



EUROPE, LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN : LOCAL TO GLOBAL VIEWPOINTS ON THE CLIMATE ISSUE

Report on the seminar sponsored by the Latin American and Caribbean Inter-Parliamentary Groups

June 4th, 2015

Prompted by the Institut des Amériques, and the Latin American inter-parliamentary friendship groups, a seminar entitled '*Perspectives on the Climate Challenge*' was held on June 4th, 2015 at the French Senate. With an opening speech by Mr Christian Cambon, Vice-President of the Foreign Affairs Committee, the seminar stressed again the need for the 'Climate Paris 2015' Conference (COP21) to succeed, and the fundamental role of local authorities in the fight against the effects of climate change.



Latin America and the Caribbean face environmental challenges

Mr Jean-Michel Blanquer, President of the Institut des Amériques, Ms Benita Ferrero-Waldner, President of the EU-LAC Foundation, and Ms Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, presented the major challenges of global warming for the countries involved. Mr Blanquer stressed that public policies and links between various scales of action should be taken into account.

Europe and Latin America have a **common legal culture**, and as a consequence they seek to **control their future** by setting up binding and controlled rules. According to Mr Blanquer, '*the challenge is to bring together various skills into common work.*'

In her speech, Ms Benita Ferrero-Waldner stressed that global warming may weaken State structures. Achieving an international agreement is a real challenge, and it is in everyone's interest to work together. In that sense, **national commitments by developing countries** (DCs) such as Gabon and Mexico are a symbolic innovation and show that **the situation has evolved since Kyoto**.

Ms Irina Bokova then mentioned the **UNESCO education program for sustainable development**. A Scientific Advisory Board has been created to promote a dialogue between politicians and scientists, in order to **bring about a green society rooted in attitudes, through education and collective awareness**.

'*Climate change affects the living, as well as change in the living affects the climate,*' said Mr Gilles Boeuf, President of the National Museum of Natural History. Human beings need to change their attitude and **be humble rather than greedy**. Mr Boeuf stressed that climate change was a fact and that its effects will be felt throughout the millennium. In the past 40 years, 42% of animal species have already disappeared.

Fighting against deforestation, pesticide use, overfishing and waste is an immediate challenge, in order for the welfare of all to take precedence over profit.

1. Regional and global integration of environmental policies

Mr Gaël Giraud, Director of Research at CNRS, and chief economist at the French Development Agency (AFD), expressed concern about the **vulnerability of the urban poor**. States must take action to protect these people. He also stressed the issue of energy transition: **intelligent energy and resource management** is the second source of economic growth after work. The role of AFD is therefore crucial. In Latin America, 70% of AFD financing are already based on the achievement of climate goals.



From right to left: Mr Edwards, Mr Spencer, Mr Giraud, Mr Velut, Mr Ominami, Mr Wilk and Mr Schuldt Espinel.

The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), represented by Mr David Wilk, is also involved in this type of financing. Mr Wilk stressed the **huge potential** of renewable energy in the region. According to recent studies, IDB investments have quadrupled over eight years, with 40% of its budget dedicated to renewable energy. Adaptation to climate change is a **major challenge**.

The EU, US and China are major polluters as well as major players in the negotiations. According to Mr Thomas Spencer, Head of the climate program at IDDRI (Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations), much still remains to be done, especially in terms of financing the energy transition. Developed countries will have to show **political will towards DCs** by helping them. The Paris agreement must not be an end in itself: it must be dynamic, long-lasting, and most importantly, strengthened over time.

To this end, Latin American countries call among other things for the **flexibility of intellectual property rights**. The issue of technology transfer is very sensitive and prevents access to certain technologies. **Small States' interests** must be taken into consideration. Mr Walter Schuldt Espinel, Director of Strategic Affairs at the Ecuadorian Ministry of External Relations, suggests setting up new legal tools, such as entrenching the 'polluter pays' and precautionary principles, recognising the 'rights of nature', as well as establishing a 3% environmental tax on DC oil exports to the North and a 'net avoided emissions' concept. For its part, UNESCO should strengthen its vital role in **educating and raising awareness** about climate change.

The success of the **Cartagena Dialogue**, set up in 2010 as an informal gathering of some forty States wishing to facilitate the continuation of UN climate negotiations, shows that Latin America is a key player in climate governance. Despite some internal differences, the **Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC)** is the most active bi-regional partnership in the world on climate issues. CELAC countries are highly committed to limiting carbon emissions and are **valuable partners** for the EU. A close alliance is needed to encourage companies to invest in non-polluting energies. Economic growth and climate protection can be complementary, says Mr Guy Edwards, a research professor at Brown University in the US.

Mr Carlos Ominami, former Chilean Minister for Economy and current President of the Chile 21 Foundation, noted that 'high diplomacy' between major powers could not be effective without a **global support movement**. Involving small and medium-sized countries is therefore essential, both to put pressure on 'big' carbon-emitting countries as well as to exercise global responsibility regarding the fate of the planet. In that respect, Chile's significant efforts have been exemplary.

II. Local territories and governments facing climate change

Since 2008, the urban population has outnumbered that of rural areas. Mr Michel Schlaifer, Climate and Sustainable Development Adviser of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), pointed to **spatial planning public policies** as a factor for imbalance and '**social, cultural and economic segregation**'. Nowadays, wealth is concentrated in the resource-rich peripheries and the centres and urban areas they provide for. The UN Habitat agency is therefore trying to promote relations between cities and nearby territories. Better connected cities should help establish '*a more balanced relationship, thus increasing resilience*' against climate change.

Ms Anne Odic, in charge of the Local Government and Urban Development Division at AFD, listed her agency's goals for cities:

- supporting **climate projects**;
- getting involved in local **communities' discussions**;
- defining **policies to decrease** greenhouse gas emissions.

AFD is very active in both financing communities' actions and supporting reflections on social projects, including through technical cooperation with French partners. In that perspective, the Île-de-France transport union has recently visited Rio to discuss urban mobility.

Latin America and the Caribbean only contribute to the climate crisis by 5%, with the Caribbean States producing only 0.2% of global emissions. **Yet**, with a population of 40 million and small island territories, **the Caribbean is the most threatened region**, and there is a very strong pressure on resources. The Caribbean States have always been at **the forefront of the fight against climate change**. According to Mr Omar Ramirez-Tejeda, Director of the Centre for Environmental, Energy and Natural Resource Studies of the FUNGLODE foundation, the climate crisis is not just about the G8 or G20; all 196 States must unite.

Ms Catherine Paquette, a researcher at the Institute of Research for Development (IRD), stressed that **urban mobility** has become a priority for many cities, especially Mexico. **The definition of a city is currently changing** in the collective consciousness. Many initiatives are being launched by big cities. They do not **communicate** sufficiently with each other, and medium-sized cities – though key factors in the climate challenge – are not sufficiently involved. **The urban development model should be changed**.

III. Culture and health within environmental challenges

Mr Stephen Rostain, archaeologist and Director of research at CNRS, finally emphasised the recurrence of global warming periods in history.



The participants in the Salle Médicis at the Palais du Luxembourg.

Around the year 1100, for instance, Amazonian and Andean societies had to develop coping strategies, or face migration or even disappearance.

Ms Geremia Cometti, post-doctoral researcher at the Swiss National Fund, has studied indigenous peoples' viewpoints, including that of the **Q'ero community**, in Peru. This Andean people perceives climate change in the same way as scientists do, through changing rainfall and temperature patterns. Like Westerners, the Q'ero point to **human responsibility**, due to deteriorating relations with their deities and abandonment of rituals. The '*Amazon Scenarios*' programme, led by Ms Ane Alencar, aims to communicate with indigenous peoples and settlers to help them come up with action plans in order to adapt to climate change. Amazonian populations are directly affected and **their ability to organise and negotiate**

on environmental and climate issues should be strengthened. NGOs have a major role to play in this.

Mr Dave Chadee, Professor of Environmental Health at the University of the West Indies, wondered about the health consequences of climate change. He foresees a **considerable increase in vector-borne diseases**, including those caused by mosquitos. The current droughts lead to the set-up of water storage mechanisms, a favourable environment for parasites.

Climate change will also have negative consequences on agriculture. Mr Doyle McKey, research professor at the University of Montpellier, expressed concern and recommends setting up a **climate-smart agriculture** based on sustainable agricultural production, a resilient agriculture with reduced greenhouse gases emissions. In that respect, France is considering a **new common agricultural policy** interlinking scientific and local knowledge, taking into account social and economic factors and considering biodiversity as part of the climate-smart agriculture.

According to Mr Augusto Castro, Director of the Institute of Natural Sciences, Territories and Renewable Energy of the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru, major powers produce most greenhouse gas emissions and if DCs could emit as much carbon in order to develop, they would. This poses an **ethical problem** which must be resolved through education.



Ms Laurence Tubiana, Ambassador in charge of negotiations on climate change, gives her closing speech.

Finally, Ms Laurence Tubiana, Ambassador in charge of negotiations on climate change and Special COP21 Representative, welcomed the rapprochement between Europe and Latin America leading up to the Paris Conference, in order to achieve a binding agreement. France and Peru, who hosted COP20, cooperate closely. Today, *'we are unable to establish a fair system (to allocate emission rights between countries) that respects the carbon targets.'* It is therefore important to **qualify the long-term goal as much as possible**. The upcoming agreement is deemed as *'an instrument pushing countries to view their development model differently, based on a low-carbon economy within a comprehensive framework of sustainable development.'*

Inter-parliamentary groups sponsoring the seminar

France-Brazil: http://www.senat.fr/groupe-interparlementaire-amitie/ami_576.html

France-Caribbean: http://www.senat.fr/groupe-interparlementaire-amitie/ami_642.html

France, Mexico and Central American countries: http://www.senat.fr/groupe-interparlementaire-amitie/ami_643.html

France-Andean countries: http://www.senat.fr/groupe-interparlementaire-amitie/ami_979.html

France-Southern Cone countries: http://www.senat.fr/groupe-interparlementaire-amitie/ami_978.html