



Declassified¹

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Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development

Network of Contact Parliamentarians for a healthy environment

Minutes of public hearings

Held in Paris on 19 May 2022

(Concerns points 4, 5 and 6 of the agenda)

1. Presentation of the 3rd report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

[AS/Soc/NCP (2022) PV01]

The network held an exchange of views with Ms Yamina Saheb, representative of the IPCC, on the Summary for Policymakers of the Working Group III contribution to the Sixth Assessment report of the IPCC, entitled “Climate Change 2022 - Mitigation of Climate Change” (presentation available on the extranet).

Ms Saheb explained that the longer green transformation was delayed, the more expensive and painful it would be to implement. The report broke new ground by proposing to decarbonise demand rather than just supply. This shift required a change in mindset to make demand the focus of reforms, as proposed by the International Energy Agency (IEA). The IPCC report put the emphasis on sufficiency rather than efficiency. Specifying sufficient needs legitimised hunting down waste and unnecessary consumption. Moving towards a new economic model required the rehabilitation of public sector intervention. It was about returning to policies that drive the new behaviour that would be required. In 2050, Africa would be the fastest growing region. As pollution knew no borders, an energy-efficient refrigerator would be just as vital in Dakar as in Paris. Mitigation efforts must be guided by the Sustainable Development Goals. The IPCC considered that the Energy Charter Treaty and most trade agreements were not compatible with the Paris Agreement and its aims. She concluded by reminding members that it was up to them to drive change and make a difference in the world.

Ms Sayek Böke complimented the expert on her excellent presentation of a crucial summary. She asked how to change the behaviour of the least eco-conscious consumers and asked for more information on the use of arbitration under the Energy Charter Treaty.

Ms Saheb replied that the change required would be similar to that triggered by the Marshall Plan. Public action should focus on the most effective policies in terms of decarbonisation. Decarbonising housing and transportation required major, long-term investments, which were often beyond the reach of consumers. As for arbitration and the Energy Charter, the mechanism addressed the relationship between private investors and States. Arbitration compromised the sovereignty of States and had adverse effects on energy policies. For example, France had wanted to stop issuing hydrocarbon exploration licences for its territory in 2017 but had been forced to suspend its decision after a Canadian company threatened to bring an arbitration claim against it, even though Canada was not a party to the treaty.

Mr Gevorgyan spoke about the situation in his country and stressed the link between democracy and good environmental governance.

Mr Grin highlighted the need for a different kind of growth to avoid protest movements like the Yellow Vests in France.

Ms Saheb emphasised that it was not the prospect of energy sufficiency that had led demonstrators to take to the streets. Consumerism was not such a recent phenomenon. The idea of every household being able to live in their own detached home was absurd. Many people who worked in cities could no longer afford to live there. Public transport systems must be improved to reduce private car use. Transparent governance and free expression in leading democracies enabled people to take more powerful action for the climate.

¹ The minutes were declassified by the Network of Contact Parliamentarians for a healthy environment at its meeting on 25 January 2023.

Mr Moutquin noted that the discussion they were having followed in step with the report that had given rise to the network. He wondered why the IPCC did not take a more political stance.

Ms Saheb replied that the IPCC had no choice but to remain within its terms of reference, which admittedly needed amending. Parliamentarians could capitalise on the research that was analysed by IPCC members. Scientists and policy makers should discuss degrowth and economic guidelines together.

The Chair referred to the climate reaching a breaking point and the need to lead by example.

Ms Saheb said tipping points had been set out in the IPCC's first report and once they had been passed, there was no going back. As far as the approach of leading by example was concerned, it should be adopted by the public sector as a whole. The key issue was that most trade treaties included arbitration clauses that could be triggered for several years after countries left such an agreement. For example, the EU Member States could leave the Energy Charter en bloc and put a de facto end to the Charter's existence.

The Chair thanked the expert and closed the meeting for the morning.

When the meeting resumed after lunch, the Chair welcomed the children from Joan of Arc School (Flavie and Alexis), their teacher and the expert who would be participating in the afternoon's session.

2. What Mobility for Tomorrow?

[AS/Soc/NCP (2022) 01rev]

The network began an exchange of views with Mr Nicolas Raillard, project manager of the Plan to transform the French economy (PTEF) at the Shift Project (TSP) (presentation available on extranet).

Mr Raillard presented the Shift Project, which was a non-profit organisation registered in France that advocated phasing out fossil fuels. A sister organisation, presided over by a French engineer, had 15 000 volunteers in France who ran training courses and awareness-raising activities. The Transformation Plan set out the transition to carbon neutrality. A review would be carried out in 2027 to take stock of societal resilience and the progress of reforms.

The chapter on travel (i.e., all journeys of more than 80 km) was chosen by way of an introduction to the Transformation Plan. People travelled six times per year on average, whether it was to see family, go on business trips or on holiday. Most of these journeys were made by private car, 14% by train and 9% by plane, with fossil fuels being used 90% of the time. The supply of hydrocarbons was a major issue. Biomass could not, however, be used to replace fossil fuels without running the risk of competing with food production for land use. As for the mass electrification of modes of transport, questions persisted concerning the risks in the supply of batteries. Electrification was still the least harmful solution, and the widespread use of hydrogen-powered aircraft could be envisaged by 2040. Switching from using cars to trains was also beneficial. People had to be weaned off the idea of travelling to the other side of the world, perhaps by making trips longer. The way we go about tourism needed to be reconsidered, particularly in terms of providing more choices locally. As for professional travel, the widespread use of videoconferencing should be prioritised over business trips.

Flavie asked the expert whether a diversified energy supply was needed.

Mr Raillard concurred that there were some limits which meant that diversifying the energy supply was necessary. For example, even converting all farmland to biomass production would not be enough to meet current energy needs.

Mr Fridez wondered whether the widespread rollout of electric cars was feasible in a mountainous country like Switzerland.

Mr Raillard replied that the technology in question was not the issue. The cost of providing the equipment was more of an impediment and government intervention was required.

Mr Grin questioned whether it was appropriate to constantly focus on increasing railway use.

Mr Raillard replied that every solution must be optimised. For example, the railway network in Switzerland was already much more widely used than in France, where rail traffic could be doubled according to the PTEF.

Mr Moutquin asked about the Shift Project's position on nuclear power and training.

Mr Raillard said that the French network operator had put forward a scenario without nuclear power. The Shift Project saw nuclear power as one of the many tools available. He admitted that the think tank had not looked at the issue of waste management. More training for individuals and policy makers was crucial. There were initiatives aimed at the general public, such as the climate and mobility workshops where participants pieced together information cards to build a global picture of the situation

Mr Benarafa asked about solutions that relied on nature.

Mr Raillard replied that any pleasant surprises that nature might provide had not been taken into account. The analyses carried out by Shift only considered the solutions currently available to decision-makers.

Mr Amraoui expressed his concern about water management and the risk of exporting this precious resource by selling agricultural produce.

The Chair said he wanted to go back to the subject of nuclear power. In this respect, he was backed by other members such as **Mr Schennach**, whose opposition to it dated back to the Austrian referendum on its domestic use for civil and military purposes.

Alexis questioned the effectiveness of compensation mechanisms.

Mr Raillard replied that the problem with compensation was that it could not be expanded ad infinitum.

The Chair made his last remarks. The transition entailed the emergence of a circular economy (from cradle to cradle). He gave the example of kelp, which captured and stored CO₂. He also wondered how useful hydrogen would be.

Mr Fridez mentioned older people travelling more cheaply during off-peak hours and of lower fares for couples.

Mr Raillard stressed that using a wide range of different decarbonisation measures was complex, but also necessary in view of their combined effect. For instance, switching from train travel to carsharing was a neutral measure as it made travelling by car more efficient by splitting the carbon footprint between passengers. He said energy sufficiency must be our watchword, otherwise we would be in for a very nasty surprise. As for the use of hydrogen, this seemed to be beneficial in certain sectors such as heavy industry (e.g., steel and fertiliser production). For freight, electrifying trucks would be a safer and more efficient option, provided that the power came from so-called clean energy sources.

3. Promoting youth and child participation to combat the climate crisis

Network members held a round table with two eco-delegates from Joan of Arc School in Colombes, France, who were accompanied by their teacher **Mr Najib Benarafa**.

Flavie raised the question of technological progress, which was both a means of reducing emissions and the reason for the increasing consumption of resources.

Alexis felt that the media did not give enough coverage to the major environmental challenges facing us.

Mr Moutquin suggested involving YouTubers and influencers to spread the word on energy sufficiency in a society in which excess consumption was deeply ingrained. People should work less and think more about the big issues such as the environment and democracy.

Mr Fridez said that if we wanted to live better, we had to change society and get out of the race for profit.

Mr Grin pointed out the risks of this approach: if people worked less, they would want to travel more, which could lead to a rise in emissions.

Mr Benarafa explained that he had done some work with his pupils on eco-anxiety, which affected 60% of them. They were worried about species going extinct. Environmental education must be strengthened together with education on health.

The Chair asked the children what their first decision would be if they were to become president of their country.

Flavie explained that she would scrap domestic flights when a rail route could be used instead. She would also look at how to use farming to repair ecosystems and revive natural cycles.

Alexis would like to restore nature to its rightful place. He would love to have more continental rail connections.

Mr Fridez noted that children today's live in a finite world, whereas he had grown up with a wealth of opportunities. He was seconded by the Chair, who had always thought that the future was bound to be better.

The Chair asked the children for their views on co-operation with the parliamentarians.

Flavie wanted the parliamentarians to address the issue of fake news. She would also like to see intergenerational co-operation. She pointed out that more and more children were skipping school to attend protests.

Mr Benarafa called for partnerships between parliamentarians and classes.

The Chair noted that growth could be a good thing or a bad thing. Changing mindsets was about getting rid of destructive forms of growth.

ATTENDANCE LIST / LISTE DE PRESENCE

(The names of members who took part in the meeting are marked in bold /
Les noms des membres ayant pris part à la réunion sont en caractères gras)

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Albania / Albanie

Andorra / Andorre

Armenia/ Arménie

Mr Armen GEVORGYAN EC/DA

Austria / Autriche

Mr Stefan SCHENNACH SOC
Mr Michel REIMON SOC

Azerbaijan / Azerbaïdjan

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Mr Rik DAEMS ALDE

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Ms. Marina PENDEŠ EPP/CD
Mr. Saša MAGAZINOVIĆ SOC

Bulgaria / Bulgarie

Croatia / Croatie

Ms Zdravka BUŠIĆ EPP/CD

Cyprus / Chypre

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Liechtenstein	Mr Peter FRICK	ALDE
Lithuania / Lituanie		
Luxembourg	M. Paul GALLES	EPP/CD
Malta / Malte		
Republic of Moldova / République de Moldova		
Monaco	M. José BADIA	EPP/CD
Montenegro / Monténégro		
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Ms / Mme Ms Sonja Langenhaeck, Delegation Secretary, Belgian delegation to PACE / *Secrétaire de délégation, Délégation belge auprès de l'APCE*

EXPERTS

Ms Yamina Saheb, representative of the IPCC and member of the Working Group III on the Sixth Assessment report of the IPCC, entitled "Climate Change 2022 – Mitigation of Climate Change" / *représentante du GIEC et membre du groupe de travail III du sixième rapport d'évaluation du GIEC, intitulé « Le changement climatique en 2022 – Atténuer le changement climatique »*

Mr Nicolas Raillard, Project Manager of the Transformation Plan of the French Economy, The Shift Project / *M. Nicolas Raillard, Chef de projet du Plan de transformation de l'économie française, « The Shift Project » (Paris)*

Flavie and Alexis, eco-delegates at "Institution Jeanne d'Arc" in Colombes (France), accompanied by Mr Najib Benarafa / *Flavie et Alexis, éco-délégués à l'Institution Jeanne d'Arc à Colombes (France), accompagnés de M. Najib Benarafa*

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