

Climate Justice for the future!

Resolution of the XXV Congress of Naturefriends International on 7. October 2023 at Spital am Pyhrn

Human-made global warming is increasingly becoming a threat to our common future. The consequences are distributed in tragically highly diverse ways socially, temporally, and regionally:

- There are decades between the causation and the full unfolding of the consequences.
- The main polluters are usually not the main affected.
- Climate adaptation is not possible, or only possible to a limited extent, especially for island states and low-lying countries as well as countless countries in naturally dry regions such as the Sahel - moreover, the countries of the Global South lack the necessary financial resources for the required measures.
- There is a growing risk of the rich regions sealing themselves off from the rest of the world in green oases of prosperity, which leads to the increasing danger of climate wars even though the people of all nations are increasingly interdependent.

Naturefriends International therefore calls for a stronger commitment to climate protection and climate justice from the wealthy states: immediate ambitious and binding measures to curb greenhouse gas emissions as well as efficient support for the countries and people most affected by climate change.

No future and no peace without climate justice!

Climate justice is not charity, but a necessity for securing a decent life for all! Climate justice requires a fundamental social and ecological change of the existing conditions in the states of the Global North and of the Global South.

The aim of Naturefriends International is to combine its demands regarding peace keeping, environmental protection and ecology into a social transformation programme that enables climate justice. For this, it is necessary that the states of the Global North recognise their responsibility for the environmental destruction of the past and offer support for securing the basis of life in the states of the Global South. This also includes the recognition of the devastating consequences of European colonialism.

Insufficient progress in international climate policy.

For years, international climate conferences have been negotiating ways to stop or at least slow down the process of global warming. In 2015, at the World Climate Conference in Paris, an agreement was reached to reduce CO₂ emissions over the next few years to such an extent that global warming reaches a maximum of 2 degrees, with a target of containing global warming at 1.5 degrees being formulated.

The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPPC) regularly conducts global studies, the results of which are internationally coordinated and published. The 6th Assessment Report was published on 20 March 2023 and shows an alarming result: global warming has already increased to 1.1 degrees and the measures pledged by the Parties are far from sufficient to



stabilise global warming at 1.5 degrees. And even though there was basic agreement at the last climate conference in November 2022 in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, to set up a so-called "Loss and Damage Fund" to support the poorest countries and those most affected by climate change, there are still no binding commitments on funding.

It is now clear to almost everyone that action is urgently needed. Young people, who see their future under threat, are actively engaged in climate protection and are increasingly resorting to ever harsher forms of protest because years of civil society engagement, e.g., in the framework of Fridays for Future, have not led to the urgently needed political decisions and societal changes. Even if their protest methods and actions may hit the wrong people and lead to misunderstanding, we must show solidarity with them and support their justified concerns and demands!

We must act now if we want to secure a future worth living for all people. We need to switch our energy systems to renewable energies now and radically reduce our reliance on fossil fuels. We must change our mobility and consumption patterns now, because a large part of CO₂ emissions is caused by transport and agriculture – especially by the transport of goods across continents, by the massive increase in air traffic after the pandemic and by the rampant consumption of animal products. And we must find our way back to a sensible circular economy that focuses on the careful use of natural resources.

The measures for a shift to a sustainable world are associated with costs - but serious consequential costs are avoided in the medium and long term. In addition, promising jobs are created and many sectors of the economy, such as agriculture, forestry and tourism, benefit from an improvement in environmental conditions.

The climate crisis hits the poorest.

The people in the West African country of Senegal, for example, one of the poorest countries in the world, are particularly affected by the climate crisis: a large part of the population earns its living in agriculture and fishing. But it is precisely these important economic sectors that are severely affected by climate change - by drought and flooding that lead to crop failures, by altered ocean currents that divert shoals of fish. In addition, entire coastal regions have already sunk into the sea due to rising sea levels and coastal erosion. Thus, tens of thousands of people lose their homes and livelihoods year after year.

The countries of the Global South are not only suffering from the climate catastrophe for which they are hardly responsible but are also unable to finance measures to mitigate the consequences or repair damage themselves. They are also dependent on massive economic aid to cushion the losses in agriculture and fisheries so that the population is not forced to leave the country.

The main polluters must contribute to financing the costs of adaptation and transformation.

A global solidarity-based compensation and support fund in the amount of at least two percent of the gross national product of the countries of the Global North to support the countries of the Global South is urgently needed. Compared to the annual military expenditure of about 2,200 billion dollars worldwide, the costs of redirecting the climate crisis are low.

Climate protection and climate justice are the prerequisites for the successful implementation of the 17 global development goals with which the UN aims to create the basis for a good life for all people within the framework of the 2030 Agenda.

Demands on the industrialised and emerging countries

The XXV Congress of Naturefriends International in Spital am Pyhrn calls on industrialised and emerging countries to intensify their efforts to combat climate change and to achieve climate justice so that the stabilisation of global warming at 1.5 degrees can be achieved by 2050.

Therefore, the following measures are to be taken:

- 1) the complete conversion of energy production to renewable sources (wind, water, sun, geothermal energy - in each case in accordance with the applicable nature and environmental protection laws);
- 2) the rapid reduction of CO₂ emissions in all industrial processes in line with the EU target of climate neutrality by 2050;
- 3) a consistent change in transport with the aim of phasing out the production and use of combustion engines as quickly as possible. The expansion of public transport systems must take place quickly and must also be made attractive in rural areas and across borders. This requires a concentration of financial resources on the expansion of sustainable mobility, i.e., cycling and walking, rail, and local public transport systems;
- 4) an immediate transformation of industrialised agriculture and forestry with their massive negative impacts on biodiversity and the climate towards ecologically compatible and resource-saving land management;
- 5) a consistent turnaround in heating with the climate-friendly refurbishment of flats and houses and a rapid phase-out of fossil heat supply and air conditioning, preferably through community-based solutions on the local and regional level;
- 6) the immediate halt of environmentally harmful subsidies;
- 7) regionalisation of supply, so that transport routes and at the same time the risks of global supply chains are reduced;
- 8) preventing the relocation of CO₂ emissions to other countries (e.g., through the relocation of environmentally harmful production facilities);
- 9) a comprehensive legal due diligence for all companies to prevent environmental damage and human rights violations along the entire global value chain;
- 10) the financing of a global solidarity-based compensation and support fund by the states of the Global North in the amount of at least two percent of their gross national product for the necessary adaptation measures and the promotion of sustainable development in the states of the Global South;
- 11) a refugee policy oriented towards humanitarian and human rights standards, and the recognition of climate refugeeism as an issue under the Geneva Refugee Convention;
- 12) in the necessary restructuring of society, to consider the particular impact on socially disadvantaged, excluded, and discriminated groups of people and to support them in the best possible way and protect them from further exclusion;
- 13) effective participation of young people in all areas of life that affect them, as stipulated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The contribution of Naturefriends to climate justice

Naturefriends International has set up a climate fund that offers the opportunity to make a personal contribution to more climate justice. The donations flow 100 per cent into concrete projects of the African Naturefriends, which mitigate the consequences of climate change and improve the living conditions of local people.

In addition, Naturefriends see it as their responsibility, as a large civil society movement, to make their own contribution to mitigate climate change.

Concrete measures to achieve this are:

- 1) promoting climate-friendly travel to all Naturefriends activities;
- 2) the progressive greening of the Naturefriends Houses and an ongoing expansion of the range of vegetarian and vegan dishes with regional ingredients;
- 3) the implementation of awareness-raising measures for climate-friendly action and sustainability;
- 4) supporting the activities of Naturefriends International to raise the visibility of the Naturefriends Climate Fund and to acquire donations;
- 5) the compensation of unavoidable flights via the Naturefriends Climate Fund:
 - a. the provision of an adequate amount for all flights in the course of committee events and activities of Naturefriends International by the NFI or the participating member organisations,
 - b. motivating Naturefriends sections and groups to include an adequate Climate Fund contribution in the price of all air travel;
- 6) support for peaceful climate protests and a clear no to the criminalisation of climate activists.

Climate justice is a principle that grants every human being worldwide, including future generations, the same right to an intact world climate and at the same time strives for equitable financing of measures necessary because of climate change. To prevent the world's climate from going off the rails, human-induced global warming must be limited to less than two degrees Celsius. This means that each person in the world may only cause a maximum of two tonnes of CO₂ per year. In 2019, CO₂ emissions per capita in Germany caused by energy consumption and consumption were 7.9 tonnes, almost twice the global average value. This is in stark contrast to the CO₂ emissions caused by people in the Global South, which in many cases amount to less than one tonne per year. At the same time, however, the countries of the Global South are the most affected by climate change.

Justification

In Europe, the effects of human-made climate change are already clearly noticeable: entire regions are suffering from extreme drought, periods of heat are increasing, heavy rainfall events lead to floods and mudslides, and there is a lack of snow in the Alps.

People in the Global South, many of whom already suffer from extreme poverty, are even more severely affected. Extreme heat, drought, flood disasters, erosion of entire coastal regions – the consequences are dramatic and are already forcing more and more people to leave their home regions. The industrialised and emerging countries have the largest share of global greenhouse gas emissions. The richest 1% of the world's population causes twice as many emissions as the poorest 50%.

We have known for decades that the economic and lifestyle patterns of industrialised and emerging countries have a negative impact on the global climate. The use of fossil fuels leads to carbon dioxide emissions and thus to an increase in global temperatures via the greenhouse effect. The consequences have long been felt by all: glaciers are melting, soils and lakes are drying out, groundwater levels are sinking, forest fires are increasing, permafrost is thawing, and sea levels are rising. At the same time, heavy rainfall events lead to flooding and catastrophic floods, and storms are causing massive damage with increasing frequency in Europe as well.

The European Environment Agency estimates that economic losses due to extreme weather events in Europe between 1980 and 2021 have already amounted to 560 billion euros, with a maximum of a quarter to a third of this being covered by insurance. Not quantified are the global impacts: the worldwide decline in biodiversity, the losses in agriculture and fisheries in the countries of the Global South or the rise in sea level, which goes hand in hand with a loss of economic and settlement space in coastal regions. While people in industrialised countries can count on social security and disaster relief, people in the Global South are mostly defenceless against these developments. Thousands of people lose their livelihoods and are forced to migrate; many also must pay with their lives for the climate crisis, the causes of which they have only a very small share in. And even in the rich countries, the poorest suffer the most, while the financially better-off sections of the population have many opportunities to mitigate the effects of climate change on their quality of life, for example by air-conditioning their homes or having a second home in a climatically favoured area.

The danger of climate wars is growing if a social and ecological world policy is not quickly achieved. We are living in a decade of extremes in which the previous certainties no longer hold. The crises and challenges are accumulating, coalescing, and intensifying. Faster and faster, humanity is heading towards the fateful moment when the unresolved crises will create synergies whose negative consequences are beyond our imagination. The consequences of climate change are already being clearly felt today. If we fail in achieving a rapid and consistent transformation of today's economic and social systems based on fossil fuels, the consequences of accelerating climate change for ecosystems and human society will intensify dramatically.

The consequences of global warming primarily affect the poor regions of the world and the unborn, who have little or no political influence. The climate crisis deepens the division between rich and poor, between North and South, between young and old, whereby in the long run there will be no "emergency exit" even for the privileged population groups. But they have been less affected so far and can protect themselves better.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the world's largest scientific convention, has used paleoclimatology, over 29,000 weather observation data sheets and numerous computer simulations to show a bleak future if we do not take swift countermeasures. Mankind is waging a daily war against nature, the Global South, and the future. Global warming is coming faster, harder, and more drastic than was expected just a few years ago. Never before has humanity been so challenged to take responsibility for the future, i.e., to show consideration for a conceivable tomorrow and to come to a sustainable development. For today, the highest concentration of greenhouse gases has been measured for 650,000 years. The speed of the temperature rise exceeds anything known from the last millennia. Even if greenhouse gases were stopped immediately, a further warming of 0.1° C per decade cannot be prevented for a long time.

Unless swift and decisive action is taken, the consequences of global warming threaten to become the most significant cause of political, economic, and social crises revolving around water, food, raw materials, living conditions and migration. The consequences are violence, distribution conflicts and destabilisation that will threaten security to an unknown extent: Degradation of freshwater resources, decline in food production, storm and flood disasters, and environmentally induced poverty migration that will particularly affect poor and fragile states.

A drinking water shortage is feared for southern and western North America. In many regions, harvests will decline sharply. Strong hurricanes will increase. Florida is affected by rising sea levels. In Latin America, the Andean glaciers are melting. As a result, up to 77 million people risk being affected by water shortages. Already about 30 percent of the 2,042 square kilometres of glaciers in the Cordillera have been lost. Four-fifths of Peru's energy supply depends on hydroelectric power plants. The outlook is particularly bleak for Lima. The water supply for the more than 7.5 million inhabitants is made possible by the Andes. Reserves are declining rapidly. Humidity is decreasing, so the biosphere is being damaged by the heat, the dry savannah will displace tropical forests.

In the future, large parts of Africa will be even less able to be irrigated than today. Around half a billion people will suffer from this in the future. Already today, 46 percent of Africa's land area with 465 million people is desert. Salinisation of agricultural areas will particularly affect the densely populated Nile Delta. In the sub-Saharan part of Africa alone, 15 to 20 percent of the people are undernourished.

Global warming threatens the poorhouse of the world with up to 50 percent crop failures in some regions. A global warming of just 1.8° C could cause yields to drop by 20 percent in some countries. In the south, Mozambique, Malawi, and Zambia, which are among the poorest societies in the world, will be hardest hit, as will large parts of East Africa - northern Kenya, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Djibouti, as well as Sudan and Somalia. In the estuaries of large rivers, cities with millions of inhabitants such as Lagos in Nigeria are at risk of flooding.

In the future, numerous floods in Asia will be caused by melt water from the Himalayan glaciers. They are Asia's water reservoirs and account for 15 percent of the global ice mass, feeding large rivers such as the Indus, Mekong, or Yangtze. The trend is that all Chinese glaciers will have melted in 100 years. China is already struggling with water scarcity and water pollution. Populated cities like Mumbai or Shanghai are located in the estuaries of rivers. A total of 635 million people live along coasts that are only up to 10 metres above sea level. Even a warming of 2° C can make life impossible for millions of people in Bangladesh. Geologically, the country is a single flood plain. If the sea level were to rise by 45 cm, up to 5.5 million people would have to look for a new home.

Small islands in the Pacific, whose highest point is only five metres above sea level, are being eroded by the water and flooded. The government of the island nation of Tuvalu has already tried to apply for asylum for its people in New Zealand or Australia as a precautionary measure.

There are also alarming findings for Europe. Scientists fear that if the Arctic ice sheets break off, Holland might not be salvageable. According to the Federal Office of Oceanography, a continuous temperature increase of around 2° C in the surface water has been recorded in the North Sea since 1993. The pH value is decreasing. Since the beginning of industrialisation, it has dropped by about 0.11 units, and a further drop of up to 0.35 pH units by 2100 is to be feared. This has a considerable impact on mussels, snails, and corals. The Alps are rapidly losing their ice zones and glaciers. Heavy rainfall, flooding, erosion, and glacier melt are increasing, and droughts and crop failures are to be expected in southern Europe. Drought will be the main problem. New desert areas are emerging in southern Spain and Portugal, but also in Greece.

Threatening is the release of methane from the thawing deep freeze of Siberia, a huge greenhouse bomb. The permafrost areas are mainly located in Russia, China, and Canada. The methane emissions can provide an additional heat boost to the atmosphere, they are almost 30 times more effective than carbon dioxide.

The climate crisis is not the sole cause of inequality, but it dramatically exacerbates existing inequalities between North and South as well as poor and rich. Children and young people are particularly affected and must live with the decisions or non-decisions made today. The climate crisis is the result of economic policies geared towards the exploitation of people and nature and is closely linked to the over 500-year history of European colonialism, its destructive violence and oppression. The neoliberal economic policies of the last 50 years have massively intensified the climate crisis.

The growing climate crisis will further exacerbate existing inequities. Poorer people will not be able to afford expensive safeguards for their homes and agricultural land in the event of increasing natural disasters, or to relocate to a safer region. This will further increase inequality between the Global North and the Global South.

Already today, many political as well as military institutions classify climate change as a major "security risk". In their security analyses, they assume that social conflicts, even wars, will increase due to intensified natural disasters, due to the increase in droughts and the resulting famines, due to floods and storms. Due to the destruction of natural livelihoods, more and more people will become climate refugees, which can create further instability in entire regions. It is assumed that more than 250 million people will become climate refugees in the coming decades.

The effects of the climate crisis will also be clearly felt in the countries of the Global North. Desertification in the southern states of the EU will increase, water scarcity and significant crop losses in many parts of the EU will lead to rising food prices, which will cause further disadvantages especially for the low-income groups in society.