis. (2009). Updating the world on the Latest Climate Science. 36. www.copenhagendiagnosis.org

[13] Geyer, R., Jambeck, J. R., & Law, K. L. (2017). Production, use, and fate of all plastics ever made. *Science Advances, 3*(7).

[14] https://www.eea.europa.eu/themes/air/intro