

WE MUST DECLARE A STATE OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATIC EMERGENCY

The COVID-19 health crisis may be an opportunity to opt for new models of society. We have to choose between economic recovery and the preservation of the living. On the occasion of Biodiversity Day, we the undersigned, artists, sportsmen, intellectuals and public figures, call on the 193 member states of the United Nations to declare a state of environmental and climatic emergency.

The pandemic has highlighted the link that exists between climate change, the destruction of biodiversity, excessive mobility, an economic model based on hyper competition and the explosion of infectious diseases. In counterpoint, it also revealed our capacity to change our habits overnight. Billions of people unlocked in a snap of their fingers; a substantial drop in air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions by around 25%; researchers summoned to the 4 corners of the Planet; and 4 billion people confined. The coronavirus has made the impossible possible. Solutions were found in record time, because the urgency was there.

So, what are we waiting for to declare a state of environmental and climatic emergency? We are faced with an emergency comparable to that of the pandemic.

Scientists announce that half of the planet's tipping points have already been crossed: equal to permafrost, deforestation, bleaching of corals. Our behaviour touches the balance of nature and our geological standards, changes the surface of the submerged earth and modifies the functioning of ocean currents.

The forests are burning. Australia, Siberia, Cambodia, the Amazon, Florida, California and a number of African countries are grim. Hectares of forest and vegetation have gone to smoke killing and decimating the flora and fauna of these regions (1,25 billion animals have died in Australia during the fires of 2019.)

On 4 April 2020, a fire broke out in the Ukraine, burning several hectares near central Chernobyl and causing a cloud of smoke that dispersed throughout Europe.

With the rise of the oceans, the water tables will undergo a supply of salt which will make them unfit for consumption. The soil impregnated with salt will no longer be cultivable. At present, 70% of the human population lives in coastal areas which will be affected by the oceans. By 2050, we risk seeing two hundred million climate refugees.

These dramatic phenomena are only a glimpse of what awaits us with the acceleration of global warming.

GIEC reports point to the causes of accelerated climate change, the first of which is livestock farming which is recognised by the FAO as responsible for 14.4% of gas emissions of greenhouse effect. It is in particular the main source of emission of methane and nitrous oxide, powerful greenhouse gases.

Industrial farming is responsible for 65% of nitrous oxide and 37% of methane from human activities, but it is also responsible for 80% of deforestation in the Amazon.

This deforestation, due to the loss of biodiversity and the shrinking of living space by wild animals for the benefit of humans, is one of the causes of the pandemic COVID-19 which led to zoonoses, diseases and infections whose agents naturally transmit from vertebrate animals to humans. According to the American Department of Health, nearly 16% of all deaths recorded worldwide are attributed to infectious diseases and zoonoses represents 60% of known infectious diseases and 75% of emerging infectious diseases.

In France and in the United States, in Poland and in the Czech Republic, existing environmental legislation is being challenged on the pretext of economic recovery.

Don't we say that madness is to always do the same thing and expect a different result?

How do we want to live after COVID-19?

Can we hope for an economy recovery strategy respectful of Life and not an economy essentially based on the extraction of fossil fuels?

Can we expect a society where 1% of the world population captures 82% of all wealth?

Other models exist, more united, more equitable, more generous. Circular economy, reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, sustainable management of resources, all are possible.

We should make rapid and far-reaching transition choices in the areas of land use planning, of agriculture, food, energy, industry, building, transport and town planning. Net global emissions of anthropogenic carbon dioxide (CO₂) must be reduced and we have to wait for a zero balance of emissions around 2050. And to achieve this goal we must act immediately, disasters will not wait until 2050, the Coronavirus is proof.

It is time to put Life back at the heart of our reasoning. The health and economic crisis we are currently experiencing is only one of the consequences of the ecological crisis.

Member States must declare a state of environmental and climatic emergency in order to build new economic models in respect of humans, animals and the environment.